These are records of the acquisition and disposition of lands in a speculative industrial development scheme in Jefferson, Ste. Genevieve, Perry, Cape Girardeau, and Madison counties in Missouri.

The Missouri and Illinois Mineral and Land Company was a speculative venture apparently designed to develop a rational holding of coal, mineral, timber, water power, and river front properties on or near the Mississippi River in southeastern Missouri and southwestern Illinois. The ultimate goal seems to have been the establishment of a vertically integrated industrial enterprise.

In the 1830s and 1840s the firm acquired parcels of land from individual owners. By 1850 this process had been essentially completed (See folders for DEEDS, MISCELLANY, and BOUND VOLUMES.). Although early land transactions indicate that Giles Pease and Forrest Shepherd initiated the acquisitions, by the 1840s John Tappan of Boston, Massachusetts, was actively involved. Eventually control of the company and its land holdings fell to Tappan and Charles Stoddard, the surviving trustees. Except for the land acquisitions, nothing else is included concerning the company's active life.

In June 1868 the company named Walter Hilliard Bidwell (D.A.B., 2:249) as “special and authorized agent” to dispose of the firm's land holdings. In November of that year the remaining properties were sold to Bidwell’s brother, Oliver B. Bidwell. Oliver took no active role in the resulting transactions, and gave his brother a power of attorney shortly after the transfer. In 1871, as a part of the continuing effort to dispose of the lands, Walter Bidwell encouraged the development of a plate-glass manufactory at the mouth of Plattin Creek in Jefferson County, Missouri. This became the site of Crystal City. He was also interested in a plan, apparently supported by the leading citizens of Ste. Genevieve County, Missouri, to build a railroad along Saline Creek and through the Old Lead Belt and other mineral areas to Phelps County, Missouri. During this period Walter Bidwell was legally separated from his wife Susan (See folders for CORRESPONDENCE, FINANCIAL PAPERS, LEGAL PAPERS, DEEDS, and PROPERTY TAXES.).

In 1881 both Walter H. Bidwell and Oliver B. Bidwell died. Edward R. Pelton of New York, New York, their kinsman and executor assumed their affairs. After settling their estates, Pelton resumed the efforts to sell the lands in Missouri. By the time of Pelton’s death in 1899 some properties were still in his possession, worth as little as 50 cents per acre (See folders for CORRESPONDENCE, LEGAL PAPERS, BIDWELL ESTATES DOCUMENTS, and PROPERTY TAXES.).

Folder 1: CORRESPONDENCE, 1868-1900.
There are 66 items of correspondence, dated from 1868 to 1900. This file breaks into three major chronological sections. The letters dated from 1868 to 1875 deal mostly with the disposition of the company's property holdings by Walter H. Bidwell. The letters dated from 1879 to 1882 deal with the disposition of the Bidwell estates. The letters dated from 1885 to 1900 are concerned with the efforts of the Bidwells' kinsman, heir, and executor, Edward R. Pelton, to dispose of the remaining property in Missouri.

Folder 2: FINANCIAL PAPERS, 1839-1881.

Most of these items are concerned with the financial affairs of the Bidwell brothers.

Folder 3: LEGAL PAPERS, 1844-1882.

Most of these eighteen items are concerned with the Bidwells' land dealings in Missouri and Walter H. Bidwell's separation from his wife, Susan.

Folder 4: BIDWELL ESTATES DOCUMENTS, 1875-1883.

Walter H. Bidwell died on 11 September 1881. His brother, Oliver B. Bidwell, apparently preceeded him in death by only a few weeks. These eight items pertain to their respective estates.

Folder 5: PAPERS CONCERNING THE INTERMENT OF MRS. CATHARINE A. SAFFORD, 1864.

There is no obvious connection between these three items and the rest of the collection.

Folder 6: DEEDS, 1834-1892.

These 27 deeds relate to land in Missouri acquired by the Missouri and Illinois Mineral and Land Company.

Folder 7: PROPERTY TAXES, 1870-1898.

These 60 items, arranged chronologically, are mostly receipts for property taxes paid in Madison and Cape Girardeau counties, 1870-1898. Early receipts are in the name of Forrest Shepherd, Walter H. Bidwell, and Oliver B. Bidwell. After 1880 all receipts are in the name of Edward R. Pelton.

Folder 8: MISCELLANY, 1839-1888.

These 16 items fell into no convenient category. They have been arranged chronologically, where possible.

Folder 9: BOUND VOLUME, 1898.

This volume contains lists of land parcels acquired by the company, with hand-drawn maps indicating their locations. In most cases the date and reason for the acquisition of a particular parcel are given.

Folder 10: LAND PATENTS, 1841-1851 (Foldered in 3 parts).

There are 28 federal land patents, apparently pertaining to lands purchased by the company.

Folder 11: DAMAGED ITEMS, ca. 1841-1851.

This plastic bag contains unidentifiable fragments and damaged items.
THE RESEARCHER IS URGED TO CONSULT THE “INVENTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE MISSOURI AND ILLINOIS MINERAL AND LAND COMPANY PAPERS,” WHICH IS FILED IN THE INFORMATION FOLDER.

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