

The Filson Historical Society

**James Breckinridge Speed
Additional Papers, 1875-1913**

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Size of Collection:

0.33 Cubic Feet

Location Number:

Mss./A/S742g

**James Breckinridge Speed
Additional Papers, 1875-1913**

Scope and Content Note

The James Breckinridge Speed Additional Papers consist of records of financial interests for Speed personally as well as for business ventures with which he was involved. These records document a portion of Speed's successful personal investment history, and briefly touch upon his involvement in several Louisville-area businesses.

Speed's personal records include stock receipts, notifications, and bills for many local, regional, and national businesses, including railroads and passenger railways, manufacturing companies, mines, hotels, and cement companies. These records also include his private annual statements for 1890 and 1896, as well as tallies of holdings for 1898-1900 and an undated account realizing over 4.5 million dollars.

Speed's business records cover J. B. Speed and Co., the Louisville Railway Co., and the Louisville Cement Co. Records of J. B. Speed and Co. include partnership agreements, company statements and records by Gilmer S. Adams, and correspondence from the office to Speed while he is recovering in Maine in 1911. Records of the Louisville Railway Co. include a notice of payment to Louisville Railway Company from Louisville City Railway Company and syndicate agreement merging the Louisville City and Central Passenger Railway Companies, with signatures from stock holders (1890). Records of the Louisville Cement Company include a record of dividends from Louisville Cement Company (dates and percentage, possibly compiled by J. B. Speed) and a receipt for land purchase by LCC.

Additional business records include business audits for the Jellico-Laurel Coal Agency, the Byrne and Speed Coal Co., the North Jellico Coal Co., and Contract Teaming Co., all in Louisville, Kentucky; the audits were performed by W. S. Parker, Examiner and Accountant. Miscellaneous records include undated and unnamed balance sheets, a calling card from "Winnie E. Hollis", and a key to box #606 at the Fidelity Trust and Safety Vault Company.

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Biographical Note

James Breckinridge (also spelled Breckenridge) Speed was born 4 June 1844 in Missouri to William Pope Speed and Mary Ellen Shallcross. He was a prominent businessman in Louisville, Kentucky at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century.

J. B. Speed's father, William P. Speed, was born at Farmington plantation in Jefferson County, Kentucky, 26 April 1816 to John Speed and his wife, Lucy Gilmer Fry; his brothers included James Speed, Abraham Lincoln's second attorney general, and Joshua Fry Speed, Lincoln's personal friend. Four years after J. B. Speed's birth, his mother passed away (William P. Speed's first wife, Margaret Phillips, had passed away in 1840). William P. Speed remarried a third time, to Ardell Hutchinson, with whom he had two children, Laura T. Speed and Austin Peay Speed. According to some sources, after his mother's death, J. B. Speed was raised in Louisville by his aunt Lucy Speed Breckinridge, educated in Louisville schools (his father was in Missouri). He went into banking in Chicago, working as a clerk for the firm of Badger and Company, until the Civil War broke out in 1861. He returned to Kentucky to enlist, and rose to the position of adjutant of the 27th Kentucky Infantry. After the war ended in spring 1865, J. B. Speed took up a business career in Louisville.

J. B. Speed held an interest in a number of leading business corporations. His longest engagement was with J. B. Speed and Company, which he headed; this company dealt in lime, cement, and building materials. The business operated on Main Street in Louisville, and Speed's associates were William H. Mundy, Speed's cousin, Gilmer S. Adams, and Speed's son, William S. Speed. Speed also headed up the coal company Speed & Byrne. At different times, he served as the president and executive officer of Louisville Cement Company, the Louisville Street Railroad Company, and the Ohio Valley Telephone Company, and was a director in several banks and other corporations. He was instrumental in the raising of the first building exclusively designed and equipped for telephone purposes. J. B. Speed built up a large business enterprise, and cared for his own estate along with others for which he was a trustee.

J. B. Speed married Cora Coffin of Cincinnati in 1867; the couple had three children, Olive (married Frederick M. Sackett), Douglas Breckinridge (died young) and William Shallcross, who followed in his father's footsteps into business in Louisville, heading several manufacturing, coal, and other corporations which were headquartered in Louisville. Specifically, William was the first vice president and the general manager of the Louisville Cement Company; upon his father's death, he became its president, and also became president of the North Jellico Coal Company, the Taylor Coal Company, J. B. Speed Salt Company, and vice president of Pioneer Coal Company. William S. Speed married Virginia Perrin. Cora Coffin Speed passed away in 1905, and J. B. Speed married a second time, to Harriet "Hattie" Bishop, in 1906. Speed passed away 7 July 1912 in Rockland, Maryland, where he made his summer home.

Sources:

Speed, Thomas. *Records and Memorials of the Speed Family*. (Courier-Journal Job Printing, 1892).

Connelley, William Elsey and Ellis Merton Coulter (eds.) *History of Kentucky, Volume 3* (American Historical Society, 1922).

Heywood, John H. "Judge John Speed and his Family: A paper prepared for the Filson Club, and read at its meeting, June 4, 1894" (J. P. Morton & Co., 1894).

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Folder List

Box 1

Folder 1: James B. Speed Personal Financial Records, 1875-1911

Folder 2: J. B. Speed & Co. Records, 1886, 1907, 1911

Folder 3: Louisville Railway Company Records, 1888, 1890

Folder 4: Louisville Cement Company Records, 1887-1888

Folder 5: Business Audits, 1913

Folder 6: Miscellaneous Balance Sheets, 1908-1910

Folder 7: Miscellaneous, undated

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Subject Headings

Accounts – Kentucky – Louisville
Adams, Gilmer Speed
Auditing – Kentucky – Louisville
Business records – Kentucky – Louisville
Byrne and Speed Coal Company (Louisville, Ky.)
Cement – Kentucky - Louisville
Central Passenger Railway Company (Louisville, Ky.)
Contracts – Kentucky – Louisville
Contract Teaming Company (Louisville, Ky.)
Distributors (Commerce) – Kentucky - Louisville
Fidelity Trust and Safety Vault Company (Louisville, Ky.)
Financial statements – Kentucky – Louisville
Investments – Kentucky – Louisville
J. B. Speed and Company (Louisville, Ky.)
Jellico-Laurel Coal Agency (Louisville, Ky.)
Letterheads – Kentucky
Lime – Kentucky - Louisville
Louisville City Railway Company (Louisville, Ky.)
Louisville Railway Company (Louisville, Ky.)
Mundy, William H.
North Jellico Coal Company (Louisville, Ky.)
Parker, W. S.
Railroad companies – Kentucky - Louisville
Salt industry and trade – Kentucky
Speed, William Shallcross