

Brierfield Ironworks

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English

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University Libraries Division of Special Collections, The University of Alabama

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Summary Information

Repository:	University Libraries Division of Special Collections, The University of Alabama
Creator:	Brierfield Iron Works
Title:	Brierfield Ironworks records
ID:	MSS.0212
Date [inclusive]:	1864-1897
Date [bulk]:	bulk
Physical Description:	1.5 Linear Feet
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	Financial and legal documents of the Brierfield Ironworks along with some correspondence and printed materials, dating from 1866 to 1882. The materials are divided into two main groups: (A) those materials generated during Josiah Gorgas' control of the ironworks (1866-1869), and (B) those materials generated during Thomas S. Alvis' control of the operations (1869-1873).

Preferred Citation

Brierfield Ironworks Records, University Libraries Special Collections, The University of Alabama.

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Biographical / Historical

The original Brierfield furnace complex was constructed by C. C. Huckabee in 1861. The complex was located in eastern Bibb County and was known as the Bibb works. The Confederate government purchased the works shortly after their completion and used the complex to produce iron for the naval and ordnance works at Selma. The operation continued until the works were ruined by a Union raiding party in 1865. At that point the Bibb works became the property of the Federal government.

The Canebrake Company, formed by Josiah Gorgas and Francis Strother Lyon with other investors, purchased the ironworks from the United States government in January of 1866 for \$45,000. The

complex was rebuilt and production began on 2 November 1866 at a rate of nine tons per day. Two months later Lyon turned the deed over to Gorgas, who became president of the newly formed Brierfield Ironworks. The operation was troubled by logistical and financial problems. On 2 August 1869, Gorgas leased the Brierfield Ironworks to Thomas S. Alvis. Alvis ran the operation until the economic depression of 1873 forced its closure.

William D. and Kearsley Carter of Louisville, Kentucky purchased the facilities in 1877 and reactivated the operation. Shortly afterward they incorporated the operation as the Bibb Furnace Company.

T. J. Peter assumed control in 1882 and along with C.C. Huckabee and Robert McCalley incorporated the Brierfield Coal and Iron Company. Foreclosure proceedings shut the operation down in the mid-1880s, but Peter reorganized the company into the Alabama Iron and Steel Company. In 1894 Peter lost the company and it changed hands several times that year, but after 1894 the ironworks were never in operation again.

This history was compiled from Bibb County, Alabama: The First Hundred Years, 1818-1918 by Rhoda Coleman Ellison (University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1984) and from Brierfield Ironworks Park: A Reconnaissance by James W. Parker and Cailup B. Curren, Jr. (in Special Collections, Amelia Gayle Gorgas Library, University of Alabama).

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Scope and Contents

The materials contained within the Brierfield Ironworks collection span the lifetime of the ironworks. Although the Brierfield Ironworks operated from 1861 to 1894 with a few periods of inactivity, the materials in this collection date from 1864 to 1897.

The collection is primarily financial and legal documents along with some correspondence and printed materials. The bulk of the materials range in date from 1866-1882. The materials have been divided into two groups (A) those materials which were generated during Josiah Gorgas' control of the ironworks (1866-1869) and (B) those materials which were generated during Thomas S. Alvis' control of the operations (1869-1873). There is some overlap between the two because Alvis used the back of some of Gorgas' ledgers. In such cases, the ledger was placed in the appropriate group on the basis of the majority of the material, not the ledger as a whole.

The financial documents consist of various types of ledgers and account books in addition to bills and receipts and a promissory note. The legal documents include deeds to property and a lease in addition to legal agreements. The correspondence is entirely business correspondence while the printed materials consist of diplomas and a printed circular and a newspaper clipping.

Each of these groups contain financial documents and business correspondence, but all of the legal documents and printed materials are in the Alvis group.

The ledger that contains Josiah Gorgas' outgoing correspondence clearly reveals the logistical problems caused by the poor condition of the railroads at that time and the financial difficulties created by choosing ineffective agents. The financial papers indicate that Thomas S. Alvis was still somehow connected with the operation as late as 1882.

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Provenance

unknown

Conditions Governing Access

None

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Controlled Access Headings

- Blast furnaces
- Financial records
- Alabama
- Commercial correspondence
- Legal documents

- Business records
- Deeds
- University of Alabama -- Presidents
- Alabama -- Industries
- Iron industry and trade -- Alabama -- History -- 19th century
- Bibb County (Ala.)
- Business and Labor
- Technology and Industry
- Alvis, Thomas S.
- Gorgas, Josiah
- Brierfield Iron Works
- Brierfield Iron Works

General

To provide faster access to our materials, this finding aid was published without formal and final review. Email us at archives@ua.edu if you find mistakes or have suggestions to make this finding aid more useful for your research.

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Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances	
Gorgas--Blast furnace records. , Jan. 1864-Oct. 1872 <u>Date [inclusive]:</u> Jan. 1864-Oct. 1872	box 733	folder 1
Alvis--Commissary records. , Apr. 1864-1873 <u>Date [inclusive]:</u> Apr. 1864-1873	box 733	folder 2
Gorgas--Commissary records. , Jan. 1866-July 1866 <u>Date [inclusive]:</u> Jan. 1866-July 1866	box 733	folder 3
Gorgas--Outgoing business correspondence. , Nov.1866-July 1867 <u>Date [inclusive]:</u> Nov.1866-July 1867	box 734	folder 4
Gorgas--Accounts payable/accounts receivable. , Apr.1867-Apr. 1868 <u>Date [inclusive]:</u> Apr.1867-Apr. 1868	box 734	folder 5
Alvis--Customer accounts. , Jan.1870-Mar. 1873	box 734	folder 6

Date [inclusive]: Jan.1870-Mar. 1873

Alvis--Commissary records. , Oct.1872-Nov.1874	box 734	folder 7
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Date [inclusive]: Oct.1872-Nov.1874

Alvis--Production records, June 1873-Dec.1873	box 735	folder 8
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Date [inclusive]: June 1873-Dec.1873

Alvis--Commissary records , Jan.1874-Aug.1874	box 735	folder 9
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Date [inclusive]: Jan.1874-Aug.1874

Alvis--Deeds and legal documents. , 1868-1889	box 735	folder 1
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Date [inclusive]: 1868-1889

Alvis--Financial papers, 1867-1882	box 735	folder 2
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Date [inclusive]: 1867-1882

Alvis--Incoming correspondence, 186[?]	box 735	folder 3
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Date [inclusive]: 186[?]

Alvis--Miscellaneous , 1869-1897	box 735	folder 4
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Date [inclusive]: 1869-1897