

A Guide to the James River and Kanawha Company Records, 1835-1881

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Descriptive Summary

Accession number

36327

Language

English

Physical Characteristics

2.35 cu. ft. and 17 maps

Repository

Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection is open to research.

Use Restrictions

The journal and minute books are available on microfilm (Misc. Reels 2049-2050).

Acquisition Information

This collection came to the Library of Virginia in five accessions. Accession 36327 is used to describe and identify the entire collection.

Purchased 4/23/1935 (Accession 20914); Lent for copying by Frances Robertson 10/22/1946 (Accession 22600); Gift of Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Company 7/13/1949 (Accession 23369); Purchased 2/11/1999 (Accession 36327); and Gift of Agnes Donnelly (Accession 38075).

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Biographical/Historical Information

The James River Company was chartered by an act of the General Assembly of January 14, 1785. The company was to improve the navigation of the James River from tidewater to the "highest practicable point." The James River and Kanawha Company was chartered on February 17, 1820 as the successor to the James River Company, with the state subscribing to 3/5 of the stock. With the end of the Civil War the business of the canals began to fall off. On March 5, 1880 the James River and Kanawha Company was sold to the Richmond and Alleghany Railway Company.

The North River Navigation Company was established to open and improve navigation of the North River from its confluence with the James River to Jordan's Mills or any other point near Lexington. A canal was located between the mouth of the river and Buffalo, and a bridge at Buffalo gave access to the mills. The North River Navigation Company became part of the James River and Kanawha Company by an act of the General Assembly on 16 March 1858.

Born in 1818, Edward Lorraine worked on the James River and Kanawha Canal for 30 years. He began as a rod man in 1842, was promoted to assistant engineer, and finally appointed chief engineer of the canal. Lorraine served in this position until his death from smallpox in January 1873.

Scope and Content

Records, 1835-1881, of the James River and Kanawha Company of Richmond, Virginia. Includes accounts, correspondence, field note books, journals, maps, and minute books. Series have been designated for Series I. James River and Kanawha Company, and Series II. North River Navigation Company.

Series I: James River and Kanawha Company Records, consist of an account, letter, journal, maps, and minutes, 1835-1881. Includes an account, 1837-1848, submitted by William Fraser, of the firm of Fraser and Pearce. The account was sent to the company to identify extra charges that were incurred during construction of Lock 34, Section 135 (Middleton Mill Race), of the James River and Kanawha Canal. The account contains Fraser's detailed explanation and extracts of correspondence with William Beckwith, principal assistant engineer, and the board of the company. Also included is a photocopy of a letter, 18 March 1865, from Edward Lorraine (1818-1872), chief engineer of the James River and Kanawha Company, to the company's president and directors. The letter was written to inform them of the damage to the canal caused by Union cavalry troops under the command of Philip Sheridan (1831-1888), Thomas Devin (1822-1878), George Custer (1839-1876), and Wesley Merritt (1834-1910). Union troops destroyed locks, gates, bridges, boats, and other supplies, and took boats and tools. Included is a transcript of the letter.

Included are field note books, 1839-1879, numbered 1546-1555. Field book number 1546 contains notes on the Blue Ridge Canal and surveys between Lynchburg and North River. Field book number 1548 was apparently kept by Walter G. Turpin and contains calculations for various works, including benches, pits, ditches, and embankments on different sections of the canal. The book also contains detailed lists on the costs involved for embankments and locks needed, as well as a synopsis of the estimate on the Bald Eagle Residence, surveys of cross sections, and some drawings. Field book number 1549 contains survey notes on the relocation of the Blue Ridge Canal, 2nd division. Field book number 1550 was kept by James M. Harris and contains information on the Bald Eagle residence, survey notes, calculations, drawings, and cost lists. Field book 1551, also kept by James M. Harris, is the estimate book for Bald Eagle residence. Field book 1555 contains survey notes, drawings, and several pages containing contractors names.

Journal B, Volume 94, 1848-1860, contains information on expenses and repairs on the Canal, tolls, interest,

balance sheets, and dividends on loans. (SERVE MICROFILM ONLY- MISC. REEL 2050). Also included are photostats of promissory notes, 1 July 1839, signed by James Pearce. An act of the General Assembly, passed 23 March 1839, provided for the issuance of such notes.

Minutes of the Proceedings of the President and the Directors, 1835-1881, record construction data, revenue, and wages. Included are two volumes indexing the minute book - One volume covers the minute books Vol. 20-26, and the other volume is an index to Vol. 24, which itself is not included in this collection. (SERVE MICROFILM ONLY- MISC. REELS 2049-2050). Also included are typed abstracts from company minutes regarding the location of the canal, names of owners on condemned property along the canal, and concerning the reopening of the canal at the close of the Civil War.

The seventeen maps, undated, included in the collection all show privately owned property, portions of which were needed to be taken for the use of the James River and Kanawha Canal. Concerned were the estates of the following families: Cross, Fudge, Irvine, Johns, Jones, Kearnes, Mays, Pharr, Scott, Sivley, Skeen, Spangler, Tennant, and Womack.

Series II: North River Navigation Company Records include minutes of the Board of Directors, 1850-1858, 1866, and minutes of the stockholders, 1850-1857. There are only 5 entries for 1858 and one entry for 1866, when the Board of Directors ratified and confirmed the conveyance of the rights and property of the company to the James River and Kanawha Company. The minutes are indexed separately at the end of the volume.

Arrangement

Organized into 2 series: I. James River and Kanawha Company, II. North River Navigation Company.

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Extent

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Minutes, Proceedings of President and Directors, Vol. 21, 5 July 1837-11 May 1839

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Minutes, Proceedings of President and Directors, Vol. 22, 15 May 1839-27 August 1842

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Minutes, Proceedings of President and Directors, Vol. 25, 8 March 1859-22 December 1866

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Minutes, Proceedings of President and Directors, Vol. 25, 22 December 1866-22 January 1881

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Extent

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Maps, nd

Physical Location Oversize map drawers

Series II: North River Navigation Company 1850-1866

Box 9

Extent

Use Misc. Reel 2050

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