

Ohio University OHRAB mid-term report

Greta Suiter

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Summary of project:

Institution: Ohio University Libraries

Project Title: The Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company, Records Processing and Remediation

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The Manuscript Collections at Ohio University Libraries include strong holdings documenting the history of Appalachian Ohio and the lives of the people who live here. Included is the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company Records (CHClco). The collection dates from 1870 to 1939 and thoroughly documents the mining and company practices of the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company. This Company was known as “the syndicate” and many small mines were consolidated under its name. When the company threatened to lower pay during the summer months in the mid-1880s a large strike erupted. As a result of the strike, CHClco suffered significant financial losses. It slowly recovered and maintained its presence in the Hocking Valley until the 1920s after mining most of the deposits in the area. Part of the labor movement during the strike eventually became the United Mine Workers of America. The CHClco bought extensive land in Athens and Hocking counties and set up small communities such as Buchtel, Ohio, to support its coal mines. Some of these communities still exist today, while others no longer survive. The collection includes many shipping, payroll, and rent ledgers documenting the coal industry and labor history in southeast Ohio.

Much of this collection is in poor condition, not foldered, and not boxed in archival boxes. This project aims to properly house materials, document and assess “unsalvageable” materials, and update the finding aid.

Estimated percentage of project completed:

~10% completed.

So far, we have been working on preparing for the project. This has included doing basic research on the history of mining in Southeast Ohio and the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company (CHClco) such as locating annual reports online, creating lists of locations and real estate holdings, and understanding the broader ramifications of the 1884 strike and later creation of the United Mine Workers. From this research we have compiled readings for the assistant archivist to complete as part of their training.

We have also compiled reports and inventory lists from previous work on the collection and created a new work plan for the fall. We are currently interviewing students and plan to hire an assistant archivist student worker by early September. We plan for most of the work to be completed in September to December.

Summary of expenses:

In late August we put in our first supply order with Gaylord Archival with a rough total estimate of cost to be \$1872.95.

Amount of staff time on the project:

Approximately 40 hours of FTE staff time has been spent on the project.

Project progress:

We are on track to complete the project by December 31, 2023.

Publicity:

We have reached out to an interested Ohio University faculty member via email to give updates about progress, but have not done any public outreach about the project.