

A Guide to the Lorton Reformatory Brick Factory Records, 1954-1961

The Lorton Reformatory Brick Factory Records, 1954-1961
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A Collection in The Fairfax County Public Library MSS 02-06

Title Statement

A Guide to the Lorton Reformatory Brick Factory Records, 1954-1961

Subtitle: Lorton Reformatory Brick Factory Records

Collection: MSS 02-06

Publication Statement

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid created by Ross Landis, December 2, 2023

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Descriptive Summary

Record Group Number

MSS 02-06

Language

English

Abstract

The Lorton Reformatory Brick Factory Records consist of 0.5 linear feet and spans the years 1954-1961 and consist of papers regarding the operation of the brick plant at the Lorton Reformatory.

Creator

District of Columbia Department of Corrections Industries Division

Extent

0.5 linear feet

Repository

Fairfax County Public Library

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

None

Use Restrictions

Consult repository for information

Acquisition Information

Gift of Lawrence E. Moore, Heritage Resources Branch, Fairfax County Office of Comprehensive Planning

Processing Information

Chris Barbuschak, October 2018

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Preferred Citation

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Adjunct Descriptive Data

Separated Material

None

Related Material

None

Historical and Biographical Information

In 1910, the United States Government purchased 1,000 acres of land in Lorton, Virginia to build a work farm for District of Columbia prisoners. Prisoners were to be rehabilitated by working in a brickyard, dairy farm, chicken farm, and later a license plate plant. Eventually the complex expanded to eight prisons on 3,000 acres before closing in 2001.

From 1912 to 1967, prisoners churned out millions of bricks for buildings in Washington, D.C., northern Virginia, and for construction of the Lorton Correctional Complex itself. The Lorton and Occoquan Railroad transported the bricks from the plant to rail and water transports.

Constructed in 1911, the brick factory was built on the shores of the Occoquan River. It consisted of eight round beehive kilns with 40 foot chimneys, and additional buildings to dry and store the bricks. Operation began in 1912. Between July 1913 to June 1914, prisoners fired 2.4 million bricks and more than 200,000 paving blocks. By 1929, prisoners made more than 6 million bricks annually. In February 1928, an appropriation of \$36,000 was used to repair and remodel the eight kilns, construct three additional kilns, and expand and modernize the plant. The brick factory closed in 1967.

In 1983, the site of the brick factory was given to the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority to create Occoquan Regional Park. That same year, NVRPA demolished eight of the remaining nine kilns, adjacent brick factory buildings, and the brick coal trestle of the L&O railroad. The kilns were deemed unsafe and had been crumbling from years of neglect. NVRPA did preserve one kiln for posterity, which has since been restored.

Scope and Content

The Lorton Reformatory Brick Factory Records consist of 0.5 linear feet and spans the years 1954-1961 and consist of papers regarding the operation of the brick plant at the Lorton Reformatory. The records are in poor shape having been exposed to the elements at some point. Monthly production reports contain number of bricks set, good bricks drawn, salmon bricks drawn, and rejected bricks. Subjects include the history of the Lorton Correctional Complex.

Index Terms

Historic sites - Virginia - Lorton

Lorton (Va.) - History

Lorton Correctional Complex

Container List

Box 1 Folder 1: Kiln Record. Monthly Production Reports, 1954-1960

Box 1 Folder 2: Monthly Recapitulation Sheet, 1959

Box 1 Folder 3: Receiving and Inspection Reports , 1961

