



The Historical  
Society of  
Pennsylvania

Collection 3095

**Esther R. Bell**  
**Papers**

ca. 1850-1980 (bulk 1928-1977)  
33 boxes, 6 volumes, 1 flat file, 12.2 lin. feet

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**Abstract**

Esther Rebecca Bell (1906-1982) was a graphic artist from Media, Pennsylvania, a small suburb of Philadelphia, and a graduate of the Philadelphia School of Design for Women. While a college student, she received a fellowship to study art in Paris. Locally, she became a well-known freelance graphic design artist and worked for several organizations in Philadelphia and Media. She also designed Christmas cards, illustrated filmstrips, and taught silk screening classes. She was an active volunteer in Media, became a board member of the Media-Upper Providence Library, and participated in the restoration of Media's historic Minshall House.

The collection consists of the papers of Esther R. Bell and her family, particularly Esther Fisher Bell, Joseph Percy Bell, Joseph Elliot Bell, and Charlotte Esther Bell. It includes family correspondence, genealogical records, examples of Bell's graphic design work, board records from the Media-Upper Providence Library, records from the Minshall House restoration, clippings, photographic prints, daguerreotypes, tintypes, 8mm film, and film and glass negatives.

**Background note**

In 1906 Esther Rebecca Bell was born in Alleghany County, Pa. to Joseph Percy Bell (1879-1974) and Elizabeth Russel Black Bell (1881-1909). Her father was a Pennsylvania native, son of Joseph Major Bell and Esther Ellen Fisher. A year after Bell was born, her brother arrived, Joseph Elliot Bell (1907-1993), who generally went by "Elliot." In 1909 Elizabeth Bell died, leaving the children to be raised by their father, with assistance from their aunt Esther Fisher Bell.

The Bell family moved to Media, Pa. while Esther and Elliot Bell were still in school. Bell graduated from Media High School in 1924 and that fall enrolled in the Philadelphia School of Design for Women to study illustration. (Several years later, the Philadelphia School of Design for Women merged with the Moore Institute of Art, Science, and Industry.) Each year the school awarded to graduating seniors two fellowships for European study based on a judged exhibition. Bell entered this competition and, although she did not win, she did receive the newly-created Directors' European

Fellowship, a \$600 grant for study and travel in Europe, concluding with an exhibition upon return. With matching funds from her father, Bell traveled throughout Europe (chiefly France, England, Germany, and Italy) for a year in company of a friend. During this time, Bell stayed primarily in Paris, France, and studied at several art and music schools, such as the Académie Delecluse and the Académie Colarossi.

Upon her return to Pennsylvania, Bell established herself as a freelance artist, drawing illustrations for small magazines and newspapers, creating graphic designs for small businesses, and writing and illustrating short stories for young girls. She also maintained a studio in Philadelphia with a partner, Mathilda Keller, where they taught art classes. Bell was first hired in her area of expertise in 1940 as a project supervisor for silk screen printing and copy preparation for the National Youth Administration, a New Deal agency that operated from 1935 to 1943 as part of the Works Progress Administration. Bell was responsible for eighty-four girls who made visual aids with the use of mimeography and silk screening. From 1941 to 1944 Bell worked as a stenographer with drafting duties at ITE Electrical Circuitry. In 1944 she was hired as an artist/illustrator for the Philadelphia Quartermasters Depot, creating manuals, charts, visual aids, and posters. While on the job, Bell was almost arrested as a spy for sitting outside and sketching the administration building for the design of a booklet cover. The matter was cleared up when it was affirmed that Bell worked on the grounds, but she was admonished not to sketch the buildings.

To enhance her education, Bell attended an elements of engineering class at Temple University in 1945 and an education class at Drexel Institute of Technology in 1950. In 1946 she changed employment yet again to work for the Veterans Administration as a forms designer. From 1948 to 1951 Bell taught Silk Screening for Industrial Purposes at the Printing Institute in Philadelphia (School for the Graphic Arts Industry). Starting in 1951, Bell spent several years illustrating educational and descriptive filmstrips for a variety of companies, including Curriculum Films, Encyclopedia Britannica, Church Films, Society for Visual Education, Family Films, University Films, and McGraw-Hill Publishing Company. The subjects she illustrated ranged from dinosaurs to historical events to costume history. Bell continued to work as a freelance artist while illustrating filmstrips. She designed personalized Christmas cards, birth announcements, letterhead, and business cards. She also did the illustrations and layout for a book published by the Christian Board of Publication, *Men Who Dared in Bible Times*, as well as a poster for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Media Rotary and numerous advertisements for the Media-Upper Providence Library.

Travel became a very important part of Bell's life. After her time in Europe in 1928 and 1929, Bell desired to return to visit the many friends she had made overseas, but lacked the income. Since she didn't find enough money in free-lancing, Bell began to take odd jobs. Most notably, in 1933, she took a summer job at the Camp Lenore for Girls, in Hinsdale, Massachusetts, where she was responsible for the staging of their dramatic performances. She continued this work until 1940, when she began work for the National Youth Administration. In 1947 she finally returned to France, and from the 1950s to the late 1970s Bell traveled extensively. She visited family in Pittsburgh and Chicago and friends throughout Europe. Stops included France, England, Italy,

Germany, Portugal, and Yugoslavia. She traveled mainly by ship, despite the availability and speed of air travel.

Having made many friends during her travels, Bell corresponded regularly with contacts from a variety of European cities. Their stories of life and politics before and during World War II prompted Bell to become active in war relief efforts. She organized a connection between the Rotary Clubs in Morden, Surrey, England and Media, Pennsylvania, so that Media residents could send over relief packages. Bell also sent packages through CARE (Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe) to other parts of Europe. Her volunteer work did not end with war relief. Bell organized the Holland Flood Relief Blitz Drive in Media in 1953, and in 1966 helped organize flood relief for Florence through the Media-Upper Providence Library. Additionally, she was a judge for the Miss Pennsylvania competition in 1954.

Bell garnered the nickname “Miss Media” because of her extensive knowledge of and contacts throughout Media. She was active in several local organizations, the Media-Upper Providence Library perhaps the chief among those. She joined the library’s board in 1961 and in following years served on the Publicity Committee, Special Events Committee, 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee, and a hiring committee for a new head librarian in 1978. For at least one year she was the chairman for the Publicity and Public Relations Committee. The design work she did for the library included creating mailings and posters to help fundraising efforts. **She also served on the committee to join the Media and Upper Providence Libraries into a cohesive organization.**

Bell served as the publicity chairman on the Board of the Western Delaware County Branch of American Red Cross for nineteen years. She was the publicity chairman on the Media Area Committee for the United Nations and vice president, publicity chairman, and a founding member of the Media Civic Forum. She was a member of the Business and Professional Woman’s Club of Media and was appointed to the Media Art and Architectural Commission. Bell directed plays with the Providence Players of Media. She belonged to the American Cancer Society, Delaware County Institute of Science, Philadelphia Art Alliance, Emergency Aid of Pennsylvania, and the Needlework Guild.

In 1978, the Minshall House, the oldest house in Media, was opened as an historic house museum. Thomas Minshall, a Quaker who settled locally in the 1680s, is credited as Media’s founder. Minshall’s original house was located several hundred feet south of the location of the current Minshall House, which was built in 1814 by Minshall’s descendents. Bell served on the Board of Directors as the publicity chairman for Media Historic Preservation Inc., which directed restoration of the house beginning in 1977. She designed mailings, posters, and promotional trolley tickets to help raise funds for the restoration.

Bell was an independent woman from the time she graduated high school. She lived for many years in the Media house she inherited from her father with her aunt Esther Fisher Bell. After her aunt's death, circa 1975, Bell rented out space in her home. Esther Bell remained in Media until her death on May 11, 1982, at the age of 75.

## Scope & content

The Esther R. Bell Papers include family correspondence, business papers, financial records, and ephemera dating from about 1850 to 1980. The majority of the material spans about fifty years, from 1928 to 1977. Every effort was made to retain the original order of the collection; and although Bell filed her papers roughly by subject and then chronologically, it was clear that she maintained the same files for many years and often mixed items without changing folder labels. Therefore, the collection has been kept in rough chronological order, and Bell's original folder titles have been used where appropriate or changed to reflect each folder's contents.

These papers richly document Bell's personal and business pursuits from the 1920s to the 1970s, such as her travels, her work as a graphic designer, and her volunteerism in Media, Pennsylvania. Some of the material provides glimpses into the lives of other members of the Bell family, particularly her father Joseph Percy, and her aunt Esther Fisher, her brother, Joseph Elliot, and her nieces, Charlotte Esther and Joan (who were better known in the family by their nicknames, "Char-Este" and "Jingle.") This collection contains a myriad of items including postcards, correspondence, personal and business papers, tax records, clippings, artwork, daguerreotypes, tintypes, and other photographs.

Bell's extensive assortment of her own and her family's letters make up the majority of Series I (*Correspondence*). There are four boxes of postcards, both used and unused, as well as several more boxes of letters and cards. Highlights within this series include correspondence to and from Bell when she traveled abroad in the years 1928 and 1929, World War II-era letters from several of her friends in England, and a varied group of sympathy notes to the Bell family upon the death of Joseph Percy Bell in 1947. This series has been broken into two subseries, *Postcards* and *Personal*. While there are postcards in the *Personal* subseries, those in the *Postcards* subseries comprise a collection that Bell had started to index.

Series II (*Personal Papers*) had been divided into five subseries and documents various members the Bell family. The first subseries (*Family papers*) includes wedding announcements, correspondence, school grade reports, scrapbooks, and financial records. One folder contains plans for a memorial stone for Bell's mother, put in place by Bell and her brother many years after their mother's death. Two folders consist of anonymous poetry and prose, including one poem addressed to Esther on her birthday. The folder entitled "Char-Este's Affairs" contains correspondence from Charlotte Esther, Bell's niece, along with an accounting of her estate. There is also a ledger of Joseph M. Bell, Bell's grandfather, and a folder of the tax returns for Esther Fisher Bell, Bell's aunt.

The second subseries (*Household papers*) includes materials pertaining to the upkeep and renovation of Bell's house, along with her personal financial and legal papers. There are plans for new kitchen cabinetry as well as the renovation of a bathroom. There are also legal papers, income tax returns, and banking records.

The third subseries (*Business papers*) contains many examples of Bell's design work, including graphic design for businesses, personalized cards for Christmas and birth announcements, and several other of Bell's graphic design ideas. One folder contains illustrations and layout for a book entitled *Men Who Dared in Bible Times*. There are papers concerning her employment at Camp Lenore, with the National Youth Administration, as a drafts person for ITE Electric Circuitry, and for the Philadelphia Quartermaster's Depot. Other material in this subseries includes correspondence, receipts and bills, and papers from Bell's work as a silk screening teacher.

Papers from Bell's travels make up the fourth subseries (*Travel papers*). There are souvenir pictures and records of Bell's visit to Davanzati Palace in Italy. Other material includes vacation plans, receipts, and floorplans for various ocean liners.

The final subseries under Series II (*Filmstrip materials*) contains records of Bell's work in filmstrip illustration. The majority of these papers consist of correspondence between Bell and various contacts at the companies she worked with, scripts for filmstrips, and sketches for filmstrip frames. There are also several strips of a biblical film, and one with text for an educational film on communism.

Series III (*Media. papers*) highlights Bell's local work with the Media-Upper Providence Library, the Minshall House, and other volunteer efforts; and each topic has its own subseries. The majority of the first subseries (*Media-Upper Providence Library*) consists of meeting minutes from the Media-Upper Providence Library Board of Directors, along with the handbooks for the Board of Directors. There are also records of Bell's graphic design work for library fundraising events and a collection of clippings concerning the library. The second subseries (*Minshall House*) contains documents related to the restoration of the Minshall House, a historic house in Media. One folder contains photographs of the house's dedication. There are meeting minutes and financial reports for Media Historic Preservation Inc., correspondence, and clippings. The last subseries (*Volunteering/ miscellany*) includes an extensive collection of local and regional newspaper clippings from and about Media, as well as papers from Bell's volunteer work with many Media-based organizations.

Series VI (*Images, artifacts, ephemera*) has been divided into three subseries, *Photographs*, *Miscellany*, and *Artifacts*. In addition to photographs, the first subseries contains images of Bell family ancestors and descendants on tin, on cardstock (cabinet cards, postcards), and on ceramic. There are also two separate photo albums and eleven daguerreotypes. The *Miscellany* subseries is made up of files which Bell had labeled "miscellaneous," and additionally, index cards, clippings and other printed material, and ephemera. The final subseries (*Artifacts*) includes several interesting items, such as a card game, a children's book, and World War I medals.

## Overview of arrangement

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Series I      Correspondence, ca. 1900-1980, n.d.

	a. Postcards, ca. 1900-ca. 1970	4 boxes
	b. Personal correspondence, 1902-1980, n.d.	8 boxes
Series II	Personal papers, ca. 1869-1980, n.d.	
	a. Family papers, ca. 1869-1978, n.d.	2 boxes, 4 vols.
	b. Household papers, 1916-1977, n.d.	2 boxes
	c. Business papers, 1924-1980, n.d.	3.75 boxes
	d. Travel papers, 1928-1980, n.d.	0.25 box
	e. Filmstrip materials, 1951-1970, n.d.	2 boxes
Series III	Media, Pa. Papers, 1945-1980, n.d.	
	a. Media-Upper Providence Library, 1951-1980, n.d.	1 box
	b. Minshall House, 1975-1979, n.d.	1 box
	c. Volunteering/miscellany, 1945-1979, n.d.	1 box
Series IV	Images, artifacts, ephemera, ca. 1850-1974, n.d.	
	a. Photographs, ca. 1850-ca. 1970, n.d.	6 boxes, 1 vol.
	b. Miscellany, ca. 1920-1974, n.d.	0.75 box
	c. Artifacts, ca. 1891-1969, n.d.	2.25 boxes, 1 vol.

## Series description

### **Series 1. Correspondence, ca. 1900-1980, n.d. (Boxes 1-11, 30)**

#### a. Postcards, ca. 1900-ca. 1970

Bell's postcard collection serves as a record of correspondence as well as her travels. It appears that whenever Bell visited a new country, she purchased numerous postcards to mail or keep as souvenirs. She also received many postcards from traveling relatives and friends. In the first three boxes, the postcards are roughly alphabetized by subject, with no apparent order within each subject. There is a mix of blank single cards, blank card books, and used cards.

Box 30 contains Bell's index of some of the postcards in the first three boxes. At some point, she began, but apparently never finished, cataloging her postcard collection. Placed in alphabetical order, each card contains a list of subjects, months, and years. The meaning of the dates is somewhat vague, for they could pertain to when the card was published. In all likelihood, however, they pertain to when Bell either purchased or received each card.

#### b. Personal, 1902-1980, n.d.

This subseries contains an array of letters to and from Bell and her family from the early 1900s to the late 1970s. Letters are arranged chronologically. Large groups of letters from distinct correspondents have been separated and arranged within the chronological order.

When Bell's mother died in 1909, her aunt, Esther Fisher Bell, came to live with her father, Joseph Percy Bell, to help care for the family. As a result, both Esther Bells, for several decades, sent and received letters from many of the same people. Researchers should note that among the correspondence, it is often difficult to tell if certain letters were intended for Bell or her aunt. Many letters are simply addressed

“Miss Esther Bell” (which applied to both women since each was unmarried.) Some letters are addressed to “Esther R. Bell,” and some to “Esther F. Bell,” and this is noted in each folder title.

There are very few letters from the time of Esther’s birth (around 1906), but those that are in the collection are between her grandfather and grandmother (Joseph Major and Esther Ellen Fisher Bell) and their children. In 1928, 21-year-old Bell was awarded a fellowship to study art in Europe, and from September 1928 to July 1929, she lived primarily in Paris, France (but visited other European states). She and her family corresponded regularly and there is a fairly complete collection of letters from this time period, from the days before she left the states to the days around the time she returned home. In the first letter, written in late September 1928, her father expressed great pride in Bell, who was the first member of her family to travel to Europe. He noted that she was entering “strange surroundings with many strange faces . . . on all sides,” and that she was going to be responsible for her actions “in a foreign country for a year.” He was confident that Bell would be a responsible adult and achieve her goals in school. There are three folders of letters from both her father and aunt, most of which are routine and describe family incidents and current events.

Bell’s letters, though mature in tone, exhibit the excitement of young girl traveling to Europe for the first time. Accompanied by two friends (Mathilda and Jeanette) and other fellowship awardees, Bell traveled by boat to Le Havre, France, and then by train to Paris. Of their arrival, Bell wrote “It doesn’t seemly [sic] really possible that all the hurry and bustle around us is really Paris. However all indications point that way. And it is a very thrilling feeling” [undated letter, ca. Oct. 1928]. Most of her letters provide detailed glimpses into a day’s or week’s events, and she wrote primarily about her surroundings, her classmates, and her travels. Yet, Bell was in Europe was to study art, and she provided several accounts of her work. “To-day we signed up with the Academie Julien for three months,” she wrote in a letter dated 10 October 1928. “We will be there from nine to twelve and simply draw then we’ll have all afternoon to sketch or visit museums.” During her ten months in Europe (October 1928-July 1929), Bell studied at and visited sites throughout France, Italy, Belgium, Germany, and England. Bell’s letters end in May 1929 when her Aunt Esther arrived in London, and the two remained together for Bell’s final weeks overseas. There is one folder of letters from June and July 1929 to the Bell family from the “Esther Bells” in London.

This trip awakened Bell’s deep and abiding interest in Europe, and she would return several times during her lifetime. She also kept in touch with many of the people she met on this initial trip. One such correspondent, Alfred White, an Englishman who chaperoned the fellowship students for several months, remained one of Bell’s regular “pen pals,” and there are several folders of his letters to Bell from 1928 to the 1970s. He initially wrote to Esther while she was still in Europe to thank her for being a “constant friend and guide” to him while he was in Paris. White and Bell corresponded over many decades and discussed everything from world events to family affairs.



Other highlights in the series include folders of letters to Bell from her brother, Joseph Elliot (“Elliot”), from the 1940s and the 1970s. Elliot’s letters of the 1940s describe his service in the Navy and wartime adventures. Those from the 1970s include a few notes to Bell from Dana Alexander Scott, Elliot’s granddaughter. In addition, there is a folder of letters from the 1970s from Bell’s niece, Charlotte Esther (“Char-este”), which range from mundane accounts of daily events (September 1973: “I’ve been canning tomatoes and freezing corn, squash, and green beans for weeks now.”) to acerbic and intimate descriptions of family members and their affairs (21 September 1974: “That infantile idiot, who bore me [her mother], hasn’t changed a bit”).

**Series 2. Personal papers, ca. 1869-1980, n.d. (Boxes 12-20, Volumes 1-4)**

a. Family papers, ca. 1869-1978, n.d.

This set of family papers consists chiefly of school records, financial papers, and correspondence. Family members represented include Joseph Major Bell, Esther Ellen Fisher Bell, Elizabeth Black Bell, Joseph Percy Bell, Esther Fisher Bell, and Charlotte Esther Bell Luce.

This series contains some of the earliest material found in the entire collection. There is a school poem written by Esther Ellen Fisher in 1871. Box 13 Folder 3 contains Elizabeth Black’s diary, in which she began writing around 1900. There is also a folder of material concerning Elizabeth Black Bell’s funeral and grave marker. Even though she died in 1909, for reasons unknown her grave did not receive a headstone until the 1970s. Bell played a central role in obtaining one for her mother almost 70 years late.

In addition to a folder of Esther F. Bell’s tax returns, most of the financial papers in this series concern the estate of Thomas J. Black and the sale of his property in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. There are account statements and correspondence directed to Black’s heirs (who included Bell and her immediate relatives). The papers concerning the sale of Black’s Pittsburgh property chiefly consist of correspondence between lawyers and Bell family members, who wanted to sell the somewhat dilapidated property for the best possible price.

Other highlights include a folder of correspondence entitled “Char-este’s affairs,” which consists of pointed letters from Charlotte Esther Bell Luce to Bell concerning Joan (Jingle) Bell, her sister and Bell’s niece. There are also several folders of miscellaneous material, which include Bell’s passport of the 1920s, a daily journal that belonged to Elizabeth Black Bell, clippings, notes, and drawings.

b. Household papers, 1916-1977, n.d.

Bell’s personal financial papers as well as those pertaining to the upkeep of her house make up this subseries. There are Bell’s insurance papers and records of Bell’s investments from the 1930s to the 1980s. There are also two folders of her income tax returns from 1948 to 1967. Records of renovations to Bell’s Media home are also in this subseries. Bell renovated her kitchen in the 1950s and her bathroom in

the 1970s. She played a key role in both renovations and created her own floor plans and layouts. A folder entitled "Household" contains various receipts and invoices for home improvement items and furnishings.

Also in this subseries is a folder of legal correspondence concerning Joseph P. Bell's estate. A folder of miscellaneous items includes several letters and applications related to Bell's seeking federal employment during the 1940s. In this same folder are records of Bell's membership in Media organizations such as the Delaware County Institute of Science, as well as miscellaneous clippings and family correspondence. Box 14 Folder 7 contains additional records of Bell's investments, particularly in the Scott Paper Company and the Bell Telephone Company.

c. Business papers, 1924-1980, n.d.

This subseries is entirely devoted to Bell's graphic design work. Box 15 contains seventeen folders of magazine clippings, mostly from the late 1920s, subdivided by artist. Bell regularly clipped ads from several magazines, including *McCall's Magazine*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *The Ladies' Home Journal*, presumably to study different artists' techniques. These materials provide an interesting look at the illustration work of artists such as N.C. Wyeth, Rene Clark (Clarke), and McClelland Barclay and a record of advertising illustrations from the 1920s. Among these folders are also clippings Bell divided by subject, such as ads with metallic inks, men's fashions, and buildings and transportation.

Bell remained a freelance graphic designer throughout her career and usually worked out of her home. Several folders contain materials from Bell's Christmas card design work, her ideas for postcard designs, and examples of work she did for businesses, such as business cards and letterhead sample for Sage Imports of Upper Darby, Pennsylvania.

This subseries also contains correspondence with her various clients, art supplies, receipts, articles on artistic methods, and information on silk screening.

d. Travel papers, 1928-1980, n.d.

At only four folders, this is the smallest subseries in the collection. It contains interesting documents from Bell's travels from the late 1920s to the late 1970s. Over her lifetime, Bell traveled abroad frequently and visited numerous countries, such as France, England, Germany, Italy, Yugoslavia, and Portugal. The folder entitled "Davanzati Palace" contains photographs of this fourteenth-century structure in Florence, Italy. In other folders are receipts, correspondence, travel brochures, and pamphlets and booklets on ocean travel and ocean liners, in particular the R.M.S. *Queen Mary* which Bell sailed on at least twice.

e. Filmstrip materials, 1951-1970, n.d.

Among Bell's many business ventures was her foray into filmstrip illustration, which began in the 1950s. This subseries contains correspondence between Bell and various contacts at the companies she worked with, scripts for filmstrips, strips of film, and sketches for filmstrip frames.

During her time as a filmstrip illustrator, Bell worked with numerous organizations such as the Society of Visual Education, Encyclopedia Britannica, and the Presbyterian Board of Christian Education. She helped create numerous educational and religious filmstrips to be shown primarily to teenagers. For several years, she was employed by the William P. Gottlieb Co., a New York City-based company that produced educational filmstrips, brochures, films, and slide shows. There are several folders of correspondence and filmstrip scripts from this company to Bell. From the scripts, Bell created sketches and drawings for each frame. The filmstrips she worked on for Gottlieb ranged from historical vignettes (“Life in Elizabethan Times,” “The West and the Growth of Democracy”) to topical profiles (“Materials in Clothing,” “Prehistoric Animals”). Her drawings accompany the correspondence and scripts and provide insights into Bell’s artistic methods and style.

**Series 3. Media, Pa. papers, 1945-1980, n.d. (Boxes 21-23)**

a. Media-Upper Providence Library, 1951-1980, n.d.

In 1961, Bell joined the board of directors of Media’s local library and this subseries contains records of her work on the board. Material includes meeting minutes, information on programs, clippings, pamphlets, and booklets. Most of the board papers date from the mid to late 1970s when she served as chairman of the library’s publicity committee. Her contacts throughout Media and her graphic design skills served her well in marketing the library to local residents. She created pamphlets and flyers advertising the library’s services and often wrote event notices for the local newspaper, *Town Talk*. Bell also served on the library’s hiring committees for a new head librarian in 1978 and 1979, and there are minutes describing the committees’ search process and fact sheets on each candidate.

b. Minshall House, 1975-1979, n.d.

Bell joined the board of Media Historic Preservations, Inc. (MHP) in 1977 to assist in their efforts to save and restore the Minshall House, which is considered to be the oldest residence in Media. MHP was established in 1976 to help preserve historic properties in and around Media and Delaware County, and the Minshall House was its first project. Bell became MHP’s publicity chairman and eventually its vice chairmen. The newly restored Minshall House opened with a public reception on May 13, 1978.

Of the six folders in this small subseries, three contain board papers: meeting minutes, meeting notices, press releases, flyers, clippings, and correspondence. One folder contains a report entitled “Documentary and Architectural Study of a House at the Corner of Front Street and Providence Road.” Compiled by a local architect, this report provides an in-depth look into the history and structure of the Minshall House. There are images and detailed descriptions of each room in the house as well as recommendations for restoring and preserving the structure and site. The remaining two folders contain Bell’s drafts of Minshall House brochures and miscellaneous clippings and correspondence concerning fundraising for the project and photographs of the restoration process.

c. Volunteering/miscellany, 1945-1979, n.d.

In addition to her work with the Minshall House and the Media-Upper Providence Library, Bell worked from the 1940s to the 1970s as a publicity and marketing volunteer for many other organizations in Media, including the Red Cross, Rotary Club, and Media Civic Forum. She also worked as judge for the Miss Pennsylvania and Miss Pleasantville pageants during the 1950s.

This subseries is primarily comprised of clippings documenting local events and samples of Bell's design work, but there are also letters from the Red Cross and Rotary Club, and concerning the pageants for which she served as judge.

**Series 4. Images, artifacts, ephemera, ca. 1850-1974, n.d. (Boxes 24-29, 31-33, Volumes 5-6)**

a. Photographs, ca. 1850-ca. 1970, n.d.

The vast majority of photographs in this subseries depict various Bell family members, in particular Joseph Major Bell and Esther Ellen Fisher Bell. There are also several images of Bell's ancestors from the late 1800s and early 1900s. Most of the photographs are unlabeled.

Box 25 contains several large images as well as a scrapbook of early family photographs. Box 26 is an album that contains unsorted family photographs from the early 1900s to the 1980s, including several tintypes, cabinet cards, and postcards. Volume 5 is an album that also contains tintypes and other photographs from as early as the 1850s. Many of the images are labeled, and they appear to be of Fisher family ancestors. Lastly, there are three separate boxes that contain daguerreotypes (Box 27), glass negatives (Box 28) and a fragile photograph on ceramic (Box 29).

b. Miscellany, ca. 1920-1974, n.d.

The chief component of this subseries is clippings and other printed material, however there are also playbills, calling cards, and bookmarks. The clippings and preint material are separate by subject: local and national events, household needs and items, sports, and miscellaneous. One folder of clippings contains articles and stories by Walter Lippmann. Other items in this series include a folder of playbills, an unidentified print, an almanac, and bookmarks. There is also a folder of calling cards from and received by Bell family members.

c. Artifacts, ca. 1891-1969, n.d.

This subseries contains an interesting variety of items. In Box 32 is a card game called "Bézique," which includes cards, instructions, two dials, as well as score sheets for "Esther" (probably Esther Fisher Bell) and "Em," and a newspaper article on American Whist rules. Box 33 contains World War I-era pins and medals from Joseph Major Bell. Accompanying the pins is a membership card for the Public Safety Committee of Reading, Pennsylvania, of which Joseph was a member. In the same box is a 1919 Victory Liberty Loan certificate from the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia to Joseph M. Bell.

Other items in this series include a late nineteenth-century children's book entitled *The Twigs or Christmas at Ruddock Hall*; a street scene print on masonite; a painted portrait of E. Wallace Chadwick, a Pennsylvania politician, by Esther R. Bell; and an unidentified sewing implement or sewing machine part.

## **Separation report**

None.

## **Related materials**

None.

## **Subjects**

Art and industry – United States  
Commercial art – 20<sup>th</sup> century  
Drawing – 20<sup>th</sup> century  
Filmstrips in education  
Filmstrips in religious education  
Graphic artists – Pennsylvania  
Graphic arts – 20<sup>th</sup> century  
Graphic arts – Equipment and supplies  
Postcards – 20<sup>th</sup> century  
Postcards – Collectors and collecting  
Screen process printing  
Serigraphy – 20<sup>th</sup> century  
Serigraphy – Technique

Delaware County Library System (Pa.)  
Media Civic Forum  
Media High School  
Media Historic Preservation Inc.  
Media Rotary Club  
Media-Upper Providence Library  
Minshall House

Bell, Charlotte Esther  
Bell, Esther Ellen Fisher  
Bell, Esther Fisher  
Bell, Esther Rebecca  
Bell, Joseph Elliot  
Bell, Joseph Major  
Bell, Joseph Percy

## **Administrative Information**

### **Restrictions**

The collection is open for research.

### **Acquisition information**

Gift of Dr. Charlotte Bell, 1982.

Accession number 82:33.

### **Alternative format**

None.

### **Preferred citation**

Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here], Esther R. Bell Papers (Collection 3095), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

### **Processing note**

Processed by Sarah Hyson, September 2007.

## Box and folder listing

### Series 1. Correspondence. a. Postcards

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
Postcards	ca. 1900-ca. 1970	1-3	n/a
Postcards index	ca. 1920-ca. 1950	30	n/a

### Series 1. Correspondence. b. Personal

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
To Bell family members from friends and relatives	1902-1929	4	1-2
To Esther R. Bell from Joseph M. and Esther E. F. Bell	1922, 1926-1929	4	3
To Esther R. Bell in transit/in Europe from friends and relatives	Sept. 1928-July 1929, n.d.	4	4
To Esther R. Bell in Europe from Joseph P. Bell and Esther F. Bell	Sept. 1928-July 1929, n.d.	4	5-7
To Bell family from Esther R. Bell in Europe	Oct. 1928-May 1929, n.d.	5	1-3
To Bell family from Esther F. Bell in Europe	June-July 1929	5	4
To Esther R. Bell from Alfred White	1928, 1929 (bulk 1929)	5	5
To Esther R. Bell from Carroll Frey	1929-1935	5	6
To Esther R. Bell or Esther F. Bell from friends and relatives	1930-1939	6	1-2
To Esther R. Bell from Alfred White	1930-1939, n.d.	6	3-4
To Esther R. Bell from "Major" T. W. and Elsie Lloyd	1930-1939, n.d.	6	5
To Esther R. Bell from John (Jack) Hyatt	1931-1933	6	6
To Esther R. Bell or Esther F. Bell from friends and relatives	1940, 1942-1945, 1947-1949, n.d.	7	1
To Esther R. Bell from Alfred and Emmie White	1940-1949	7	2-4



To Esther R. Bell from Elsie Lloyd	1940-1949, 1950	7	5
To Esther R. Bell from Bill Bradner	1941, 1942, 1944, n.d. (bulk 1941)	7	6
To Bell family from Joseph Elliot Bell	1943-1945, 1947 (bulk 1945)	7	7
To Bell family from friends and relatives, re: Joseph P. Bell's death	Dec. 1947-Jan. 1948 (bulk Dec. 1947)	8	1-3
To Esther R. Bell or Esther F. Bell from friends and relatives	1950-1952, 1954-1956, 1959	8	4
To Esther R. Bell from Alfred White	1950-1963 (bulk 1950)	8	5
To Mary (Bell) and Robert Kissinger from various Bell family members	1955, 1958-1961, 1973 (bulk 1955, 1958)	8	6
To Esther R. Bell or Esther F. Bell from friends and relatives	1960-1969 (bulk 1967-1969)	8	7
To Esther R. Bell from U.S. Senators	1962, 1966	8	8
To Esther R. Bell from Evelyn Barnes Peirce	1963-1969, n.d.	8	9
To Esther R. Bell or Esther F. Bell from friends and relatives	1970-1971	9	1
To Esther R. Bell from John and Lillian Landis	1970-1977	9	2
To Esther R. Bell from Evelyn Barnes Peirce	1970-1977, 1979	9	3
To Esther R. Bell from Emmie (and Alfred) White	1970-1977, 1979	9	4
To Esther R. Bell from Charlotte Bell Luce	1971-1974, 1979, n.d.	9	5
To Esther R. Bell from friends and relatives	1972-1975	9	6-7
To Esther R. Bell from friends and relatives	1976-1980	10	1-2
To Esther R. Bell from Joseph Elliot Bell and daughter	1977-1979, n.d.	10	3
Miscellaneous	1974-1979, n.d.	10	4
Miscellaneous family letters	n.d.	10	5-6
Greeting cards	n.d.	11	1-2
Items removed from correspondence	1927-1979, n.d.	11	3

**Series 2. Personal Papers. a. Family Papers**

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
Creative writing/stories/essays	n.d.	12	1
Anonymous poetry	n.d.	12	2
Signature book	ca. 1869-ca. 1874	Vol. 1	n/a
School papers	1871-1949	12	3
Ledger	ca. 1901-1942	Vol. 2	n/a
Original poems for various occasions	1905, 1943, n.d.	12	4
Bell, Elizabeth Black memorial	1909-1977	12	5
Travel journal	1924-1931	12	6
Financial papers	1929-1959	12	7
Correspondence	1929-1978	12	8
Financial and legal papers	1930-1953	12	9
Papers concerning 729 S. Aiken Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa.	1932-1944	12	10
Scrapbook: "Time's Footsteps." Commemorative Joseph Major Bell's and Esther Ellen Fisher Bell's 60 <sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary	ca. 1936	Vol. 3	n/a
Items removed from Volume 3	ca. 1936	12	11
Scrapbook	ca. 1939	Vol. 4	n/a
Char-Este's affairs	1949-1969	12	12
Articles mentioning Esther Bell	1962-1978	13	1
Tax returns for Esther F. Bell	1968-1976	13	2
Miscellaneous	1900-1969	13	3-6

**Series 2. Personal Papers. b. Household Papers**

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
Personal financial papers	1928-1980	13	7
Guarantees and manuals	1928-1956, n.d.	14	1
Miscellaneous	1938-1969	14	2
Mr. E.A. Howell, legal papers	1949-1965	14	3
Household	1949-1977	14	4
Jury summons	1957	14	5
<i>Reader's Digest</i>	1957-1959	14	6
Hooper, Soliday, Brooke, Sheridan, Inc.	1968-1975	14	7
Income tax returns	1948-1967	14	8-9
Banking	1970-1977	14	10

Bathroom design	1977	14	11
Keeping ledger	n.d.	14	12
Magazine clippings: Wyeth	1927-1929	15	1
Magazine clippings: Barclay	1927-1929	15	2
Magazine clippings: Preston	1929, n.d.	15	3
Magazine clippings: Morgan, Dunn	1927-1929, n.d.	15	4
Magazine clippings: Timkins	1927-1928	15	5
Magazine clippings: Rene Clark	1923-1929 (bulk 1927-1929)	15	6
Advertisements showing miscellaneous backgrounds	1926-1930	15	7
Magazine clippings: Gruger	1921-1932, n.d. (bulk 1927-1929)	15	8
Magazine clippings: Pennell	1927-1928	15	9
Magazine clippings: Coles, Phillips	1916-1923, n.d.	15	10
Magazine clippings: Fisher, Body	1926-1929	15	11
Advertisements showing buildings and transportation	1926-1928	15	12
Advertisements with metallic ink	1930-1932	15	13
Magazine clippings: Raleigh	1929-1930	15	14
Magazine clippings: Mowat	1924-1930	15	15
Magazine clippings: men's fashions	1918-1929, n.d.	15	16
Magazine clippings: fashions Le Pape	1927-1929, n.d.	15	17

**Series 2. Personal Papers. c. Business Papers**

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
Miscellaneous	1938-1946, n.d.	16	1
Miscellaneous	1939-1964	16	2
Christmas card design work	1927-1952, n.d.	16	3
Christmas card work for Headlong House	n.d.	16	4
Christmas card design work	1952	16	5
Christmas card design work and small designs	1941-1952, n.d.	16	6
ITE circuit breaker drafting	1942	16	7
Designs for Philadelphia print series	1941-1949	16	8
Designs for WPWA	1949	16	9
Miscellaneous small orders	1948-1953, n.d.	16	10

Designs, postcard ideas	1952, n.d.	16	11
Christian Board of Publication, artwork for <i>Men Who Dared in Bible Times</i>	1961	16	12
Design work for Sage Imports	1965-1966	17	1
Map book proposals	1964-1968	17	2
Design work: Warrenton, Va.	n.d.	17	3
Christmas card designs, ornaments	n.d.	17	4
Miscellaneous art supplies	n.d.	17	5
Receipts	1924-1956	17	6
Miscellaneous correspondence	1927-1965	17	7-8
Articles	1938-1949	17	9
Miscellaneous correspondence	1941-1974	17	10
American Baptist Publication Society	1946-1949	17	11
Business methods	1947, n.d.	17	12
Baker Print Shop	1949	17	13
Student background and progress records	1949	17	14
John Wanamaker	1948	17	15
Silk screen and sign shop advertisement lists	1949, n.d.	18	1
On foreign jobs	1949-1950	18	2
Lessons for silk screen	1950	18	3
Art supplies	1949	18	4
School papers	1950-1952, n.d.	18	5
Colotone and silk screening	1950-1959, n.d.	18	6
Kleen-Stik	1951	18	7
Philadelphia Art Supply	1948-1968	18	8-9
Silk screening instructions	n.d.	18	10
Publisher contacts	n.d.	18	11
Exhibits	1979-1980	18	12

**Series 2. Personal Papers. d. Travel Papers**

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
Davanzati Palace	1928-1958, n.d.	18	13
Early travel	1929-1980, n.d.	18	14
Ocean travel and receipts	1947-1962, n.d.	18	15
Hotels	1950, n.d.	18	16

**Series 2. Personal Papers. e. Filmstrip Materials**

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
<i>Encyclopedia Britannica</i> and William P. Gottlieb Co. scripts	1953-1958	19	1
Correspondence	1956-1961	19	2-3
William P. Gottlieb Co. and University Films	1961-1965	19	4-5
Society for Visual Education, Inc.	1956-1958, n.d.	19	6-7
<i>Encyclopedia Britannica</i>	1956-1959	19	8
"How We Got Our Bible"	1956-1959	20	1
Church Screen productions	1953, n.d.	20	2
Presbyterian Board of Christian Education	1963-1969, n.d.	20	3
Television, Radio, and Film Commission	1964	20	4
Family Films	1958-1964	20	5
Correspondence	1957-1963	20	6
University Films	1965-1968	20	7
Look/Listen and Learn	1969-1970	20	8
S.P.P.A. Convention	1951	20	9
Film contacts	1951-1963	20	10
Curriculum Films	1951-1953	20	11

**Series 3. Media, Pa. Papers. a. Media-Upper Providence Library**

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
Board of Directors papers	1962-1980, n.d.	21	1-5
Clippings and miscellany	1951-1979	21	6
Board of Directors meeting minutes	1961-1966	21	7
Library programs	1963, n.d.	21	8
Picture of the month	1972-1979	21	9
Miscellaneous	1953-1978	21	10

**Series 3. Media, Pa. Papers. b. Minshall House**

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
Media Historic Preservation Inc. Board of Directors papers	1975-1979	22	1-3
Architectural study	1975	22	4
Material for first brochure	1976, n.d.	22	5

Miscellaneous	1976-1978	22	6
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**Series 3. Media, Pa. Papers. c. Volunteering/Miscellany**

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
Red Cross	1948-1975	23	1
Rotary Club	1949-1953	23	2
Business and Professional Women's Club	1950-1953	23	3
Media Town Fair/Bicentennial/ Media Civic Forum	1964-1976	23	4-5
C.A.R.E./Relief	1945-1951	23	6
Miss Pennsylvania	1954	23	7
Miss Pleasantville	1950-1953	23	8
Clippings	1950-1978	23	9
Miscellaneous	1947-1979, n.d.	23	10-11

**Series 4. Images, Artifacts, and Ephemera. a. Photographs**

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
Photo album	ca. 1850-ca. 1860	Vol. 5	n/a
Bell family and others	ca. 1890-ca. 1970	24	1
Joseph Major Bell and Esther Ellen Fisher Bell	ca. 1900	24	2
Bell family	ca. 1900	24	3-8
Daguerreotypes	ca. 1900	27	11 items
Photo album	ca. 1900	25	1
Bell family	ca. 1900-ca. 1930	25	2
Unidentified family member	ca. 1900	25	3
Boy and girl	ca. 1900	25	4
Classroom	ca. 1900	25	5
"Violinist Will Bradner" by John Sloan	1903	25	6
Bell family portrait	ca. 1906	25	7
Loose album pages	ca. 1912	25	8
Glass negatives	ca. 1915	28	8 items
Class photos	ca. 1915	25	9
Bell family	ca. 1920-ca. 1930	25	10
Jennie Gifford	1921	25	11
Esther Bell and nephew (?)	ca. 1940	25	12
Unidentified family members	ca. 1940	25	13-16
Esther in classroom	ca. 1940	25	17
Miscellaneous houses	ca. 1940	25	18

Elliot Bell and Elizabeth Bradner wedding	1943	25	19
Elliot Bell with Joan (Jingle) Bell	ca. 1947	25	20
Unidentified family members	n.d.	25	21-25
Photo album: Bell family	ca. 1890-ca. 1970	26	n/a
Photo on ceramic	n.d.	29	1 item

**Series 4. Images, Artifacts, and Ephemera. b. Miscellany**

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
Clippings – local and national events	ca. 1920-ca. 1970	31	1
Playbills	1924, 1927	31	2
Clippings – household needs and items	ca. 1927-ca. 1970	31	3
Printed material – miscellaneous	1949, 1968, 1974, n.d.	31	4
Printed material – sports	1950	31	5
Printed material – Walter Lippmann	1964	31	6
Unidentified print	n.d.	31	7
Almanac	n.d.	31	8
Calling cards	n.d.	31	9
Bookmarks	n.d.	31	10
Miscellaneous	1920-ca. 1936, n.d.	31	11

**Series 4. Images, Artifacts, and Ephemera. c. Artifacts**

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
Children book: <i>The Twigs or Christmas at Ruddock Hall</i>	ca. 1891	Vol. 6	n/a
“Bézique” (card game)	ca. 1892	32	n/a
World War I medals and Victory Liberty Loan certificate	ca. 1915, 1949	33	n/a
Street scene print on masonite	1942	31	12
Painted portrait by E. R. Bell (E. Wallace Chadwick, 1884-1969)	1969	31	13
Sewing implement or machine part	n.d.	31	14