
Giffen Incorporated Records csf.2004.001

Processing of this collection was funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and administered by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives program.

Special Collections Research Center, California State University, Fresno

5200 North Barton Avenue, M/S ML 34

Fresno, CA, 93740-8014

(559) 278-2595

specialc@listserv.csufresno.edu

12/23/2011

Title: Giffen Incorporated

Identifier/Call Number: csf.2004.001

Contributing Institution: Special Collections Research Center, California State University, Fresno

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 78.25 Linear feet

Date (bulk): Bulk, 1946-1983

Date (inclusive): 1911-2000

creator: Giffen, Russell

creator: Giffen, Ruth Price

creator: Giffen, Wylie

History

Russell Giffen was born on April 23, 1902 to Wylie and May Giffen, the last of four children. Wylie Giffen was a farmer in the Mendota area and a major player in the grape and raisin industry in the early 20th century. In 1924 Russell Giffen married Ruth Price. Giffen farmed on leased land near Arvin, California, during the 1920s, until the depression hit and he moved to Mendota to help on his father's farm. A difference in opinion regarding cotton irrigation resulted in Russell Giffen going into business for himself again, this time doing custom farm tillage and gleaning harvested cotton fields.

Around 1934 Giffen leased 640 acres of farmland in the Cantua Creek area of Western Fresno County. Seeking financing to drill a well, Giffen contacted R.V. Johnson, the crop finance vice president of Anderson, Clayton & Co (ACCO). ACCO refused to finance the well, but Johnson personally advanced the money needed. This 640-acre farm was the beginning of the what would become known as Russell Giffen and Company. The farming operation started with 640 acres and expanded to 54,000 by World War II. During the war, taxes approaching 90% on Giffen's farming operation led to the operations' earnings being less than the capital debt payments. ACCO agreed to carry the finance disparity, but once the war ended Giffen decided to sell in order to become more financially secure. After offering the sale to ACCO rival Producer's Cotton Oil Co., ACCO agreed to purchase the farming operation, setting Russell Giffen up as the farm manager for 18 months.

Finding being ACCO's farm manager not to his liking, largely due to disagreements with ACCO executives over how the operation should be managed, Giffen gathered several of his farm management team and started two new business endeavors. The first was called Giffen Inc., which was also known as Pasajero Farms, and was solely owned by Russell and Ruth Giffen. The second operation was called Employees Enterprises Inc. and was 85% owned by members of Giffen's farm management group, with the remainder owned by Russell and Ruth Giffen. Each farm consisted of approximately 10,000 acres, both leased and purchased, with Giffen Inc. being located near the town of Huron and Employees Enterprises west of Mendota. Another Giffen Inc. operation was later added at Cantua and the operation grew until totaling 120,000 acres. Of this 120,000 acres, approximately 50,000 was owned by the two corporations, with the remaining 70,000 being leased. Around half of the leased land was owned by the Southern Pacific Land Co., with the remainder being a mix of original homesteaders, oil speculators, sheep herders and others.

Giffen Inc. and Employees Enterprises Inc. operated until 1968 solely using well water. As the ground water had high alkalinity and contained boron, the crops which could be grown on the farms was somewhat limited, with the primary crops being cotton, cereal grains, melons, alfalfa, tomatoes, potatoes and sugar beets. After receiving canal water in 1968, the Giffen operation started growing wine grapes and vegetables, but these never became major crops. Long-term irrigation using well water, as well as irrigating virgin soil containing gypsum caused a significant amount of subsidence, with the company's headquarters in Huron dropping 9 to 10 feet over the course of 20 years.

In 1953 the stockholders of Employees Enterprises Inc., except for Russell and Ruth Giffen, decided to sell their interest in the company. Giffen Inc. purchased the remaining stock and Employees Enterprises was folded into Giffen Inc.

In 1957 Russell Giffen and a group of investors bought a property near Gila Bend, Arizona, called the Gillespie Ranch. It was renamed the Gila River Ranch and consisted of approximately 120,000 acres, with 80,000 being owned and the remainder being leased. A large portion of the ranch consisted of feedlots for cattle. The main crops grown at the ranch were grain, alfalfa, safflower and Bermuda grass. Cotton was initially a main crop grown at the ranch but because of government acreage quotas, Gila River Ranch only had an allotment of 20 acres and all excess cotton was subject to a 50% price penalty, and was forced to give up cotton as a main crop. Gila River Ranch struggled to make a profit and in 1968 was sold to Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co.

The 1960s were an active time for Giffen Inc. In the early 1960s Giffen Inc. decided it needed to control the ginning of its cotton crop and to that effect it partnered with neighboring farmers and purchased Kingsburg Cotton Oil Co., with Giffen Inc. owning a controlling 51% of the stock. The company was renamed Giffen Ginning Inc. Giffen Inc.'s office was also relocated in the 1960s, moving to the 8th floor of the T.W. Patterson building in Fresno in 1968.

In 1964 Russell Giffen and Giffen Inc. purchased a cattle ranch along the Kings River, near Piedra. Russell Giffen named it the River Ranch. Crops that were planted included citrus, wine grapes and olives. The rest of the property was used for cattle grazing. Russell Giffen also built a new home on this property, using it for several events. The farming property was sold in 1975 to Jack Harris Farms, with Harris also purchasing the home in 1983 after Russell Giffen's death.

In the late 1960's Freeway I-5 was built, with rights of way through the Giffen Inc. properties being bought by the government. Also in the late 1960's acreage allotments were lifted, allowing Giffen Inc. to determine how much cotton they could plant. Giffen Inc. reached the height of its influence at this point, with Russell Giffen being a major player in the cotton industry and being able to obtain changes in legislation through Congressman Bernie Sisk.

From early on in Giffen Inc.'s history there had been much interest in oil and gas exploration and various oil ventures leased mineral rights on Giffen Inc. property, sometimes with Russell Giffen as a financing partner. Several exploratory wells were drilled, but only minor deposits were found and none proved to be successful. Russell Giffen also invested in an oil and gas venture in Mexico. Though the area was a proven oil field, it proved to be extremely difficult to get the permits to drill, with government officials having to be bribed with no success at gaining the permits. Eventually, after 10 to 12 years of this, the venture was abandoned.

In 1968 Giffen Inc.'s west side properties began receiving canal water provided by the Bureau of Reclamation. Accepting reclaimed water meant that Giffen Inc. had to enter into a contract with the Bureau of Reclamation to comply with the 1902 reclamation act which limited landowners to 160 acres of land per person or 320 acres per corporation. All additional land receiving reclaimed water was known as excess land and had to be sold at Bureau approved prices within 10 years. Between 1969 and 1973, Russell Giffen suffered two heart attacks as well as a minor stroke while horseback riding which caused him to fall and break his hip, requiring replacement. With Russell Giffen in poor health he decided to sell all Giffen Inc. properties in Westlands Water District. By 1974 all west side property had been sold to 52 different buyers. In 1976 ownership of the remaining 150 acres of the River Ranch containing the Giffen residence was transferred to Russell and Ruth Price Giffen and Giffen Inc. was officially defunct.

Russell Giffen maintained an office after the end of Giffen Inc. primarily to complete Giffen Inc. tax documents, and other paperwork. He often consulted with other west side farmers and agricultural and political figures. Ruth Price Giffen died in February of 1978. A few years later, Russell Giffen married Blanche O'Brien. In 1982 Russell Giffen was diagnosed with cancer and died on January 19, 1983.

Adapted from Woolf, Jack. *Giffen Inc., A History From 1946-1976 of Russel Giffen's Ranch*, 2000.

Scope and Content note

The Giffen Incorporated collection measures 78.25 linear feet and dates from 1911 to 1983. The collection is arranged in eleven series: Employees Enterprises, Giffen family-personal, Giffen Ginning Company, Giffen Incorporated, Gila River Ranch, History, Hunting and fishing permits, Mexico oil and gas venture, River Ranch, Russell Giffen and Company, and Wylie Giffen. This collection was only processed to the sub-series level.

The **Employees Enterprises** series (1946-1980) consists of records of the subsidiary corporation of Giffen Inc. founded by Russell and Ruth Price Giffen, several of Giffen's former employees, and a few new partners. The series is composed of budgets, ledgers, minutes and stock certificates, as well as land purchase, lease and sale documents.

The **Giffen family-personal** series (1931-1983) is composed largely of materials related to Russell and Ruth Giffen's personal finances, taxes, and estate as well as a small amount of material related to their children and other relatives.

The **Giffen Ginning Company** series (1960-1974) is comprised of materials related to the ginning subsidiary of Giffen Inc. created in order to process their cotton crop. It is composed of budgets and ledgers.

The **Giffen Incorporated** series (1946-1981) is the largest series of the collection by bulk, and consists of all materials created by Giffen Inc. proper. These include financial records such as bank statements, ledgers and tax records. Also included in this series are land purchase and sale documents, lease records for land and mineral rights, crop sale information, maps, minutes and stock certificates.

The Gila River Ranch series (1956-1976) consists of the records of the subsidiary corporation formed by Russell Giffen and other investors to farm in Arizona. The materials in the series include the articles of incorporation, budget materials, ledgers, stock certificates, land purchases and sales documents and general subject files.

The **History** series (2000) consists of a history and biography of Russell Giffen and his farming operations written by one of his former employees, Jack Woolf.

The **Hunting and fishing permits** series (1967-1973, 1976, 1980) contains correspondence and permission slips granted by Giffen Inc., Employees Enterprises, Gila River Ranch and the River Ranch.

The **Mexico oil and gas venture** series (1941-1942, 1947-1963, 1966-1974, 1978) contains the records of Russell Giffen's unsuccessful attempt to get into the Mexican petroleum market.

The **River Ranch** series (1963-1976, 1979-1983) is comprised of materials related to the last business owned and operated by Russell and Ruth Giffen. It includes financial records, ledgers, maps, purchase and sale documents and tax files.

The **Russell Giffen and Company** series (1928, 1932-1955, 1959) consists of materials related to a farming venture started by Russell Giffen prior to Giffen Inc. The series consists of financial statements, ledgers, purchase and sale documents, maps, tax documents and subject files.

The **Wylie Giffen** series (1911-1937, 1941, 1957-1959) relates to the farming operation owned by Russell Giffen's father, and contains the earliest materials in the collection. It consists of correspondence, ledgers, tax documents and subject files as well as materials related to Wylie Giffen's estate.

Acquisition

The collection was donated by Price Giffen through the auspices of Jack Woolf in 2004.

Copyright

The library can only claim physical ownership of the collection. Users are responsible for satisfying any claimants of literary property.

Access

The collection is open for research.

Preferred Citation

Giffen Incorporated Collection. Special Collections Research Center, Henry Madden Library, California State University, Fresno.

Related Collections

The National Land for People collection, 1850-1991, Special Collections Research Center, Henry Madden Library, California State University, Fresno

Processing Information note

Processing of the Giffen Incorporated Records was generously funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and administered by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR). The Henry Madden Library, California State University, Fresno was awarded a Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives grant from 2010-2012, "Uncovering California's Environmental Collections," in collaboration with eight additional special collections and archival repositories throughout the state and the California Digital Library (CDL). Grant objectives included processing of over 33 hidden collections related to the state's environment and environmental history. The collections document an array of important sub-topics such as irrigation, mining, forestry, agriculture, industry, land use, activism, and research. Together they form a multifaceted picture of the natural world and the way it was probed, altered, exploited and protected in California over the twentieth century. Finding aids are made available through the Online Archive of California (OAC).

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Carruth, Les

Employees Enterprises.

Giffen Incorporated.

Giffen, Hill

Giffen, Price

Giffen, Ross

Gila River Ranch.

Goforth, Jess

Jertberg, Gilbert

Kimball, Joe

Lowe, Jim

Russell Giffen and Company.

The River Ranch.

Thomas, Jack

Thomas, Lewis

Woolf, Jack

Uncovering California's Environmental Collections Project

Employees Enterprises 1946-1980

General Physical Description note: Boxes 1-8

Budgets and financial statements 1949-1964

General Physical Description note: Boxes 1-2

Equipment and asset ledgers 1950-1959

General Physical Description note: Box 3

General ledgers 1946-1964

General Physical Description note:

Lease documents 1946-1955

General Physical Description note: Box 7

Minutes 1946-1964

General Physical Description note: Box 7

Purchase documents and deeds 1946-1966

General Physical Description note: Boxes 7-8

Sale and dissolution 1963-1965, 1971-1972

General Physical Description note: Box 8

Stock certificates 1946-1953, 1964

General Physical Description note: Box 8

Stockholder payments 1967-1980

General Physical Description note: Box 8

Tax documents and returns 1946-1963

General Physical Description note: Box 8

Giffen family-personal 1931-1983 and undated

General Physical Description note: Boxes 9-14

Giffen family tax documents and returns 1945-1951

General Physical Description note: Box 9

Russell and Ruth Price Giffen blueprints

General Physical Description note:
[oversize: in Box 97]

Russell and Ruth Price Giffen checkbooks 1953-1959

General Physical Description note: Box 9

Russell and Ruth Price Giffen correspondence 1947-1979

General Physical Description note: Boxes 9-10

Russell and Ruth Price Giffen estate 1960-1964, 1971-1979

General Physical Description note: Box 10

Russell and Ruth Price Giffen insurance documents 1937, 1940, 1946, 1970-1974, 1977-1981

General Physical Description note: Box 10

Russell and Ruth Price Giffen ledgers 1946-1978

General Physical Description note: Boxes 11-12 [oversize: in Box 97]

Russell and Ruth Price Giffen purchase documents and deeds 1946-1962, 1974-1978

General Physical Description note: Box 12

Russell and Ruth Price Giffen tax documents and returns 1934-1981

General Physical Description note: Boxes 12-13

Russell and Ruth Price Giffen v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue 1947-1950

General Physical Description note: Box 13

Russell and Ruth Price Giffen miscellaneous 1931-1938, 1943-1983

General Physical Description note: Boxes 13-14

Giffen Ginning Company 1960-1974

General Physical Description note: Boxes 15-17

Budgets and financial statements 1960-1969

General Physical Description note: Box 15

General ledgers 1960-1963, 1971-1974

General Physical Description note: Boxes 15-17

Giffen Incorporated 1946-1981

General Physical Description note: Boxes 18-68

Bank statements and deposits 1973-1974

General Physical Description note: Box 18 [oversize: in Box 98]

Budgets 1947-1974

General Physical Description note: Boxes 18-22

Crop ledgers 1970-1974

General Physical Description note: Boxes 23-24

Crop sales 1947, 1958-1959, 1974-1975, 1982

General Physical Description note: Box 24

Equipment and asset ledgers 1948-1974

General Physical Description note: Boxes 25-28

General ledgers 1946-1974

General Physical Description note: Boxes 29-39 [oversize: in Box 98]

Highway encroachment permits 1970-1973

General Physical Description note: Box 40

Land sales 1957-1981

General Physical Description note: Boxes 40-46

Lease documents 1946-1974

General Physical Description note: Boxes 47-55

Maps undated

General Physical Description note: [oversize: in Box 98]

Minutes 1946-1974

General Physical Description note: Box 56

Oil and gas exploration 1950-1981

General Physical Description note: Box 56-59

Purchase documents and deeds 1946-1975

General Physical Description note: Boxes 60-66

Stock certificates 1946

General Physical Description note: Box 67

Tax documents and returns 1947-1979

General Physical Description note: Box 67

Miscellaneous 1946-1978

General Physical Description note: Boxes 67-68

Gila River Ranch 1956-1976

General Physical Description note: Boxes 69-77

Articles of incorporation and minutes 1957-1963

General Physical Description note: Box 69

Flow easements 1957-1972

General Physical Description note: Box 71

Budgets and financing 1956-1958, 1963-1965

General Physical Description note: Box 69

Equipment and asset ledgers 1958-1968

General Physical Description note: Box 70

General ledgers 1957-1970

General Physical Description note: Boxes 72-74

Lease documents 1957, 1962-1969

General Physical Description note: Box 75

Purchase documents and deeds 1957-1960, 1964-1965

General Physical Description note: Box 75

Sale, quitclaim deeds and dissolution 1962, 1964-1971

General Physical Description note: Boxes 75-76

Stock certificates 1957-1958, 1964, 1972

General Physical Description note: Box 76

Miscellaneous 1956-1976

General Physical Description note: Boxes 76-77

History 2000

General Physical Description note: Box 78

Hunting and fishing permits 1967-1973, 1976, 1980

General Physical Description note: Box 78

Mexico oil and gas venture 1941-1942, 1947-1963, 1966-1974, 1978

General Physical Description note: Box 78

River Ranch 1963-1976, 1979-1983

General Physical Description note: Boxes 79-84

Budgets 1965-1975

General Physical Description note: Box 79

Crop ledgers 1964-1974

General Physical Description note: Box 80

Equipment and asset ledgers 1964-1974

General Physical Description note: Box 80

General ledgers 1963-1974

General Physical Description note: Boxes 81-82 [oversize: in Box 99]

Lease documents 1965-1975, 1979

General Physical Description note: Box 83

Maps 1966-1969, 1974 and undated

General Physical Description note: [oversize: in Box 100]

Purchase documents and deeds 1964-1975, 1981

General Physical Description note: Box 83

Tax documents and returns

General Physical Description note:
83-84

Miscellaneous 1973-1976, 1979-1983

General Physical Description note: Box 84

Russell Giffen and Company 1928, 1932-1955, 1959

General Physical Description note: Boxes 84-93

Bank and financial statements 1934-1937, 1941-1952

General Physical Description note: Box 85

Checkbooks 1946-1951 and undated

General Physical Description note: Box 85 [oversize: in Box 101]

General ledgers 1935-1951

General Physical Description note: Boxes 86-88

Insurance documents 1936-1946

General Physical Description note: Box 89

Lease documents 1932-1952

General Physical Description note:

Liquidation 1946, 1951, 1959

General Physical Description note: Box 90

Maps 1941-1942 and undated

General Physical Description note: Box 90

Payroll 1939-1943

General Physical Description note: Box 90

Purchase documents and deeds 1928, 1932-1948, 1951

General Physical Description note: Box 91

Tax documents and returns 1934-1955

General Physical Description note: Box 91-92

Miscellaneous 1934-1949

General Physical Description note: Boxes 92-95

Wylie Giffen 1911-1937, 1941, 1957-1959

General Physical Description note: Boxes 95-96

Correspondence 1921-1925, 1929-1935

General Physical Description note: Box 95

Estate 1936-1937, 1941, 1957-1959

General Physical Description note: Box 95

Ledgers 1930-1932

General Physical Description note: Box 95

Tax documents and returns 1922, 1926-1936

General Physical Description note: Box 95

Miscellaneous 1911-1922, 1925-1936

General Physical Description note: Boxes 95-96
