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MSS 478

Title: African American Workers of Empire Steel, Mansfield, Ohio: The World War II Era

Location: Ohio Genealogical Society, Lyle H. West Archives, 611 SR 97 W, Bellville, Ohio, 44813

Preferred Citation: African American Workers of Empire Steel, Mansfield, Ohio: The World War II Era, MSS 478, file number. Lyle H. West Archives, Ohio Genealogical Society, Bellville, Ohio.

Dates: 1941-1943

Creator(s): Empire Steel Company; Mansfield, Ohio.

Donor(s): Mansfield Memorial Museum; 34 Park Avenue West; Mansfield, Ohio. August 2025.

Administrative History: In 1924, the Mansfield Sheet & Tin Plate Company was established in a triangular section of land on Mansfield's north side bound by Bowman Street on the west, Pennsylvania and B&O railroad lines on the east, and what is now US 30 on the south. The new steel plant flourished and grew dramatically over the next several decades. It would be known primarily as Empire Steel but after mergers, consolidations, and buyouts also as Empire-Detroit, Cyclops, and AK Steel. As the United States entered WWII, steel production was at an all-time high, and many employment opportunities were created in the steel mills of Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Mansfield was no exception.

Scope and Content:

The collection contains photographs of African American employees of the Empire Steel plant in Mansfield, Richland County from about 1942. These portrait photographs would have been used for their employee ID badges and also within personnel files. Most individuals are identified.

System of Arrangement: Photos were originally glued to a posterboard in no apparent order. At the time this collection was processed, photographs were sorted alphabetically by last name

and put into envelopes by last name letter as follows: A, B, C, D, E-F, G, H, J, K, L, M, N-Q, R, S, T, W. Unidentified/unplaced individuals are filed separately.

Access: No access restrictions.

Language: English

Provenance: Original photographs obtained by the Mansfield Memorial Museum sometime between 1998-2020. It is possible that they were discovered when the former Empire Steel plant was being demolished, however, this is uncertain. When the museum closed in 2023 after the death of the curator, the collection was donated to OGS.

Additional Notes: This collection of pictures was formerly in the hands of the Mansfield Memorial Museum before coming to OGS. There, the late curator had affixed Scotch tape to the front of each picture and wrote the name that had been printed 80+ years ago on the back of the picture onto the tape. The pictures were then glued with heavy adhesive to a posterboard for display in the museum. Unfortunately, the handwriting on the tape is often difficult to decipher, and the backs of the pictures were ruined by the glue after removal from the posterboard.

I [Aaron] have spent the last several months creating an every-name inventory for the photographs within this collection. Using the names written on the pictures, I was able to place about 2/3 of the people with specific names and dates. I relied heavily on city directories for Mansfield between 1940-1945 which gave the place of occupation in the alphabetical listings. The "Occupation" and "Industry" columns of the 1940 census were useful in matching up people with records. Obituaries also proved helpful when trying to match a name on a picture to a specific individual. With common surnames such as Davis, Harper, James, Johnson, Jones, Lindsay, and Smith, I wanted to make sure I had the exact person before assigning birth and death dates to the inventory. An obituary for employee Calvin Calhoun on December 31, 1942, indicates that he had been employed there since October 23 of that year. Therefore, "Fall 1942" is the approximate date the pictures were taken.

The complete inventory of names is included here. The fields highlighted in yellow [shown as greyscale in the printed form of the *OGN*] indicate the people who are not specifically placed and for whom more research is needed—meaning the picture does have a name on it, but no corroborating source or record has been found to specifically identify the individual.

While the photographs themselves are not digitized, the finding aid for the collection, which also contains the inventory of names, is. See ogs.org > Genealogy Resources > Library Special

Collections. Select “Archive Collections” and “Richland County” to narrow the search to find MSS 478. The African American Workers of Empire Steel collection, MSS478, is available for in-person viewing at the OGS library and for copy service requests.

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Box 1:

ORGANIZATION

LAST	FIRST	MIDDLE/MAIDEN	DATE OF BIRTH	DATE OF DEATH	NOTES
Andrews	Unknown				
Atwater	James	Allen	12/20/1924	8/1/1980	
Atwater, Sr.	Fred	Carl	5/25/1923	8/20/1976	
Avery	Elsie Lee	(Ross)	10/3/1915	10/30/1987	
Baker	Anna Louise	(Ralls)	4/xx/1921	1/17/1978	
Barrett	Willie		11/14/1890	1/16/1971	
Barton	Theodore	Weldon	7/17/1907	10/15/1970	
Benford	Joseph	Willie	12/21/1901	5/22/1973	
Berry	Printis				
Black	Daniel	Aaron	12/14/1907	3/18/1943	
Black	James		5/xx/1878	3/17/1954	
Black	Myrtle Glenn	(Robinson)	3/10/1909	12/8/1992	
Black	Robert				
Black, Jr.	Delarcy		1/17/1925	7/12/1987	
Black, Sr.	Delarcy		9/2/1902	11/6/1988	
Black, Sr.	James	Aaron	1/30/1926	8/5/1998	
Blossomgame	John	H	6/13/1897	10/2/1966	

Bond	Webster				Born c. 1915 in Haywood, TN. Son of John Venus & Lula Bond; 1942 WWII draft card lists age as "About 25" and date of birth "don't know"; November 1947 in prison at the Ohio State Penitentiary
Bowman	Ira		5/17/1896	3/2/1983	
Bowman	Jessie	Howard	9/1/1902	4/14/1972	
Bradford	Gladys Corine	(Scott)	1/12/1905	2/2/1993	
Bradford	James	Anthony	5/8/1892	10/4/1975	
Bradley	Wesley	Charles	11/26/1896	9/2/1967	
Bradley	William	Eugene	3/19/1899	12/15/1975	
Burke	Emma	L			Mrs. Emma Burke; 266 North Diamond Street
Burrage	Nathaniel	Hawthorne	6/5/1893	10/8/1960	
Burrage, Jr.	James		3/26/1923	9/19/2012	
Burrell	Craten		5/10/1897	8/27/1973	
Burrell	James	D	10/24/1899	2/27/1971	
Butler	G	B			May be George B. Butler?
Butler	George	Washington	1/25/1902	5/8/1971	
Butts	Martha Lee	(Peoples)	8/27/1910	9/8/1951	
Byrd	Mamie E.	(Radford)	3/1/1894	5/8/1982	
Calhoun	Calvin		4/11/1902	12/30/1942	Hired October 23, 1942
Camak	Flun	Sander	3/12/1890	6/6/1969	
Camak, Sr.	Samuel	Sander	5/24/1909	3/10/1986	
Carpenter	Herchel		6/3/1892	12/3/1962	
Carter	Unknown				
Clement	Bartlett	Harvey	9/6/1917	2/11/2004	
Clemons	Gabriel		7/21/1897	2/2/1966	
Coleman	Edward	C			Born c. 1899 in Alabama; in 1950 living as a lodger with M/m Alfonso O'Neal; 58 Raymond Ave.
Courtney	Courthney				
Cowan	Charles	Edward	4/5/1915	10/30/1943	

Cowell	Robert				
Crooks	Willie	James	3/19/1915	3/20/1971	
Daniels	James			10/19/1964	(Unconfirmed)
Davis	Jasper		7/16/1900	9/30/1969	
Davis	R				
Davis, Jr.	Charles				
Davis, Sr.	Ophinell		8/5/1895	11/24/1969	
Dawson	Rufus		2/15/1901	1/13/1959	
Day	Harvey	L	7/4/1904	2/9/1993	
Dickerson	Saint	Peter	9/13/1900	6/8/1967	
Drummonds	Givens		3/24/1893	11/24/1956	
Drye	Dewey		8/13/1898	6/xx/1970	
Duncan	Malcolm	John	5/15/1893	11/16/1972	
Dunn	Sammy	Joe	1/11/1915	9/15/1980	
Eubanks, Sr.	Howard	Maxwell	1/1/1924	5/27/2004	
Evans	Willie		2/13/1907	9/24/1969	
Fanning	Richard	T	2/3/1915	3/30/1979	
Ferguson	Charlie		2/3/1905	4/28/1995	
Finley	Virginia Holly	(McAtee)	2/16/1916	2/23/1993	
Fletcher	William				
Forte	Thomas		10/22/1890	6/15/1957	
Freeman Baldwin	Nellie Ruth	(Washington)	7/9/1911	5/xx/1974	
Fuqua	Logan		9/4/1893	10/16/1964	
Gaines	Arthur	Lee	12/6/1891	3/18/1952	
Gaines	Willie	Hayes	3/22/1903	5/5/1963	
Glover	Joseph		9/28/1890	7/22/1973	
Glover	Marvin	Donalee	4/12/1912	4/12/1960	
Gordon	Cleve		2/15/1920	10/27/1991	
Gordon	Jackie Lee	(Clemons)	7/16/1920	6/5/2000	
Gordon	James	Henry	11/25/1918	6/19/1993	
Grace	Thomas		8/8/1910	12/9/1996	
Graham	Noble	Lee			FEMALE; had a son born in 1941; in 1945 married Elmer Treadwell; Divorced in 1946; lived at 276 N. Franklin Ave.; Mansfield
Grandberry	Willie		10/9/1909	9/4/1954	
Green	Otis				

Guyness	Rosella	(Ferguson)	2/22/1901	7/31/1948	
Hamilton	Dewey	Harvey	8/26/1903	9/25/1958	
Harden	Samuel	Preston	9/12/1910	2/14/1982	
Harper	Lawrence Edward	"Bunker"	3/1/1926	12/22/2016	
Harper	Lymon	Lee	11/20/1915	8/18/1986	
Harper	Ralph	Benjamin	8/8/1898	3/25/1982	
Harper	Stewart	Etherton	4/2/1900	11/3/1961	
Harris	James				Age 23 in 1950; Living with Uncle John & Aunt Katie (Young) Harris
Harrison	Washington				
Hawkins	William	Cooper	1/18/1903	5/14/1969	
Hawthorne, Sr.	Willie	A	9/27/1922	2/2/1979	
Haynes	Edward		8/11/1878	5/4/1955	
Haynes	Edward	Lewis	8/7/1905	12/29/1966	
Haynes	Willie				May be Edwin Haynes?
Hill	Luther	J	9/1/1900	8/10/1974	
Hill	Otis		3/23/1919	8/30/1989	
Hines, Jr.	Tom		1/12/1901	4/20/1980	
Hoard	Henry	John	1/11/1924	1/16/1977	
Holloway	John		6/24/1896	10/29/1979	
Houston	Anna				May be wife of Sidney?
Howard	Cornelius	J	6/16/1899	9/19/1955	
Howard, Sr.	Freddie		1/1/1921	10/4/1975	
Hoy, Jr.	William	E	7/15/1913	2/20/1985	
Hutchins, Sr.	Isaac	James	4/18/1909	7/12/1981	
Jacobs Brookins	Sylvester	(Bell)	5/18/1903	8/xx/1992	FEMALE
James	Charles	Richard	1/16/1894	1/11/1972	
James	Otis				
James	Willard	Charles	3/2/1901	12/xx/1944	
Jarrels	Floyd				
Jester	Homer	Wilson	5/1/1925	12/13/1993	
Jester	Wilson	"Babe"	2/18/1895	4/26/1957	
Johnson	Goe				
Johnson	James				
Johnson	John	C	1/11/1911	8/6/1998	(Unconfirmed)
Johnson	Myrtle Elizabeth	Dockery	4/19/1897	4/23/1980	
Johnson	Pauline Gaines	(Duncan)	11/8/1924	9/24/1982	
Johnson	Tom				
Johnson	Winkie	E	1/18/1897	8/28/1958	(Unconfirmed)

Jones	Arthur		7/1/1888	8/1/1957	
Jones	Charlie				
Jones	James				
					May be John J. "Junior" Jones b. 1915 WV living with grandmother Clara Jones in 1940 at 231 N. Adams Rear OR b. June 8, 1917 son of John Jones (b. 1880 AL) and Jane Govin (b. 1881 AL) ?
Jones	John				
Jones	John				
					Married; Mother of Richard; 161 West 6th Street
Jones	Mozelle				
Jones	Ray				
Jones	Roosevelt		10/1/1920	9/xx/1962	
					May be b. 1881 in Georgia; "Lodger" in 1940 census ?
Jones	William				
					Age 74 in 1940. Born in Georgia. Husband of Elizabeth. Res: 40 Louis Street, Mansfield ?
Jordan	Walter				
Kale	James	Robert	11/13/1894	8/21/1969	
Kale	Samuel	Peter	3/19/1903	5/16/1956	
Kennebrew	James		3/3/1907	7/3/1982	
					May be Kerney or Kenney ?
Kerney, Jr.	Ed				
Kethley	Clarence				May be Keithley ?
Lackey	Daniel	Waller	9/21/1901	12/27/1964	
Langford	Rosa				
Langford	William				
Langley	Zealie	Luke	1/26/1895	1/9/1979	
			born c. 1886		
Lawson	James			1/18/1962	
Lemon	Charles				
Lindsay	James	Thomas Lorne	6/22/1912	12/17/1971	
Lindsay	John	Clarence	4/9/1890	2/13/1978	
Lindsay	Lurie	Franklin	7/30/1903	4/21/1986	

Lindsay	Vosie		4/20/1907	4/6/1981	
Lindsay Hardeman	Virgie	(Mitchell)	3/21/1910	3/25/2012	
Luckie Nall	Margaret	(Harris)	12/4/1916	7/1/1985	
Luckie, Sr.	M.	Alexander	12/25/1877	1/24/1975	aka Alex Lucky
Luimon	Charles				
Lumpkin	Ralph	Duncan	4/27/1898	11/xx/1974	
Lyman	Jewel				May be Lymon ?
Lytle	James	Wilber	9/23/1910		
Maddox	James				
Majors	Zeb		5/16/1898	7/30/1955	
Malone	Robert	Hugh	11/26/1911	3/9/1951	
Mapp	William		7/15/1892	3/3/1954	
Martin	Edward		10/26/1905	3/31/1996	
McAtee Brooks	Verian	(Holley)	3/18/1914	1/5/1989	
McCondichie	Columbus	Charles	1/18/1900	2/26/1967	
McCondichie	John	Edwin	8/16/1899	12/12/1958	
McFadden	Howard		8/1/1905	3/4/1970	DOB on stone says 7/11/1898
Merritt	Emery		9/7/1914	9/xx/1985	
Michael	William	Nelson	11/20/1894	7/17/1961	
Middlebrook	Jack	Donald	6/9/1913	11/15/1990	
Middlebrook	Lucille Helen	(Burke)	1/1/1912	5/28/2000	
Middleton	John	Kemper	1/4/1878	12/27/1944	
Miller	Goldie				Listed as Mrs. Goldie M. Miller in 1941 directory; 182.5 Main ST.
Miller	Lee				
Monroe	Willie				
Moseley	Margaret	Elizabeth	6/10/1920	12/8/1990	
Motley	Albert		7/31/1914	5/4/1987	
Moxley	Margaret	Johnson			wife of Carl T. Moxley; divorced 1944
Murpohy	Donald		3/6/1898	4/19/1966	
Pardon	Erric		1/26/1902	9/xx/1965	
Parsons	William	B.	11/27/1895	1/30/1960	
Payne	Reuen	Ceranza	9/30/1916	12/27/1999	
Pearson	Jesse	Willard	12/15/1901	3/26/1982	
Peoples, Sr.	John		12/24/1906	11/22/1949	
Phillips	Eddie		3/1/1899	3/8/1963	

Porch	Anderson		12/12/1895	1/9/1963	
Quates	Sam	Tullie	3/31/1909	9/11/1990	
Queener	Donald		11/10/1901	2/12/1975	
Ramsay	Elma				b. 1911, FL; Mother of Kenneth (1935-1972); wife of John Willie Ramsey; in 1940 she was in prison in Marysville Ohio
Ramsey	Frank		10/9/1916	7/2/1973	
Ramsey	Pearl	(Morton)	11/16/1908	3/3/2000	
Ramsey	Simeon	T	2/4/1904	8/10/1978	
Reece	Earl				
Reynolds	Edgar	"Red"	7/9/1907	11/17/1991	
Riley	Victor		10/21/1913	12/17/1988	
Rimblert	Simmie	Lee	9/9/1910	6/13/1992	
Risinger	Matthew		9/16/1897	6/3/1967	
Ross	Jerry		12/18/1872	6/1/1945	
Ross	John	Otis	3/28/1890	4/7/1969	
Ross	Mable	(Arnold)	5/10/1895	4/14/1923	
Ryuse, Sr.	Mark		5/28/1902	1/26/1990	
Sanders	John				
Scott	James				
Shepard	Maxie				
Shoulders	Everett		10/7/1900	5/3/1978	
Simms	Odell		9/6/1894		
Sloan	John	B	6/25/1892	1/8/1984	
Smiley	David				
Smith	Ernest	Son	6/16/1897	5/20/1977	
Smith	James				
Smith	Leola "Lola"	E	10/16/1892	3/30/1964	
Smith	William				
Spears, Sr.	Charles	Henry	11/24/1908	6/30/1993	
Staples	Steve		3/25/1878	7/24/1974	
Stephens	Marvin	Maxwell	11/9/1899	3/7/1977	
Swan	Melvin	Swain	11/8/1923	7/13/2000	
Thomas	Pearlie Mae	(Adams)			b. 1905, Oklahoma; wife of T.R. Thomas
Thomas	Theodore	Roosevelt	2/1/1902	12/25/1949	
Tolliver, Sr.	James	Earl	3/2/1909	1/30/1969	

Tolliver, Sr.	William		8/4/1885	9/21/1964	
Tolliver, Jr.	William		7/3/1912	3/22/1981	
Twyman, Sr.	Albert		1/22/1913	10/27/1951	
Waddell	Stella Beatrice	(Wisdom)	3/1/1901	6/18/1989	
Walker	Andrew	Jackson	8/10/1924	10/18/1965	
Wallace Spears	Emma Belle	(Fields)	c. 1916	9/19/1988	
Waters	Dora Mae	(Phillips)	5/18/1911	7/18/1999	
Waters	Tommie	Lewis	7/13/1907	12/19/1980	
Watts	Matthew	Liggings	10/11/1896	8/24/1951	
Weaver, Sr.	John	Daniel	6/19/1894	2/26/1980	
West	Arthur		12/25/1890	7/30/1952	aka Henry G. Bryant
Whitley	Lester		7/4/1898	8/5/1959	
Wilborn	Alfonzo		1/9/1909	7/25/1981	
Williams	Carl		9/30/1895	2/11/1960	
Williams	Elbert	Lee	8/15/1895	9/22/1957	
Willis	Peter		2/1/1903	7/17/1963	
Winder	James	Laron	10/14/1908	2/8/1962	
Witherspoon	John	H.	5/7/1894	9/11/1963	
Woodberry	Herbert	Andrew	9/28/1918	7/17/1973	
Woodson	Carl	Thomas	3/14/1923	8/27/2002	
Woodson	Oscar	J	10/2/1906	5/17/1973	

Key Words: African Americans; Blacks; Mansfield; Richland County; WWII; Steel industry; Steel mill; Empire Steel; Empire Detroit Steel; AK Steel; Steel workers; Photographs; Portraits; Pictures; Identified persons.

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