

Bryce, Peter

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on May 19, 2017.

English

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

University Libraries Division of Special Collections, The University of Alabama

Box 870266

Tuscaloosa 35487-0266

archives@ua.edu

URL: <http://www.lib.ua.edu/>

Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Biographical / Historical	3
Scope and Contents	4
Administrative Information	4
Controlled Access Headings	5
General	5
Collection Inventory	6

Summary Information

Repository:	University Libraries Division of Special Collections, The University of Alabama
Creator:	Bryce, Peter
Title:	Peter Bryce collection
ID:	MSS.0226
Date [inclusive]:	1859-1888
Physical Description:	1.05 Linear Feet (5 items, 5 pieces; partially photocopies)
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	A small miscellany of materials including Bryce's appointment as medical officer of ship "Yorkshire," clippings about Bryce, among them his obituary, and copy of his "Moral and Criminal Responsibility," 1888

Preferred Citation

Peter Bryce collection, University Libraries Special Collections, The University of Alabama.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical / Historical

Peter Bryce (1834-92) was a pioneering figure in the field of mental health. Practicing in the post--Civil War era, he championed more humane therapeutic treatments for the mentally ill. He held important offices in both state and national organizations relating to the health professions and was the first superintendent of the state mental hospital that now bears his name.

Bryce was born in Columbia, South Carolina, to Peter and Martha Smith Bryce. He graduated with distinction from The Citadel in 1855 and New York's Medical College (now New York University School of Medicine) in 1859. After graduating, Bryce traveled in Europe, where his developing interest in mental health was enhanced during visits to psychiatric hospitals. Upon his return, he worked at psychiatric hospitals in New Jersey and South Carolina.

In late 1859, Dorothea Dix, a teacher and nationally renowned advocate for the mentally ill, brought Bryce to the attention of the trustees of the Alabama Insane Hospital (AIH). Located in Tuscaloosa, the

institution had been created by the state legislature in 1852 but remained under construction for most of the decade. Despite his youth, Bryce's training and southern roots were viewed favorably by the trustees, and in July 1860 they selected him to be the hospital's first superintendent. Bryce accepted and moved to Tuscaloosa soon after marrying Ellen Clarkson, also of Columbia. The childless couple would devote all of their attention to AIH for the next 30 years. As construction was completed, Bryce developed the institutional policies and procedures by which the hospital was governed.

The idea of "moral treatment" of the insane, discarding the use of shackles, jackets and other medical restraints was 70 years old but still virtually unknown in this country when the first patient was admitted by Bryce in 1861. The young physician enforced strict discipline among his attendants, requiring nothing short of absolute courtesy, kindness and respect toward the patients. This conscientious nursing bore fruit in the form of warm relationships and by 1882 a policy of absolute non-restraint could be initiated. Bryce set up programs of work - farming, sewing, maintenance - and of amusement for his patients; programs valuable both as therapy and as a means of making ends meet. The very survival of the hospital during its early years, when the state's interest and finances were directed to other needs, must be listed as one of the superintendent's greatest accomplishments.

Bryce created a mental institution recognized as one of the best managed in the country. An understatement, but nonetheless true, is Bryce's own assessment, written just before his death: "I feel that I have done my work, and hope, without self-praise, to be permitted to say I have done it well."

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Contents

The collection contains a small miscellany of materials including Bryce's appointment as medical officer of the ship "Yorkshire," clippings about Bryce, among them his obituary, and copy of his "Moral and Criminal Responsibility," 1888.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

University Libraries Division of Special Collections, The University of Alabama

Box 870266

Tuscaloosa 35487-0266

archives@ua.edu

URL: <http://www.lib.ua.edu/>

Provenance

unknown

Conditions Governing Access

None

Processed by

unknown, 2008; updated by Martha Bace, 2012

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Controlled Access Headings

- Alabama Hall of Fame Inductees
- Manuscripts for publication
- Psychiatrists -- United States -- History -- 19th century
- Clippings (information artifacts)
- Obituaries
- Civil Rights and Human Rights
- Military records
- Health, Medicine and Welfare
- War and Military
- Alabama
- Bryce, Peter
- Bryce, Peter

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.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances
Peter Bryce	box 2447
Ellen Peter Bryce Society of the Colonial Dames of America certificate of membership, 1898	box OS0006 folder 226.01