

Information Sheet

R **Bell, John B., 1827-1896.**
119 **Record book, 1860-1875.**
 One volume, photocopies.

This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri. If you would like more information, please contact us at shsresearch@umsystem.edu.

This is a record book kept by John B. Bell, a physician at Potosi in Washington County, Missouri. Bell was a medical examiner of Enrolled Missouri Militia and U.S. Colored Troops during the Civil War, and of pension applicants after the war. The entries include the results of examinations and descriptions of disabilities. The pension examinations are indexed.

John B. Bell was born on 1 December 1827 in Salisbury, Maryland. He moved to his grandfather's farm in Bellevue Township, Washington County, Missouri, in 1838. He moved to Potosi in 1844, and as a store clerk there for five years before moving to St. Louis to study medicine. He attended classes at Washington University, graduating in 1853. Bell served in the medical department of the Union army during the Civil War, as medical examiner of recruits of the Enrolled Missouri Militia, 1862-1865. After the war he served as a government pension examiner for over twenty years, inspecting hundreds of veterans who claimed compensation for disabilities suffered while in government service. Bell died in Potosi in 1896.

There are a few entries at the beginning of Bell's ledger which pertain to his practice before the war. However, most of the volume is filled with records of the examinations he performed for the government during and after the war. The militia laws provided for medical exemptions from service upon certification by an examining physician, and each recruit reported for a medical inspection. Bell's ledger contains the results of his examinations, with brief notes on any exemptions allowed. Among others, Bell inspected the 32nd Regiment of Enrolled Missouri Militia, raised in Hannibal, Missouri, and a group of African-American recruits for an unspecified regiment.

The pension records, which are indexed, contain more biographical data than do those of the militia examinations. Each entry includes the name of the claimant, the regiment in which he served, the nature and date of the disability, and Bell's recommendations to the pension office. Although most of the claimants were veterans of Missouri volunteer units, Bell also examined applicants who had moved to Missouri after service in regiments from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

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Shelf List

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The records are in chronological order. Militia records precede those of pension examinations, which Bell performed from 1869 through 1875. Copies of rules for militia exemptions, and a letter from Bell to Maj. James Cook of Old Mines, Missouri, are included at the end of the volume.

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