

# William Bittle Wells papers, 1890-1960

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Creator</b>	Wells, William Bittle
<b>Title</b>	William Bittle Wells papers
<b>Dates</b>	1890-1960 (inclusive) 1890 1960
<b>Quantity</b>	16.0 linear feet, (30 containers)
<b>Collection Number</b>	Ax 095
<b>Summary</b>	William Bittle Wells worked in the Pacific Northwest as a manager, editor, advertiser, and writer for a variety of publications. In 1898 Wells founded the western magazine <i>Pacific Monthly</i> , which focused on the development of the pacific coast, literature, and humor. Wells became northwest editor and manger for <i>Sunset Magazine</i> from 1907-1912. Wells then became advertiser for <i>Community Publicity</i> , a publication produced by the Harriman Lines railroad. Next, Wells managed his own printing company, Wells and Company, from 1912 to 1915. For two years, Wells served as editor of <i>Better Cooking</i> , a publication to publicize cities across the nation. In 1917, Wells signed a contract with New York Life Insurance Company where he worked as an insurance agent for the next forty years. After he retired, he focused on writing extensively on Christian religious topics. The collection consists of biographical material, correspondence, high school scrapbooks, class papers from Wells' attendance at Stanford University, business files documenting his various career endeavors, and personal papers and mementos, including manuscripts and photographs.
<b>Repository</b>	<a href="#">University of Oregon Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives.</a> UO Libraries--SPC, 1299 University of Oregon Eugene OR 97403-1299 Telephone: 541-346-3068 Fax: 541-346-3485 <a href="mailto:spcarref@uoregon.edu">spcarref@uoregon.edu</a>
<b>Access Restrictions</b>	Collection is open to the public.  Collection must be used in Special Collections & University Archives Reading Room.
<b>Languages</b>	English
<b>Sponsor</b>	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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## Historical Note

William Bittle Wells was born in Floyd County, Virginia in 1872. After first moving to California in 1874, Wells' family settled in Portland, Oregon in 1881. He graduated from Stanford University in 1897 with a degree in English and a certificate in education. At Stanford, Wells had developed an interest in publishing and publicity. He was an editor of several school newspapers, including *The Daily Palo Alto* and *Olla Podria*.

In 1898 Wells founded the western magazine *Pacific Monthly*, which featured book reviews, reports on the development of the Pacific coast, literature, and humor. Wells made the magazine into an outlet for the work of young American writers. *Pacific Monthly* was not a financial success, and after he encountered difficulties obtaining editorial assistance, Wells finally sold the magazine in 1906. It was later consolidated with *Sunset Magazine*.

After severing his ties with *Pacific Monthly*, Wells began working as an advertising salesman for *Sunset Magazine*, which had begun as a publication of Southern Pacific Railway. He became northwest editor and manager for the magazine from 1907-1912.

During his tenure with *Sunset Magazine*, Wells began to publish promotional booklets about regions and cities served by the railroad on the west coast. Under his guidance as manager of *Community Publicity*, the Harriman Lines railroad began its publicity program with a booklet about the Rouge River Valley and Medford. Wells coordinated not only the advertising for these booklets, but he also oversaw all aspects of the organization of this project, including coordinating writers with the targeted communities.

Wells left Harriman Lines and *Community Publicity* after Harriman's freight department exerted its influence to eliminate the *Sunset Magazine* venture, allegedly because it adversely affected freight traffic. Although Wells worked hard to counteract these allegations by producing a report with contrary statistics, his efforts proved fruitless. Harriman offered to keep Wells as a passenger agent, but he elected to resign.

Wells next ventured into the printing and publishing business as the proprietor and manager of his own company, Wells and Company, from 1912 to 1915. Wells quickly discovered that he was not suited to the business and abandoned the operation after only three years.

Although at this point Wells was nearly penniless, he undertook the management and editing of a new magazine, *Better Cooking*, another publicity venture for cities across the nation. The venture was short-lived; Wells and the owner failed to agree on the direction of the magazine. After two years, Wells once again found himself looking for work.

In 1917, Wells signed a contract with New York Life Insurance Company where he worked during the next forty years. During his career in insurance, Wells not only sold insurance but also wrote promotional literature about the sale and benefit of insurance for businesses and the general public, including *The Beneficiary of Partnership Insurance*.

Highly successful as an agent, Wells interrupted his insurance career only during World War II when he worked in the shipyards of the Willamette Iron and Steel Company (WISCO) as chief clerk, editor, and inventory technician. Wells retired from the insurance business in 1940 when he was seventy. Near the end of his career, he had developed an intense interest in religion. After he retired, he spent the remaining eighteen years of his life writing extensively on Christian religious topics. He published several booklets, including *Studies in Modernism*, *Heirs of Promise*, and *What Shall We Do with Christianity*, in which he speculated on the role of religion in mid-century America. He died in 1960 at the age of eighty-eight.

## Content Description

The William Bittle Wells Papers consist of biographical material, correspondence, high school scrapbooks, class papers from Wells' attendance at Stanford University, business files documenting his various career endeavors, and personal papers and mementos, including manuscripts and photographs.

A major segment of the biographical material is comprised of the Wells Outline, a series of scrapbook pages compiled by Wells which roughly conform to the events in his life as they occurred. These papers contain correspondence, photographs, clippings, a variety of printed material and other memorabilia which are all annotated by Wells. Much of this biographical material is duplicated in later series such as the community booklets printed by Harriman Lines. Several drafts of Wells' autobiographical "Story of My Life" complete the series.

Correspondence is divided into two subseries, business and personal, each arranged chronologically. The business correspondence details Wells' involvement in *Pacific Monthly* magazine (and later *Sunset Magazine*) and his career as an insurance agent for New York Life. Wells' interest in religion is the subject matter of much of the personal correspondence.

The high school scrapbooks contain a miscellany of clippings and student publications as well as personal observations. Materials from his years at Stanford University consist of class notes arranged by academic year, essays, scrapbooks, and yearbooks. Also included is a musical composition written by Wells.

Business files are arranged according to employer in chronological order. Represented in this series is *Pacific Monthly*, a magazine founded by Wells; *Sunset Magazine*, for which Wells served as editor of its northwest edition; Harriman Lines, a railroad for which Wells was in charge of publicity; and *Better Cooking*, a magazine for which Wells was editor of three different west coast editions. Examples of printing done by Wells and Company, another of his ventures, are included. Wells' career with New York Life Insurance Company is recorded by a number of published materials he authored for the company, certificates of achievement, and a scrapbook he put together detailing the growth of the company and significant events. While employed with Willamette Iron and Steel Company, Wells compiled and published the company's *Handbook of Abbreviations, Symbols, Terms, and Allied Data* as used by its shipyard operations.

The remainder of the collection is comprised of personal papers that documents Wells' private side as opposed to his business career interests. Most notable are his writings, both published and unpublished, primarily about religion but which also include an interview with Homer Davenport, cartoonist and artist for the Hearst newspaper syndicate as well as Northwest newspapers. There is a file on Wells' political, financial, and legal activities as well as various kinds of souvenirs, mementos, newspaper clippings, and family photographs.

## Use of the Collection

### Restrictions on Use

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If a researcher finds sensitive personal information in a collection, please bring it to the attention of the reading room staff.

## Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], William Bittle Wells Papers, Ax 095, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon.

# Administrative Information

## Arrangement

Collection is organized into the following series: Biographical Materials; Correspondence; Educational Memorabilia; Business Files; Wells and Company; New York Life; WISCO (Willamette Iron and Steel Company); Personal Materials; Photographs; List of Community Booklets

## Processing Note

Collection processed by staff.

This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description.

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# Detailed Description of the Collection

## Inventory

### Series I: Biographical Materials

Container(s)	Description
	<b>Wells Outline</b>
Box	Folder

Container(s)		Description
1	2	Introduction
1	3	Ancestry
1	4	Literary Works, Sonoma Days, High School
1	5	Stanford University
2	1	<i>Pacific Monthly, Sunset Magazine</i>
2	2	Wells and Company (Printers)
2	3	Harriman Lines (Railroad Community Publicity)
2	4	Harriman Lines (Railroad Community Publicity)
2	5	Harriman Lines (Railroad Community Publicity)
3	1	Harriman Lines (Railroad Community Publicity)
3	2	Harriman Lines (Railroad Community Publicity)
3	3	<i>Better Cooking</i> , New York Life (Insurance)
3	4	WISCO (Willamette Iron and Steel Company)
3	5	Religious Work, Family records
4	1	Family records
4	2	Family Album
4	3	Family Album
4	4	Family Album
5		Photos, Publications
6		Publications
Folder		

Container(s)		Description
7	1	Loose pages
7	2	Loose pages
<b>Story of My Life</b>		
<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	
7	3	First draft, pp. 11-61
7	4	First draft, pp. 62-100
7	5	First draft, pp. 101-140
7	6	Second draft, pp. 1-50
7	7	Second draft, pp. 51-100
7	8	Second draft, pp. 101-150
7	9	Second draft, pp. 151-193
7	10	Addenda to biography

## Series II: Correspondence

Container(s)		Description	Dates
<b>Business correspondence</b>			
<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>		
8	1		1890-1904
8	2		1905
8	3		January 1906
8	4		February 1906

Container(s)		Description	Dates
8	5		March 1906-July 1906
8	6		August 1906-September 1906
8	7		October 1906-December 1906
8	8		1908-1910
8	9		1911
8	10		1915-1940
9	1		1941-1951
9	2		1953
9	3		1954-1957
9	4		1958-1960

### Personal correspondence

Box	Folder		Dates
9	5		1892-1901
9	6		1902
9	7		1903-1910
9	8		1911-1920
9	9		1921-1924
9	10		1925-1930
9	11		1931-1935
10	1		1936-1940

Container(s)	Description	Dates
10 2		1941-1944
10 3		1947-1949
10 4		1950-1952
10 5		1953-1954
10 6		1955-1957
10 7		January 1958- June 1958
10 8		July 1958- December 1958
10 9		January 1959- May 1959
10 10		June 1959-July 1959
10 11		August 1959- November 1959
10 12		1960

### Series III: Educational Memorabilia

Container(s)	Description	Dates
<b>Lawrence High School</b>		
<b>Box</b>		
11	Scrapbook: "High School, the Student, Miscellany 1-A"	
11	Scrapbook: "High School, the Student, Miscellany 1-B"	
11	<i>Oll Podria</i> (publication of Lawrenceville School)	



Container(s)	Description	Dates
11	Volume: <i>History of Lawrenceville School 1810–1935</i> by Roland J. Mulford	1810-1935
11	Scrapbook: “Early Album”	
<b>Stanford University</b>		
<b>Box</b>		
12	Class Notes: Economics II	
12	Class Notes: Education	
12	Class Notes: Education III (two books)	
12	Class Notes: Education IV, no. 2	
12	Class Notes: Education VII (Philosophy)	
12	Class Notes: English (2 books)	
12	Class Notes: English 15 (Drama to Shakespeare)	
12	Class Notes: English XXI (two books)	
12	Class Notes: English 23 (Chaucer – two books)	
12	Class Notes: English 26 (Shakespeare – two books)	
13	Ethics IV (autobiography)	
13	Ethics XII (two books)	
13	French 3	
13	Greek	
13	Laboratory Work in Psychology	
13	Philosophy	
13	Practical Politics	

Container(s)	Description	Dates
13	Psychology (two books)	
13	Sociology II (Education and Society)	
13	Forensics, History, American History	
	Folder	
14	1 Education	
14	2 Education	
14	3 Ethics	
14	4 Ethics	
14	5 Economics	
14	6 School papers/assignments	
14	7 School papers/assignments	
14	8 School papers/assignments	
14	9 School papers/assignments	
14	10 School papers/assignments	
14	11 School papers/assignments	
14	12 Musical compositions: March	
15	Scrapbook: Literary	1894
15	Notebook: Music	
15	Notebook: <i>Olla Podria</i>	1893
16	Scrapbook: Stanford Miscellany, Musical Club	
16	Yearbooks: <i>Stanford Quad</i>	1895

Container(s)	Description	Dates
16	Yearbooks: <i>Stanford Quad</i>	1896
17	Yearbooks: <i>Stanford Quad</i>	1897
17	Yearbooks: <i>Stanford Quad</i>	1898
17	Scrapbook: Stanford Miscellany	

## Series IV: Business Files

Container(s)	Description	Dates	
<b><i>Pacific Monthly</i></b> (See also Box 8, Folders 1-8 and Box 9, Folder 3)			
Box	Folder		
18	1-2	Business papers	
18	3	Stockholders reports (third annual and fourth annual)	
18	4-6	Announcement for advertisers; assorted issues (7)	
<b><i>Sunset Magazine</i></b> (See also Box 8, Folders 8-9)			
Box	Folder		
18	7	Business papers	
<b>Harriman Lines</b> (See also Box 8, Folders 8-9)			
Box	Folder		
18	8	Community Publicity papers	
19	1	Report of Bureau of Community Publicity	1911
19	2	List of Community Publicity Booklets	

### ***Community Publicity Booklets***

Container(s)		Description	Dates
Box	Folder		
19	3	Albany, Oregon – Attalia, Washington	
19	4	Baker, Oregon – Buhl, Idaho	
19	5	Carlton, Oregon – Dallas, Oregon	
19	6	Dayton and Waitsburg, Washington – Fall City, Oregon	
20	1	Gillam County, Oregon – Grants Pass, Oregon	
20	2	Hailey, Idaho – Hood River, Oregon	
20	3	John Day Valley, Oregon – Lincoln County, Oregon	
20	4	Medford, Oregon	
20	5	Morrow County, Oregon – Oregon City, Oregon	
20	6	Portland, Oregon – Pullman, Washington	
21	1	Redmond, Oregon – Roseburg, Oregon	
21	2	Salem, Oregon – Sutherlin, Oregon	
21	3	The Dalles, Oregon	
21	4	Toledo, Oregon – Willamette Valley, Oregon	
21	5	Yakima County, Washington – Zillah, Washington	
22		Scrapbook: Traffic Meeting Related Lines, Del Monte	June 6, 1910- June 30, 1910

### ***Better Cooking***

Box	Folder		
22	1	Portland edition	
22	2	Portland edition	

Container(s)	Description	Dates
22 3	Portland edition	
22 4	Tacoma edition	
22 5	Tacoma edition	
22 6	Seattle edition	

## Series V: Wells and Company

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box	Folder	
22 7	Financial and operational papers	
<b>Printing samples</b>		
Box	Folder	
22 8	Miscellaneous advertisements, brochures, and booklets	
23	Books and pamphlets	
23	Apple Growing in the Pacific Northwest	
23	Association Advertising by H. W. Stone	
23	The Forests by John H. Williams	
23	Guardians of the Columbia by John H. Williams	
23	Residential Portland	1911
23	Stewart Brother Company Catalog	
23	Trees, Shrubs, Vines and Plants by J. B. Pilkington, Nurseryman	
23	Twin Falls Valley in photographs	

## Series VI: New York Life

### Other Descriptive Information

(See also Box 8, Folder 10 and Box 9, Folders 1-4)

Container(s)		Description
Box	Folder	
24	1	Booklets, <i>The Beneficiary of Partnership Insurance</i>
24	2	Articles, Published
24	3	Articles, Unpublished
24	4	Articles, Unpublished
24	5	Periodicals, including NYLIC Review
24	6	Financial records
24	7	NYLIC policyholder records and receipts
24	8	Testimonial letters
24	9	Promotional/public relations Newspaper and magazine articles regarding insurance business, including partnership insurance
24	10	Business artifacts: business cards, forms, and certificates
25		Certificates, scrapbook

## Series VII: WISCO (Willamette Iron and Steel Company)

Container(s)		Description	Dates
Box	Folder		
26	1	Handbook of Abbreviations, Masterfile	
26	2	Handbook of Abbreviations, Masterfile	

Container(s)	Description	Dates
26 3	Handbook of Abbreviations, Masterfile	
26 4	Loose papers, Warehouse Workers Manual	
26 5	Scrapbook, "WISCO 1943-1944-1945-1946"	1943-1946
27 1	Volume: <i>Handbook of Abbreviations, Symbols, Terms, and Allied Data</i>	undated

## Series VIII: Personal Materials

Container(s)	Description
<b>Religious works; religious writings and related material</b>	
Box	Folder
27 2	Unpublished manuscripts
27 3	Unpublished manuscripts
27 4	Unpublished manuscripts
27 5	Unpublished manuscripts
27 6	Unpublished manuscripts
27 7	Unpublished manuscripts
27 8	Unpublished manuscripts
27 9	Unpublished manuscripts
28 1	Unpublished manuscripts
28 2	Unpublished manuscripts
28 3	Unpublished manuscripts
28 4	Unpublished manuscripts

Container(s)		Description
28	5	Published works
28	6	Published works: <i>Studies in Modernism, Heirs of Promise</i>
28	7	Loose papers
28	8	Loose papers
28	9	Loose papers
28	10	Loose papers
29	1	Scrapbook, religious articles with some correspondence
<b>Other Writings</b>		
<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	
29	2	Manuscripts, unpublished
29	3	Manuscripts, unpublished
29	4	Published works
30	1	Homer Davenport interview
30	2	Sons of American Revolution; papers
30	3	Political, financial, and legal activities
30	4	Programs, tickets
30	5	Calling cards and announcements
30	6	Clippings, personal and family
30	7	Photographs, scrapbook, photos and clippings and published materials

## Series IX: Photographs



**Description**

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Color negative: Golden Opportunities Blackfoot, Idaho

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**Series X: List of Community Booklets**

**Other Descriptive Information**

(Located in Boxes 19-21)

**Description**

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Albany, OR

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American Falls, ID

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Ashland, OR

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Astoria, OR

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Attalia, WA

---

Baker, OR

---

Benton City, WA

---

Blackfoot, ID

---

Boise, ID

---

Brownsville, OR

---

Buhl, ID

---

Carlton, OR

---

Central Point, OR

---

Columbia County, OR

---

Corvallis, OR

---

Cottage Grove, OR

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**Description**

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Creswell, OR

---

Dallas, OR

---

The Dalles, OR

---

Dayton and Waitsburg, WA

---

Eugene, OR

---

Fairfield, WA

---

Falls City, OR

---

Gilliam County, OR

---

Gooding, ID

---

Grandview, WA

---

Granger, WA

---

Grants Pass, OR

---

Hailey, ID

---

Hermiston, OR

---

Hood River, OR

---

John Day Valley, OR

---

Kelso, WA

---

Kennewick, WA

---

Lincoln County, WA

---

Medford, OR

---

Morrow County, OR

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**Description**

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Mosier, OR

---

Newberg, OR

---

North Beach, WA

---

North Yakima, WA

---

Oakland, OR

---

Oregon City, OR

---

Portland, OR

---

Pullman, WA

---

Redmond, OR

---

Richfield, ID

---

Rogue River Valley, OR

---

Roseburg, OR

---

Salem, OR

---

Seattle, WA

---

Sheridan, OR

---

Sherman County, OR

---

Silverton, OR

---

St. Anthony, ID

---

Stanfield, OR

---

Sutherlin Valley, OR

---

Toledo, OR

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## Description

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Twin Falls, ID

---

Umatilla County, OR

---

Walla Walla, WA

---

Washington County, OR

---

Weiser, ID

---

West Stayton, OR

---

Willamette Valley of OR

---

Yakima County, WA

---

Yamhill, OR

---

Zillah, WA

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## Names and Subjects

### Subject Terms :

Insurance agents--United States

Periodical editors--United States

Railroad travel--Pacific States

Railroads--Public relations--Pacific States

Religious literature--Authorship

### Personal Names :

Davenport, Homer, 1867-1912--Interviews

Wells, William Bittle--Archives

### Corporate Names :

New York Life Insurance Company

Wells and Company

### Geographical Names :

Pacific States--Description and travel

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