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James Henry Burton Papers
Collection Number: 1322 WFCHS

CONDITIONS GOVERNING ACCESS: Collection is open to all researchers.

CONDITIONS GOVERNING REPRODUCTION AND USE: Restrictions may apply concerning the use, photoduplication, or publication of items in this collection. Consult a member of the archives staff for information concerning these restrictions. The user assumes all responsibility for identifying and satisfying any claimants of copyright. Some materials may require special handling.

PROCESSING INFORMATION: Initial processing undertaken in 2005. Last updated by Buffy Knappenberger in June 2025.

EXTENT: 1.04 linear feet

DATE: 1844 – 1894

EXISTENCE AND LOCATION OF COPIES: Photographs in this collection have been digitized and are available to view online through the Past Perfect online database: <http://handley.pastperfectonline.com/>

SCOPE AND CONTENT: This collection chiefly contains correspondence from 1849 to 1892 relating to family matters and Burton's professional assignments. Also included are Burton's technical specifications for breech-loading firearms, published in London in 1866, and a message of John Letcher, Governor of VA to an extraordinary session of the VA Senate and House of Delegates (Jan. 7, 1861). In addition, the collection contains material collected by Thomas Tate for the biography of James Henry Burton and correspondence regarding 19th century street development in the western part of Winchester, VA by the West End Land and Building Company.

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL: James Henry Burton was born on Aug. 17, 1823 at Shannondale Springs in Jefferson County, WV (then VA). Burton trained as a master armorer. In 1844, he became a master machinist in the Rifle Works of the Harper's Ferry Arsenal and Armory (WV); in 1855, as chief engineer of the Royal Small Arms Factory at Enfield, near London, England, he introduced the concept of machine-made manufacture of rifles to England and Europe. His work led to a commission by VA Governor John Letcher, a commission by confederate president Jefferson Davis (1808-1889) during the Civil War, and an assignment from the German government to work in Russia. He returned to Winchester, VA in 1873 as a farmer, where he served as a member of the board of directors of the Shenandoah Valley Agricultural Society of Winchester, and as a land developer with the West End Land and Building Company associated with R.T. Barton and E. Holmes Boyd, attorneys at law. Burton married three times – first, to Cornelia Mauzy from 1844 until her death in 1850; second, to Elizabeth Evering Keller from 1852 until her death in 1858; and, third, to Eugenia Harper Mauzy (1840-1924) in 1859. Burton died on Oct. 18, 1894.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *History of the Lower Shenandoah Valley*, by J.E. Norris; *The Brunswick* (Maryland) *Herald*, Friday, Oct. 26, 1894.

Tate, Thomas K. *From Under Iron Eyelids the Biography of James Henry Burton, Armorer to Three Nations*.
Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2005.

IMMEDIATE SOURCE OF ACQUISITION: Gift of multiple donors.

CONTAINER LIST:

BOX 1

Broun, Edwin Conway - "In Memoriam," 1879, 1 leaf, printed

Burton, James H. - steel engraving, 1 item

Correspondence, 1849-1854, unnumbered leaves, typescript

Correspondence, 1855-1859, unnumbered items, typescript

Correspondence re Confederate States, 1859-1867, 17 items, manuscript

Correspondence, 1860-1863, unnumbered items, typescript

Correspondence, 1865-1868, unnumbered items, typescript

Correspondence, 1871-1892, unnumbered items, typescript

Governor's message, January 7, 1861, John Letcher, Governor, William F. Ritchie, public printer, Richmond VA, 1861, 1 item, printed

House construction expenses - house to be built in Sidney, 1861-1862, 9 items, manuscript

Land transactions, James H. Burton - West End Land Company, 1891-1892, 27 items, manuscript, typescript

Patent – Breech-loading firearms - specification of James Henry Burton, Great Seal Patent Office, London

#624, March 1859, 2 leaves printed

#422, February 1866, 4 leaves printed (sketch located in Map Case 3, Drawer 11)

#59, January 1867 with added notes, 2 manuscripts, 4 printed (photocopied) (sketch located in Map Case 3, Drawer 11)

Scrapbook pages, 25 leaves, photocopies

Tax receipt, 1864, 1 item, manuscript on printed form

BOX 2

Burton Papers, 1844-1861, 53 leaves manuscript/typescript/printed

Burton letters, 1853-1856, 40 leaves manuscript (photocopy) University of Texas

Burton's Return to U.S. – 1860, 40 leaves manuscript (photocopy)

Burton's Papers, 1859-1860, 1863, 10 leaves manuscript (photocopy) University of Texas

Burton's Rifle Drawings by Thomas K. Tate, 4 leaves, from patents #850, #59, and #422

Physical Location, Map Case 4, Drawer 4

England – trip to purchase machinery – 1863, 4 items, manuscript (photocopy) National Archives

England – Service Record 1863, 7 leaves manuscript (photocopy)

Armories, 30 leaves manuscript (photocopy); Columbia, 5 leaves; Holly Springs, 8 leaves; Red Mountain, 17 leaves

Armory—Macon Armory, Gunstoke, unnumbered pages, manuscript (photocopy)

Artillery—1860, 27 leaves manuscript (photocopy)

Confederate Carbines, Sharps, 3 leaves manuscript (photocopy)

Harpers Ferry, 24 leaves manuscript/printed

"James H. Burton, Lieutenant Colonel Virginia State Armory" -- newspapers and clippings relating to Civil War and to transfer of machinery and ordnance from Harper's Ferry to State Armory in Richmond, 9 items

Physical Location: Oversize, Box 16

Machines for Muskets, n.d., 12 leaves typescript

Ordinance work, Late War, 1864, 6 leaves manuscript (photocopy)

Pay and Expense Records—1862, 22 leaves manuscript (photocopy)

Pistols, Guns, 13 leaves manuscript (photocopy)

Spiller and Burr, 31 leaves manuscript (photocopy/notes)

After the War, 1871, 32 leaves manuscript (photocopy)

Burton Letters—1873, 1875, 1879, 12 items, manuscript (photocopy) Duke University

Burton, Frederick H. at Mt. St. Mary's College, 19 leaves manuscript/typescript (photocopy)

Obituary—Oct. 18, 1894, 2 leaves printed (photocopy)

BOX 3

1864, manuscript (photocopy) unnumbered pages

1864, manuscript (photocopy) unnumbered pages

1864, manuscript (photocopy) unnumbered pages

1864, manuscript (photocopy) unnumbered pages

MICROFILM

– James Henry Burton Papers, Ramsdell Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, 4 reels

Physical Location: Miscellaneous Family Papers Reels

-- James H. Burton 1823-1894; Papers of Lt. Col. Burton, Yale, 2 reels

Physical Location: Miscellaneous Family Papers Reels

PHOTOGRAPHS

- [1322-001] Col. James H. Burton (1823-1894), photograph from an engraving by E. G. Williams and Brothers, New York, circa 1885
- [1322-002] Eugenia Mauzy Burton (1840-1924), wife of Col. James H. Burton, circa 1865
- [1322-003] Col. James H. Burton (1823-1894), circa 1870
- [1322-004] Mrs. John H. Clowe, wife of son of Maria Louisa Young and Harrison L. Clowe, circa 1880
- [1322-005] Col. James H. Burton (1823-1894) about ten years prior to the J. Turner photograph, circa 1865
- [1322-006] Col. James H. Burton (1823-1894), circa 1875
- [1322-007] Col. James H. Burton (1823-1894), circa 1875
- [1322-008] “The Maples,” side view of the outbuildings, n.d.
- [1322-009] Burton family members, none identified, circa 1875