
Descriptive Summary

Title: Eric Temple Bell Papers,

Date (inclusive): 1919-1955

Collection number: 10006-MS

Creator: Bell, Eric Temple 1883-1960

Extent: 4 linear feet

Repository: California Institute of Technology. Caltech Archives
Pasadena, California 91125

Abstract: Eric Temple Bell was professor mathematics at Caltech from 1926 to 1953. He was a specialist in the theory of numbers. He also distinguished himself as a writer of science fiction under the name of John Taine, and also as the author of non-fiction and poetry. His papers include literary and scientific manuscripts; correspondence, largely with publishers; and some reprints of his own scientific publications.

Physical location: Archives, California Institute of Technology.

Language of Material:

Languages represented in the collection:

English

Access

The collection is open for research. Researchers must apply in writing for access.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Eric Temple Bell Papers, 10006-MS, Caltech Archives, California Institute of Technology.

Acquisition Information

The Eric Temple Bell Papers were assembled from a number of different sources. The earliest to be documented is the 1971 donation of the manuscript of "Man and his Lifebelts" from a private source. The mathematical manuscripts were given to the Caltech Archives by Caltech professor of mathematics Tom M. Apostol in 1981. The manuscript copy of the poem "The Scarlet Night" was donated to the Archives by Bell's biographer, Constance Reid, in 1997. E. T. Bell's reprints were added to the collection at various times from various sources.

Biography

Eric Temple Bell was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, in 1883. He came alone to the U.S. at the age of 19 and enrolled in Stanford University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in 1904. He continued his education at the University of Washington with a master's degree in 1908. Subsequently he moved to New York to earn his PhD at Columbia University in 1912. He returned to the West to teach mathematics at the University of Washington, where he stayed for 14 years. He came to Caltech as professor of mathematics in 1926.

Bell was a specialist in the theory of numbers. He received the prestigious Bôcher Prize from the American Mathematical Society in 1920. From 1924 to 1927 he served on the Society's council and in 1926 became its vice president. In 1930 he served as vice president of the Physical Sciences Section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and from 1931 to 1933 was president of the Mathematical Association of America. In 1938 he received the Gold Medal of the California Commonwealth Club for his mathematical writings. He was the author of almost 300 mathematical papers, four advanced and ten popular books on mathematics, among the latter the highly regarded *Men of Mathematics* (1937). His technical books include *Algebraic Arithmetic* (1927) and *The Development of Mathematics* (1940). Bell was a member of a number of learned societies, including the American Philosophical Society and the National Academy of Sciences.

Under the pseudonym John Taine, Bell authored 13 science fiction novels and more science fiction magazine stories, most written between the years 1920 and 1940. A writer for the Caltech magazine *Engineering and Science* wrote: "Bell's science fiction is distinguished by its

violence. It abounds in overwhelming catastrophes of nature, prehistoric reptilian monsters, men turned into brute beasts and men turned into masses of fungoid growth." Bell also wrote plays, poetry, and works of non-fiction.

Eric Temple Bell died in Pasadena, California, on December 21, 1960.

Scope and Content

The Papers of Eric Temple Bell are comprised of separate groups of papers which were acquired by the Caltech Archives in a piecemeal fashion. The collection is currently organized into four series, generally reflecting the sequence of donation. The first series contains some of Bell's science fiction manuscripts in both typewritten and holographic form. A copy of the manuscript for his long poem, "The Scarlet Night," is located in series 4 because of its late date of acquisition. The correspondence series (series 2) is a mixture of types, but letters with publishers predominate, and there is little in the way of interesting scientific exchange. Series 3, the mathematical manuscripts, came to the Archives through the care of Professor Tom Apostol of the Caltech mathematics department. It represents at best a sample of Bell's work, mainly from the 1940s. The concluding section of the collection contains a portion of Bell's many mathematical articles in reprint form, from the 1920s through the late 1940s.

The collection is organized into the following series:

- Series 1. Science Fiction and Non-Technical Writings
- Series 2. Correspondence
- Series 3. Mathematical Manuscripts
- Series 4. Miscellaneous and Supplementary Material

Related Material

Substantial correspondence with E. T. Bell, his wife Toby, and their son, Taine, may be found in the papers of H. P. Robertson in the Caltech Archives. Readers should also consult the Historical File on E. T. Bell which contains additional stories and playbills for dramatic productions by this author.

A collection of Eric Temple Bell papers is deposited in the Special Collections department of the University of California, Santa Cruz, library. A [finding aid to this collection](#) is available at the Online Archive of California.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Subjects

California Institute of Technology

Taine, John 1883-1960

Mathematics

Science fiction

Occupations

Mathematicians

Series 1. Science Fiction and Non-Technical Writings

- Box 1, Folder 1 **The Forbidden Garden: Chaps. 1-7 1928**
Physical Description: Typescript with holograph corrections.
Note
Author John Taine.
- Box 1, Folder 2 **The Forbidden Garden: Chaps. 8-15 1928**
Physical Description: Typescript with holograph corrections.
Note
Author John Taine.
- Box 1, Folder 3 **The Forbidden Garden: Chaps. 16-23 1928**
Physical Description: Typescript with holograph corrections.
Note
Author John Taine.
- Box 1, Folder 4 **White Lily: Part I undated**
Physical Description: Typescript.
Note
Author John Taine.
- Box 1, Folder 5 **White Lily: Part II undated**
Physical Description: Typescript.
Note
Author John Taine.
- Box 1, Folder 6 **White Lily: Part III undated**
Physical Description: Typescript.
Note
Author John Taine.
- Box 1, Folder 7 **New Magic for Old: Science in a Dawning Civilization: Part I undated**
Physical Description: Typescript.
Note
Author E. T. Bell
- Box 1, Folder 8 **New Magic for Old: Science in a Dawning Civilization: Part II undated**
Physical Description: Typescript.
Note
Author E. T. Bell

- Box 1, Folder 9 **New Magic for Old: Science in a Dawning Civilization: Part III undated**
Physical Description: Typescript.
Note
Author E. T. Bell
- Box 2, Folder 1 **New Magic for Old: Science in a Dawning Civilization: Part I (1) 1938**
Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.
Note
Author E. T. Bell.
- Box 2, Folder 2 **New Magic for Old: Science in a Dawning Civilization: Part I (2) 1938**
Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.
Note
Author E. T. Bell.
- Box 2, Folder 3 **New Magic for Old: Science in a Dawning Civilization: Part II (1) 1938**
Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.
Note
Author E. T. Bell.
- Box 2, Folder 4 **New Magic for Old: Science in a Dawning Civilization: Part II (2) 1938**
Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.
Note
Author E. T. Bell.
- Box 2, Folder 5 **New Magic for Old: Science in a Dawning Civilization: Part III (1) 1938**
Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.
Note
Author E. T. Bell.
- Box 2, Folder 6 **New Magic for Old: Science in a Dawning Civilization: Part III (2) 1938**
Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.
Note
Author E. T. Bell.
- Box 3, Folder 1 **Man and His Lifebelts (1) 1937**
Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.
- Box 3, Folder 2 **Man and His Lifebelts (2) 1937**
Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.
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- Box 3, Folder 3 **Man and His Lifebelts (3) 1937**
 Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.
- Box 3, Folder 4 **Man and His Lifebelts (4) 1937**
 Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.
- Box 3, Folder 5 **Man and His Lifebelts (5) 1937**
 Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.
- Box 3, Folder 6 **Man and His Lifebelts (6) 1937**
 Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.
- Box 3, Folder 7 **Man and His Lifebelts (7) 1937**
 Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.
- Box 3, Folder 8 **Man and His Lifebelts (8) 1937**
 Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.
- Box 3, Folder 9 **Man and His Lifebelts (9) 1937**
 Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.
- Box 3, Folder 10 **Man and His Lifebelts (10) 1937**
 Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.
- Box 3, Folder 11 **Man and His Lifebelts (11) 1937**
 Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.
- Box 3, Folder 12 **Man and His Lifebelts (12) 1937**
 Physical Description: Holograph manuscript.

Series 2. Correspondence

Box 4, Folder 1 **Ackerman, Forrest 1947-1951, undated**
Box 4, Folder 2 **American Philosophical Society 1950**
Box 4, Folder 3 **Author's Guild of the Author's League of America, Inc. 1948-1950**
Box 4, Folder 4 **Richard D. Badger Publisher 1919**
Box 4, Folder 5 **Curtis Brown, Ltd. 1951**
Box 4, Folder 6 **Dover Publications, Inc. 1949, 1951**
Box 4, Folder 7 **Encyclopaedia Britannica 1950**
Box 4, Folder 8 **Fantastic Worlds 1953**
Box 4, Folder 9 **Fantasy Press, Inc. 1946-1948, 1951-1952, 1954-1955**
Box 4, Folder 10 **Fantasy Publishing Company 1947-1952, undated**
Box 4, Folder 11 **Friend, Oscar J. 1949-1955, undated**
Box 4, Folder 12 **Galaxy Science Fiction 1951**
Box 4, Folder 13 **Harvard University Press 1949**
Box 4, Folder 14 **Kapferer, Heinrich 1933, 1949**

Note

Includes reprints.

Box 4, Folder 15 **Lauer, Rosemary Zita 1951**
Box 4, Folder 16 **McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc. 1946-1953, 1955, undated**
Box 4, Folder 17 **Merlin Press, Inc. 1949**
Box 4, Folder 18 **Moskowitz, Sam 1952**
Box 4, Folder 19 **National Comics Publications, Inc. 1946-1953**
Box 4, Folder 20 **Noble and Noble Publishers, Inc. 1949**
Box 4, Folder 21 **W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1948**
Box 4, Folder 22 **Penguin Books Ltd. 1950, 1952**
Box 4, Folder 23 **Pohl, Frederik 1950**
Box 4, Folder 24 **Pol, Balthasar van der 1952**
Box 4, Folder 25 **Princeton University Press 1950-1952**
Box 4, Folder 26 **Rieder, Heinrich 1947**
Box 4, Folder 27 **Rougier, Louis 1947-1948, undated**
Box 4, Folder 28 **Rukeyser, Muriel 1940 [?], 1950-1951, undated**
Box 4, Folder 29 **Henry Schuman, Inc., Publishers 1947-1948, undated**
Box 4, Folder 30 **Scientific American 1948-1949**
Box 4, Folder 31 **Scripta Mathematica 1948-1949, 1952**
Box 4, Folder 32 **Simon and Schuster, Inc. 1935, 1947-1953, 1955, 1960, undated**
Box 4, Folder 33 **William R. Staats Company 1950**
Box 4, Folder 34 **Standard Magazines, Inc. 1946, 1949**
Box 4, Folder 35 **Swift, J. D. 1950**
Box 4, Folder 36 **University of Washington 1941**
Box 4, Folder 37 **Western Printing and Lithographing Company 1949**
Box 4, Folder 38 **Williams and Wilkins Company 1945, 1947-1950**
Box 4, Folder 39 **Zeitlin and Ver Brugge Booksellers 1938, 1946-1947**

Series 3. **Mathematical Manuscripts**

Box 5, Folder 1 **Census of Solved Simple Multiplicative Diophantine Equations ca. 1931-1943**
Box 5, Folder 2 **Miscellaneous Diophantines I (1) ca. 1945**
Box 5, Folder 3 **Miscellaneous Diophantines I (2) ca. 1945**
Box 5, Folder 4 **Miscellaneous Diophantines I (3) ca. 1945**
Box 5, Folder 5 **Miscellaneous Diophantines II (1) ca. 1945**
Box 5, Folder 6 **Miscellaneous Diophantines II (2) ca. 1945**
Box 6, Folder 1 **Miscellaneous Diophantines II (3) ca. 1945**
Box 6, Folder 2 **Miscellaneous Diophantines III 1945-1946**
Box 6, Folder 3 **General case Dirichlet products 1944**
Box 6, Folder 4 **Pseudo-Bernoulli numbers 1950**
Box 6, Folder 5 **Stirling numbers 1943, undated**
Box 6, Folder 6 **Linear partitions 1947-1951**
Box 6, Folder 7 **Totitive functions (1) ca. 1943-1949**
Box 6, Folder 8 **Totitive functions (2) ca. 1943-1950**
Box 6, Folder 9 **Indeterminate analysis 1951**

Series 4. Miscellaneous and Supplementary Material

Box 6, Folder 10 **Published Articles**

Scope and Content Note

- Bell, Eric T.: Arithmetical Paraphrases 1921
- Bell, Eric T.: Mathematics Up-To-Date 1934
- Bell, Jessie L.: Chains of Congruences for the Numerators and Denominators of the Bernoulli Numbers 1927

Box 7, Folder 1 **The Scarlet Night (dramatic poem) 1910, after 1945**

Physical Description: Photocopy of typescript; 756 pages.

Note

With introductory note by author written after Word War II and the use of the atomic bomb.

Box 8, Folder 1 **E. T. Bell, Mathematical reprints 1927-1929**

Box 8, Folder 2 **E. T. Bell, Mathematical reprints 1930-1933**

Box 8, Folder 3 **E. T. Bell, Mathematical reprints 1934-1936**

Box 8, Folder 4 **E. T. Bell, Mathematical reprints 1937-1942**

Box 9, Folder 1 **E. T. Bell, Mathematical reprints 1943-1949, undated**

Box 9, Folder 2 **Conference on the Interpretation of the Natural Sciences for a General Public (Rye, New York): Vol. 1, sections 1-3 15-16 June 1938**

Note

Conference memorandum.

Box 9, Folder 3 **Conference on the Interpretation of the Natural Sciences for a General Public (Rye, New York): Vol. 2, sections 4-5 15-16 June 1938**

Note

Conference memorandum.