Guide to the Bessemer Coal, Iron, and Land Company records
MSS.0145

This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit
November 29, 2012
Describing Archives: A Content Standard
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Summary Information

Repository
W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama

Creator

Title
Bessemer Coal, Iron, and Land Company records

Date [inclusive]
1886-1982

Extent
12.0 Linear feet

Language
English

Abstract
This collection contains much of the business correspondence and records of the Bessemer Coal, Iron and Land Company, including lists of stockholders, minutes of meetings, maps of mine sites, and correspondence with government entities.

Preferred Citation
Biographical/Historical note

Seven businessmen founded the Bessemer Land and Improvement Company in July 1886 (the company was incorporated in January 1887) as a land speculation venture in the mineral-rich valley of central Alabama. Starting with the initial acquisition of 4040 acres of land, the company recognized the importance of attracting viable industries to the area to employ the residents of Bessemer. It provided incentives to businesses (either cash gifts, grants, loans or a combination of these means) to locate on its lands. The company also engaged in the acquisition of other companies to keep them in Bessemer or to relocate them there.

Under the direction of its first president, Henry F. DeBardelben, the company directly entered into the mining and iron industries in 1895. The move into coal mining and iron production was a natural choice after the failure of the company to attract a major steel producer to Bessemer. After all, DeBardelben had selected the name Bessemer to honor the inventor and to underscore the importance of steel in this town. The founders had agreed to the site for their new city based on the land's fortuitous location between the ores of Red Mountain, the rich coal veins of the surrounding area, and the vast limestone resources of the Jones Valley, and the initial investors had discussed the idea of diversification at the first meeting in Charleston in March 1886. To reflect the new missions of the company, it was renamed in 1903 as the Bessemer Coal, Iron, and Land Company.

The company and the city enjoyed strong growth during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By 1916, Bessemer was the fourth largest city in Alabama, and new mine purchases in Alabama and Tennessee expanded the coal yield. However, the Depression and the decline in the coal market after World War II brought sharp profit declines. The company also faced increasing competition from other local mines and iron manufacturers in the area. After the war, the company lessened its dependence on coal fortunes and returned to its initial charter as a land and development company. It focused on the growth of the Bessemer Mortgage and Securities Company and started work on new subdivisions in the area.

After years of declining returns, the company disbanded in 1981, but Bessemer remains a living legacy of the initial stockholders of the land company.

Scope and Contents note

These records include minutes of stockholder meetings (1890-1936), early accounting books, ledgers, and office files from the 1930s to the 1960s containing correspondence and negotiations with other industries (e.g., railroad, timber, banking, and insurance) and dealings with governmental agencies. The collection also contains company files on lawsuits, records of legal documents (stock sales and share certificates,
deeds, and right of way agreements), and over 150 maps (1887-1978) of the company's land-holding and coal mining interests.

Administrative Information

Publication Information
W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama May 2009

Revision Description
November 2012

Conditions Governing Access note
None

Conditions Governing Use note
None

Provenance
Purchased from Cather & Brown Books, 1993

Processed by
Unknown; updated by Andrew Harris, 2012

Controlled Access Headings

Genre(s)

- Business records
- Commercial correspondence
- Deeds
• Ledgers (account books)
• Legal documents
• Maps
• Minutes
• Photographs
• Tax records
• Records and correspondence

Geographic Name(s)

• Central Alabama
• Jefferson County (Ala.)

Subject(s)

• Alabama
• Alabama Business and Industry
• Banks and banking
• Business and Labor
• Coal mines and mining
• Government, Law and Politics
• Iron industry and trade--Alabama--Jefferson County
• Railroads--Alabama--Records and correspondence
• Technology and Industry
## Collection Inventory

### SERIES I: MINUTES OF STOCKHOLDER MEETINGS AND SOME GENERAL FILES

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<td>1950 - 1958</td>
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**Scope and Contents note**

a. Mr. John A. Acker  
b. Herbert Etheridge, Atty (regarding Mr. I.D. Albright)  
c. American Bank & Trust Co.  
d. Mrs. Aldridge  
e. Mr. Joshua Oden (Alabama Mineral Land Co.)  
f. Kaul Lumber Co. - Hugh Kaul (Alabama Forest Products Association)  
g. Alabama Fuel & Iron Co.  

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<td>A.E.C. Analysis 1956-1957</td>
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**Scope and Contents note**

b. Re: contract between A.E.C. & Windrock Mines to supply coal for the Union Carbide Nuclear Co. Includes analysis, contracts, & correspondence  
c. Union Carbide Nuclear Co

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a. Quigly Co., Inc.

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<td>B, 1889-1964 1889-1964</td>
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**Scope and Contents note**


| J. Ralph Barron (Dadeville, AL) - Lumber 1951 | 4792 | 12 |
| Bessemer Business Sites 1951, 1953 | 4792 | 13 |

**Scope and Contents note**

a. Alliance Machine Co. b. Appleton Electric Co. c. Re: sites (land) companies they were interested in using

| Bessemer General Hospital 1966-1967 | 4792 | 14 |
| Bessemer Mine Equipment Rebuilding Co. 1966-1967 | 4792 | 15 |
| Bessemer Mortgage & Securities Inc., 188? - 1962 | 4792 | 16 |
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### Scope and Contents note

- Owned by Bessemer Mortgage and Securities

### Bessemer Plan 1945-1946

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### Bi (1) 1950-1965

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### Scope and Contents note

- The Birmingham News
- Billups Western Petroleum Co.
- Birmingham Southern Railroad Co.
- Mr. T.E. Batson, Agent (Birmingham Southern R.R.)
- Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company
- Brighton Development Co.
- H.P. Lipscomb, Lipscomb and Lipscomb (Jap Bryant's heirs to Addle Ruth Bryant)
- Mrs. Jap Bryant
- Mr. Willie Bryant
- Mr. Edward H. Saunders (Charles Brown, Charlie Brown & Ruby M. Brown)
- Birmingham Federal Savings & Loan Assn.
- Floyd E. Benton
- Mr. Lloyd Bowers
- SFC Arthur Belvins
- Mr. Charles Blair (Black Diamond Coal Co.)
- Black Diamond Coal Mining Co.
- Birmingham Trust National Bank
- Mr. William Bonner
- Bibb Lumber Co.
- Burr, McKamy, More & Tate
- Bond Brothers Incorporated
- Mr. Lee Bradley, Jr.
- Bradley, Baldwin, All and White
- Mr. B.L. Boyd-Albert Holman Lumber Co

### Bi (2) 1940-1954

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a. Mr. H. L. Badham, Jr. b. H.P. Cottingham-Forrest Ranger c. Judge of Probate, Bibb County (A.B. and Mary A. Griffin) d. Mr. Arthur N. Beck, Chief Engineer and Director, Bureau of Sanitation e. Ala. Mining Institute (Stone & Webster Engineering Corp.) f. Stone & Webster Engineering Corp. (Cahaba Field & Steam Coal Tampa Electric Company) g. Black Diamond Coal & Mining co.  

h. Board of Education, Bibb County i. W.A. Bisso-New Orleans Coal & Bisso Towboat Co.

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Scope and Contents note


C (2) 1950-1961

Scope and Contents note


Jelks H. Cabaniss 1943-1944

Co (1) 1936-1956

Scope and Contents note

a. Mrs. O.D. Cox b. Mr. W.E. Craig c. J.J. Collier d. Knox Coshatt (Donahoo Realty Co.) e. Collateral Mortgage Co

Co (2) 1939-1960

Scope and Contents note

a. Coyle and Co. b. Cooke-Wilson Electric Supply Co. c. Consolidation Coal Co. d. Mr. Howard W. Smith, Chairman, Special Committee to
Investigate the National Labor Relations Board C.I.O. Contracts e. Bessie Mae Cook

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**Scope and Contents note**

a. Mrs. Lucy J. Durr  
b. Dunson Electric Co.  
c. Mr. Charles G. Dawson  
d. Mr. Ganus Duncan  
e. Mr. O.G. Daniel  
f. Davis Coal Co. (Purchase Order)  
g. Davis and Marsh Attorneys At Law  
h. Mr. W.H. Harper Justice of the Peace (Pierce Dennis alias C.P. Daniels)  
i. T.L. Davis  
j. Mr. F.L. Davis  
k. Mr. Bradford Daniel  
l. City Federal Savings and Loan Assoc. (Re: Demby Loan)  
m. A.R. Dearborn & Co.  
n. Mr. W.W. Deason  
o. Mr. Rogers Dewey  
p. Dr. L.S. Denby  
q. Mr. J.W. Dailey  
r. Mr. J.M. Underwood, Atty. (Re: Duncan Case)  
s. Demopolis Ice & Coal Co.  
t. Durr Drug Company  
u. Dixie Metal Products Inc.  

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**Scope and Contents note**

- b. Exchange Bank
- c. Mr. Herbert Etheridge
- d. Mr. R.D. Russell, Vice-Pres., Exchange Bank at Five Points
- e. Mrs. Irene Edge
- f. Essman Brothers
- g. Mr. L.D. Echols
- h. Mr. Charles J. Ebert (Hartford Five Ins. Co.)
- i. The English Assoc. of American Bond & Share Holders, Ltd.

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- a. Electrical Materials Co.
- b. Escambia Farms School
- c. Ensley Coal & Coke Co.
- d. Edgewood Park Land Co.
- e. R.E. Evans

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- Also contains Department of Industrial Relations, a sub-branch
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<td>Mercantile Trust &amp; Deposit Co. of Baltimore 1913, 1916, 1921</td>
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<td>North River Coal Co. - Sales Agreements and Land 1913-1918</td>
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<td>Oil, Gas &amp; Mineral Leases 1910, 1971-1979</td>
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<td>Right of Way Agreements 1905-1915</td>
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<td>Timber Deeds and Sales Agreements 1978-1979</td>
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<td>Tourists Courts Report 1950</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aerial Views of Bessemer, Jonesboro, &amp; 1-1-24 &amp; 25-47</td>
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**Scope and Contents note**

a. Box 10F3 Broadmoor to Lakewood - good downtown section

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**Scope and Contents note**

a. Bessemer Alabama & Environments b. Aerial View of Broadmoor site c. Includes negatives d. Map of plans e. 5 Points in North Highlands Bessemer taken about 1932 f. Includes design for future brochure

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**Scope and Contents note**

a. Photo of Building b. Design for future brochure

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<td>Bessemer Land and Improvement Co. - Cashbook 1887-1893</td>
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<td>4811</td>
<td>Bessemer Land and Improvement Co. - Cashbook E 1902 November - 1904 July</td>
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<td>4812</td>
<td>Bessemer Land and Improvement Co. - Journal No. 1 - Land Department 1887-1893</td>
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<td>4813</td>
<td>Bessemer Land and Improvement Co. - Ledger 1 1901-1903</td>
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**Scope and Contents note**

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<td>Bessemer Land and Improvement Co. - Stock Ledger 1887-1926</td>
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<td>Journal 2 1904 January - 1906 September</td>
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<td>a. Includes Belle Ellen, Payroll, Mine Expenses, Individual Accounts, Bills Receivable, etc.</td>
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**Scope and Contents**
a. Maps plotting pieces of land by street and Bessemer
b. There are some subdivisions by area including Shady Park, Bessemer Gardens, Broadmoor Estates, North Highlands, etc.

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<td>Scrapbook of Company Maps of Landholdings and Photographs of Businessmen 1950-1971</td>
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<td>Property Maps of Jefferson County (undated) and Bessemer 1887</td>
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<td>Unsorted land deeds and notarized items, circa 1950 (1 of 15)</td>
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DIXIE METAL PRODUCT CO.. DIXIE METAL PRODUCT CO..

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<td>Columbus &amp; Pensacola Railroad 1836 February 6</td>
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<td>Map of the Town of Cahawba, Alabama, Dallas County 1948</td>
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<td>Land Cessions from the Southern Indians before Removal 1803-1811</td>
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**Scope and Contents note**

in 4 pieces

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<td>Map of Colonial Hills, Morrow Sector 1928 July 20</td>
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<td>Map of Shades Valley Gardens 1940 April 29</td>
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<td>Rock House Land Co.</td>
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<td>Map of Warwick Terrace</td>
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<td>Pinecrest with lot numbers and prices</td>
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<td>Survey in Section 14, T. 20, R. 5W 1931 July</td>
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**Scope and Contents note**

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| Metropolitan Birmingham - Southwestern Area Street Map 1977-1978 | 4801 | 26 |
| Wind Rock Coal & Coke | 4801 | 27 |
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| S.S.S. & I. Co. Property in SE 1/4 Section 1-19-4; Add. to Reg. Sec. Plat | 5739 | 4 |

**General note**

note: "Sloss Plat"

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<td>Topography Alabama Birmingham Quadrangle 1907 August</td>
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<td>Birmingham, Bessemer, and Environs 1943</td>
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<td>Birmingham, Bessemer, and Environs 1914 May 9</td>
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<td>Map of Valley Creek &amp; Drainage System of Jones Valley 1943</td>
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<td>Proposed Spur Track 8th Avenue Bessemer, Jefferson County, Ala.</td>
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<td>A.B. &amp; A.R.R. Sketch Showing Proposed Spur Tracks July 9-10</td>
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<td>Alabama- US Dept. of the Interior Index to Topographic Maps and Geologic Folios 1938 January</td>
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<td>Pratt Coal in Sec. 31 T.16.S R4W 1905 November 17</td>
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<td>Black Creek Outcrop in Sections 25-26-34-35 &amp; 36, Township 14S, Range 5West 1926 July 1</td>
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<td>Geologic Atlas of the United States - Gadsden Folio 1896</td>
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<td>Map Showing Land Bought from the City of Bessemer by the Bessemer Coal, Iron &amp; Land 1919 June 9</td>
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- **Campaign Poster for Franklin N. Julian for office of Railroad Commissioner**
- **Wind Rock Coal & Coke Co. - Dean Mine - Worked Out Area**
- **Eastern Portion of Tennessee River Basin**
- **Different Coal Lands - Tracing**

### SERIES XVI: LARGE MAPS & POSTERS

Maps

**Scope and Contents**


Maps

**Scope and Contents note**

Carver Place note: Drawing 151 Property of Bessemer Coal, Iron & Land Co. in Section 9, Township 19S, R4W, January 1909 note: Drawing 59 Map No. 3 - Flow of Water, Springs, and Creeks, 1943 Map
No. 4 - Flow of Springs & Creeks, 1943 (2 pieces, includes sketch book) Coal Outcrops & Geographic Map Bessemer Coal, Iron & Land Blueprints for Home Foundations Coal Map Depths Maps (2 pieces)

Maps

Scope and Contents note


Maps

Scope and Contents note


Maps

Scope and Contents note

Property Map - Pratt Fuel Corp. Bessemer Coal, Iron & Land Co.'s Property - Westwood, signed April 29, 1939; note: Drawing 135 Property of Bessemer Land & Improvement Co. in Section 10, Township
Maps

Scope and Contents note


Maps

Scope and Contents note