

The Isaac Burton Tigrett Collection
Tennessee Room
Jackson Madison County Library

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The collection was processed by Brendan Rowe, Tennessee Room Librarian, December 2022.

Preferred Citation

The Isaac Burton Tigrett collection, Jackson – Madison County Library, Tennessee Room.

Dates

1900 - 1978

Biography

This collection pertains to the life and business ventures of Isaac Burton Tigrett, a man of humble beginnings who became, through being in the right place at the right time, the president of a railroad that stretched from the Gulf Coast to Chicago. Self-deprecating and sincere, Tigrett never adopted the persona of a cutthroat industrialist. He practiced humanitarian efforts throughout the regions served by his railroad, leading to investments in farming, mail routes, and education not only in Jackson but also in many of the poor communities linked to Jackson by rail. He lacked pretense and, when interviewed, he sought to dispel mythic notions about him: he was, in actuality, a mediocre student; the football game he played with Union against Yale was not “almost a victory” as his team did not score a single point; he never held dreams of working for a railroad but would have preferred being an engineer.

We are left with an image of a kind and decent man, and his values are reflected upon the business he created. Included in the collection are excerpts from public statements, speeches, news and magazine articles, as well as information related to the growth and acquisition of the railroad he was president of.

Scope and Content

The contents of this collection are from two different sources. The Tennessee Room maintained a vertical file of biographical and business information related to Isaac Tigrett. Three artifacts and an official portrait were included from elsewhere in the archive. Items from the vertical file were divided into two different sections and organized chronologically. Box 1 contains biographical information. Box 2 contains information about the railroad network that he was instrumental in creating. Box 3 contains a pair of three ring binders, each of them filled with excerpts or speeches in whole. Box 4 contains a scrapbook and an official portrait. Because Isaac Tigrett was subject to several articles about both him and his business, distinction was made contextually on the contents of each article to better define placement. Some documents sorted into Box 2 do contain biographical information but only to the extent to provide context for Tigrett’s position as a railroad magnate and to support the narrative of a given article. Additional items sorted into Box 2 are several pieces of correspondence related to requests for information regarding the company and the history of the train companies it had acquired.

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Scope and Content, continued

Two items in Box 1 (Folders 17 & 21) had no clear definition of the exact date; for Folder 17, the time frame was narrowed down based upon references to acquisitions to some point in the mid-40's; for Folder 21, the time frame was determined as being after 1950 but before 1954 due to the reference of Lane College's president. The item listed as "Director's Tour" (Box 2, Folder 17) was originally an ad-hoc scrapbook containing newspaper clippings pertaining to executive operations and business statements published throughout 1950. The scrapbook was disassembled and filed in a single file folder; the same organization present in original form is kept, and the original folder is included within.

Items in Boxes 3 and 4 were processed as artifacts and left in their original state. Numbering was provided for the pages for the scrapbook in Box 4; additionally, the final page was discarded as it was left blank.

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Contents List

Box 1

Folder

1. Excerpt from *Tennessee: A History* (1933); biographical information.
2. 1900 Census
3. 1920 Census
4. Article from *The Jackson Sun*, copies and original, about Tigrett's early life.
5. "The Iron Gate Swings Open", a pamphlet containing remarks made by Tigrett, 1929.
6. "Commerce – Ancient and Modern", a pamphlet containing remarks made by Tigrett, 1932.
7. "The Lesson We Won't Learn", a pamphlet containing remarks made by Tigrett, 1932.
8. Photocopy of article from *McNairy County Independent*, 1940, "A Man and His Dream."
9. Photocopy of article from *The Commercial Appeal*, 1940, "Preacher's Boy Builds Railroad Empire."
10. Typed copy of article from *Newsweek*, 1940.
11. Photocopy of articles from *Time*, 1940 & 1945.
12. "Peace Hath Her Victories", a pamphlet containing remarks made by Tigrett, 1940.
13. Photocopy and original article from *The Commercial Appeal*, 1945, "From Jerk-Water Road to Rail Empire."
14. Copy and glossy photo of Isaac Tigrett and others, 1946, "Founder's Day" at Union University for SAE fraternity. Identification of subjects found on verso of copy.
15. Photocopy and original article, *The Saturday Evening Post*, 1947, "The Hesitant Hero of Jackson."
16. Photocopy of article from unidentified source, 1947, "Railroad Empire Built by Ex-Country Banker."
17. Newspaper clipping from unidentified source, 1940's, "Tigrett Built Major System From 49 Miles of Track."

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Box 1, continued

Folder

18. Typed copy and photo copy from *Salt Lake Telegram*, 1950, "Railroad Executive Visits on Way to Coast."
19. Photocopy from *The Jackson Sun*, 1951, "Ripley Paper Points to I.B. Tigrett As Early Halls Banker."
20. Photocopy from *GM&O News*, 1952, "Isaac Burton Tigrett: Father of the GM&O."
21. "Patriots of Peacetime", a pamphlet containing remarks made by Tigrett, early 1950's.
22. "My Railroad Saga", two pamphlets written by Tigrett containing his autobiography.
23. Photocopy of Tigrett's obituary, *The Jackson Sun*, 1954, "I.B. Tigrett, Dean of Rail Executives, Dies At Age 74."
24. Dedication to Tigrett published by *GM&O News*, 1954.

Box 2

Folder

1. "Corporate & Chronological History of the Gulf, Mobile, and Northern Railroad Co.", 1920's.
2. Train ticket, Japanese. 1927.
3. Memo issued by Tigrett regarding company policy in reaction to Great Depression, 1938.
4. Issue of publication for rail line, "The Bride Writes Home."
5. B.M. Sheridan correspondence, 1945.
6. "History of the Alton Railroad", 1945.
7. Reprinted article from *Lawyers Monthly*, "Squeezing Last Harriman Water from the Alton", 1945.
8. E.I. Williams correspondence, 1945.
9. Marie Owen correspondence, 1946.
10. Carl Fox correspondence, 1946-1947.

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Box 2, continued

Folder

11. Lois Oakley correspondence, 1947.
12. Jameson Jones correspondence, 1947.
13. Reprinted article from *The Geographical Review*, 1949, "The Railroad Pattern of the United States."
14. *GM&O News*, 1949, featuring write-up for Bellingrath Gardens.
15. Annual GM&O Report, 1950.
16. Director's Tour
17. *Investor's Reader*, 1951.
18. Pages from unidentified publication, 1951.
19. *Forbes* magazine, 1952.
20. *Cross-Tie Bulletin*, 1952.
21. *Traffic World*, 1952, "New Traffic for Gulf, Mobile, and Ohio Created Chemurgic Upsurge in South."
22. *GM&O News*, 1952, "Board of Directors Dedicates Portrait of Chairman Tigrett."
23. Annual Report, *National Securities Series*, 1952.
24. A copy of a memorandum issued throughout the company upon the passing of Tigrett, 1954.
25. Photocopy of article from *The Jackson Sun*, 1958, "Rebels' Gone After 100 Years."
26. Insurance information issued by GM&O, 1972.
27. Newspaper article, *The Commercial Appeal*, 1978, "When the Rebel Trains Ruled the Rails of Dixie."

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Box 3

Contains two small three ring binders filled with speeches and remarks made by Tigrett. Binder 1 (olive-colored), titled "Signals: Taken from the Public Speeches of a Railroad President", organizes several hundred pages of excerpts to communicate the theme of Tigrett's personal philosophy. Binder 2 (brown with a green spine) is an index containing several hundreds of pages of excerpts from speeches made by Tigrett, organized here alphabetically by topic.

Box 4

Contains a scrapbook, "Tigrett Memorial", 24 pages; contained within are two copies of a pamphlet pertaining to a portrait dedication ceremony, photographs of Tigrett and his wife, photographs of trains throughout the history of the rail road, as well as newspaper clippings and supplementary information. Also contained within Box 4, in an insert underneath the scrapbook, is an official portrait of Tigrett.