
Isaac Bonsall Collection of Photographs: Finding Aid

Finding aid prepared by Diann Benti.

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

Photo Archives

1151 Oxford Road

San Marino, California 91108

Phone: (626) 405-2191

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URL: <http://www.huntington.org>

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Overview of the Collection

Title: Isaac Bonsall Collection of Photographs

Dates (inclusive): approximately 1862-1880

Bulk dates: 1862-1864

Collection Number: photCL 491

Creator: Bonsall, Isaac, 1833-1909, photographer.

Extent: 54 photographs in 2 boxes: albumen prints; various sizes

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Abstract: This collection contains 54 photographs by photographer Isaac H. Bonsall (1833-1909) chiefly depicting the landscape and Union Army operations during the American Civil War in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and the surrounding regions, from approximately 1862 to 1865. The prints primarily document encampments, buildings, artillery, steamships, railroad bridges, and soldiers. Two images were not taken by Bonsall and include copyright information for photographer N. Brown.

Language: English.

Note:

Finding aid last updated on February 25, 2020.

Access

Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Isaac Bonsall Collection of Photographs, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Provenance

Received as four separate accessions:

Items 13-30, and 41, gift of John Boland, December 2008.

Items 40, 42-45, and 47-51, purchased for the Huntington from the Andrew Smith Gallery by the Library Collectors' Council, January 2009.

Items 1-12, 31-39, 46, and 52-53, gift of John Boland, November 2009.

Items 29.1, 29.2, 29.3, gift of Claire Lozier and Andrew Smith, December 2019.

Biographical Note

Isaac H. Bonsall (1833-1909) was born in December 1833. He grew up around Cincinnati, Ohio, and opened his own photography studio there in the 1850s. In the late 1850s, he moved to Kansas, and worked primarily in the Leavenworth area, including in a brief partnership with ambrotypist John T. Needles. During this time, he also worked in New Orleans, Louisiana. Bonsall returned to Ohio in late 1859.

In September 1862, Bonsall joined the Union army. He was attached to the engineering department of the Army of the Cumberland and assigned to photograph maps at the headquarters of General William S. Rosecrans. While with the Army, he also photographed soldiers and officers and documented military building and engineering projects and the aftermath of battles. In particular, Bonsall documented the area and projects around Chattanooga, Tennessee, during the Siege of Chattanooga in late 1863 and into 1864.

Bonsall was discharged from the Army in 1865 and following his wartime service returned to running his photography gallery. In 1871, he returned to Leavenworth, and in 1872 relocated to Arkansas City, Kansas, where he worked as a photographer, as well as in local government. In Arkansas City, he apprenticed photographer William S. Prettyman. Bonsall

died on September 8, 1909.

Scope and Content

This collection contains 54 photographs by photographer Isaac H. Bonsall chiefly depicting the landscape and Union Army operations during the American Civil War in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Lookout Mountain, Georgia, Corinth, Mississippi, and the surrounding regions, from approximately 1862 to 1865. The prints primarily document encampments, buildings, artillery, steamships, railroad bridges, and soldiers. The collection also includes some portraits of soldiers and Union officers, including the officers of the 1st United States Veteran Volunteer Engineers (Items 52-53) and Generals William S. Rosencrans (Item 2), John H. King and George H. Thomas (Item 45), and Joseph Hooker (Item 47). Among the images are two images of African American Union troops (Items 34 and 44).

Item 29, a landscape view of grazing farm animals near Arkansas City, Kansas, dates from circa 1875-1880, and is the only image carrying Bonsall's imprint. Items 29.1 - 29.3 also date from after the Civil War. Two images in the collection were not taken by Bonsall and include copyright information for N. Brown (Items 30 and 31).

Alternative Form of Materials Available

Visit the [Huntington Digital Library: United States Civil War](#) to view digitized items from this collection.

Arrangement

The photographs are housed in 2 boxes according to the item numbers assigned by Huntington staff, with larger items removed to Box 2; items are not arranged according to any organizational schema.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the [Huntington Library's Online Catalog](#).

Subjects

Hooker, Joseph, 1814-1879

King, John H. (John Haskell), 1820-1888 -- Photographs.

Rosecrans, William S. (William Starke), 1819-1898 -- Photographs.

Thomas, George H. (George Henry), 1816-1870 -- Photographs.

United States. Army. Veteran Volunteer Engineers Regiment, 1st (1864-1865) -- Photographs.

United States. Army -- Officers -- Photographs.

African American soldiers. -- Photographs.

Soldiers -- Portraits.

Military camps -- Photographs.

Waterfalls -- Georgia -- Photographs.

Arkansas City (Kan.) -- Photographs.

Chattanooga, Battle of, Chattanooga, Tenn., 1863 -- Photographs.

Chattanooga (Tenn.) -- Photographs.

Lookout Mountain, Battle of, Tenn., 1863 -- Photographs.

Lookout Mountain (Ga.) -- Photographs.

Tennessee -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Photographs.

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- African American troops.

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Campaigns -- Photographs.

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Engineering and construction -- Photographs.

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Military facilities -- Photographs.

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Photographs.

Forms/Genres

Photographs.

Additional Entries


Brown, N. (Nicholas), 1820-, photographer.

Photographs


Note

Titles devised by the cataloger are enclosed in square brackets.

Box 1	Photographs (Items 1-13, 16-33, 35-41)
Item 1	[Portrait of a Union soldier], approximately 1863-1864  Physical Description: 11 x 7.5 cm
Item 2	[U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Wm. S. Rosecrans], approximately 1862 Physical Description: 11 x 7 cm
Item 3	[Line of shelters covered with branches near Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1864 Physical Description: 7 x 11 cm
Item 4	[Tents of Battery Mitchell & Co., Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1864 Physical Description: 15 x 22 cm
Item 5	[Stone house with men on porch and with horses, Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1864 Physical Description: 15 x 22 cm
Item 6	[Artillery squad in a Union Redoubt, Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1864 Physical Description: 15 x 22 cm
Item 7	[Aiming siege guns at Lunette Mitchell, inside of Fortress Rosecrans, Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1864 Physical Description: 15 x 22 cm
Item 8	[Artillery and infantry squads by siege guns in Redoubt inside Fortress Rosecrans], approximately 1864 Physical Description: 15 x 22 cm
Item 9	[Overview of Chattanooga, Tennessee, looking toward Lookout Mountain], approximately 1864 Physical Description: 15 x 22 cm
Item 10	[Army post below Signal Hill, Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1864 Physical Description: 15 x 22 cm
Item 11	House presented to Lt. Genl. U.S. Grant by the Citizens of Galena, Ills., approximately 1865  Physical Description: oval 18.5 x 13.5 cm Note Title transcribed from handwritten note on verso.
Item 12	[Machinery and elevation drawings of Chattanooga Water Works], approximately 1864 Physical Description: 20.5 x 24 cm Note Photograph of drawings.
Item 13	[Union army artillery squad posed with cannon], approximately 1864  Physical Description: 13.5 x 18.5 cm






- Item 16 **[Tents of Battery Mitchell & Co., Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1864**
 Physical Description: 15 x 22 cm
- Item 17 **[Skirmish site at farm near Lookout Mt.], approximately 1863-1864**
 Physical Description: 13.5 x 18.5 cm
- Item 18 **[Union cavalry squad and carriage traveling, Tennessee], approximately 1864**
 Physical Description: 13.5 x 18.5 cm
- Item 19 **[Back view of large clapboard house, Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1864**
 Physical Description: 15 x 22 cm
- Item 20 **[Two-story house with veranda, Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1864**
 Physical Description: 7 x 11 cm
- Item 21 **[Large wooden clapboard house, Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1864**
 Physical Description: 15 x 22 cm
- Item 22 **[Large wooden clapboard house, Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1864**
 Physical Description: 15 x 22 cm
- Item 23 **View of mess at supper [Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1864**
 Physical Description: 22 x 15 cm
 Note
 Title transcribed from handwritten note on verso.
- Item 24 **[Group of 7 Union Army soldiers posed in demonstration of eating at mess, possibly Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1862-1863**
 Physical Description: 11 x 7 cm
- Item 25 **[Seated Union army officer], approximately 1862-1863**
 Physical Description: 11 x 7 cm
- Item 26 **Union Army Major/Lt. Colonel, possibly at General Rosecrans' headquarters, Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1862-1863**
 Physical Description: 11 x 7 cm
- Item 27 **[Elevation drawing of Chattanooga Water Works by C.H. Elliott], approximately 1864**
 Physical Description: 12 x 25.5 cm
 Note
 Photograph of drawings.
- Item 28 **[Crawfish Spring, Georgia], 1863 **
 Physical Description: 26 x 33 cm
- Item 29 **[Grazing cattle and pigs in Rocky Valley near Arkansas, Kansas], approximately 1875-1880**
 Physical Description: 20 x 25.5 cm








- Item 29.1 **[Group portrait of large group of men, well-dressed, with hats and many wearing ribbons, as for a convention], approximately 1881**
 Note
 Includes several U.S. flags and numerous rifles. Concession tents in background. Possibly Arkansas City, Kansas or nearby. (Former Sgt. I. H. Bonsall was one of a roster of veterans that established a new encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic in 1881. Possibly a scene of veterans.)
 Physical Description: 25.5 x 31 cm
- Item 29.2 **[Portrait of an unidentified man with beard wearing white shirt and plain coat], approximately 1875-1880**
 Note
 Attributed to Bonsall by donor. Possibly a self-portrait[?].
 Physical Description: 15 x 12 cm
- Item 29.3 **[View of stores and businesses on Summit Street, Arkansas City, Kansas], approximately 1875-1880**
 Note
 Shows storefronts, boardwalk, horses, carriages, businesses with signs. C. R. Sipes' hardware store, seen at left, was established around 1870 on Summit Street. (Source: William G. Cutler, "History of the State of Kansas, Cowley County, Part 9").
 Physical Description: 20 x 25.5 cm
- Item 30 **After the charge, 1862**
 Physical Description: image 15 x 22 cm, mount 25.5 x 30.5 cm
 Note
 Title transcribed from handwritten frame. Matted; "Entered ... 1862, by N. Brown, Photographer ..."--copyright statement on image; "Fort Robbinette near Corinth ... Sept. 6th & 7th 1862"--note on verso
- Item 31 **Fort Robbinette at Corinth [Mississippi], 6th & 7th of Sept. 1862**
 Physical Description: image 15 x 22 cm, mount 25.5 x 30.5 cm
 Note
 Title and date transcribed from handwritten note on verso. Matted; "Entered ... 1862, by N. Brown, Photographer ..."--copyright statement on image
- Item 32 **[Three-story house with picket fence, Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1864**
 Physical Description: image 14.5 x 18 cm, mount 29.5 x 24.5
- Item 33 **[Military Bridge, Chattanooga, Tennessee, taken from the Navy Yard], approximately 1863-1864**
 Physical Description: 26 x 31.5 cm
- Item 35 **[Chattanooga Railroad Yards #3, Tennessee], approximately 1863-1864**
 Physical Description: 25 x 33 cm
- Item 36 **[Man at Lulah Lake, Lookout Mt., Georgia], approximately 1863**
 Physical Description: 32 x 26 cm
- Item 37 **[Slope of Lookout Mt., Georgia], approximately 1863**
 Physical Description: 26 x 33.5 cm
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| Item 38 | [Lulah Falls, Lookout Mt., Georgia], approximately 1863
Physical Description: 26 x 33 cm |
| Item 39 | [Tennessee River near Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1863
Physical Description: 26.5 x 32.5 cm |
| Item 40 | [Indian Mound, near Chattanooga, Tennessee, sanitary garden for convalescents], approximately 1864 
Physical Description: 26 x 32.5 cm |
| Item 41 | [Lulah Falls, Lookout Mt., Georgia], approximately 1863
Physical Description: 26 x 33.5 cm |
| Item 43 | [Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1864 
Physical Description: 26 x 32.5 cm |
| Item 44 | [Camp of U.S. Colored Infantry at Chattanooga, Tenn., near Sanitary Garden], approximately 1864 
Physical Description: 26.5 x 33 cm |
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Box 2

Oversize and matted photographs (Items 14-15, 34, 42, 45-53)

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| Item 14 | [Partial artillery squad in a Union redoubt, Fortress Rosecrans, Murfreesboro, Tennessee], approximately 1863-1864 
Physical Description: 15 x 22 cm
Note
"No. 5" written on verso; matted with Item 15. |
| Item 15 | View of the tents of Battery Mitchell & Company ..., approximately 1863 
Physical Description: 15 x 22 cm
Note
Title transcribed from handwritten note on verso; matted with Item 14. |
| Item 34 | [Close-order Black Platoon Drill in Parade Plaza near Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1864 
Physical Description: 26 x 31.5 cm
Note
Matted. |
| Item 42 | [Group of Union Military and Civilian Men, Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1863-1864 
Physical Description: 31 x 26 cm
Note
Matted. |
| Item 45 | Military bridge across the Tennessee River at Chattanooga, built Oct 1863, approximately 1863-1864 
Physical Description: 27 x 34.5 cm
Note
Title transcribed from handwritten note on verso; matted. |
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- Item 46 **Genl. Thomas and Staff, and Genl. King, Point Lookout, Lookout Mt., approximately 1863**
 Physical Description: image 28 x 22 cm, mount 40.5 x 38 cm
- Item 47 **Genl. Hooker on Point Lookout, Lookout, Mt., approximately 1864** 
 Physical Description: image 28 x 21.5 cm, mount 45 x 38 cm
Note
 Title transcribed from handwritten caption.
- Item 48 **Steamboat [Bridgeport], U.S. Navy Yards, 1864** 
 Physical Description: image 25 x 33 cm, mount 33 x 43 cm
Note
 Title and date transcribed from handwritten caption; matted.
- Item 49 **[Steamboat Kingston on River Chattanooga, Tennessee], approximately 1863-1864** 
 Physical Description: image 26 x 30.5 cm, mount 35.5 x 43 cm
- Item 50 **[Infantry company in formation, Chattanooga Railroad Yards], approximately 1863-1864** 
 Physical Description: 32.5 x 36 cm
Note
 Matted.
- Item 51 **The Navy Yard Chattanooga, Tenn., Capt. Slayton's Mill. I.H. Bonsall, photographer, approximately 1863-1864** 
 Physical Description: image 26 x 32 cm, mount 38 x 45.5 cm
Note
 Title transcribed from handwritten caption.
- Item 52 **Officers, 1st U.S. V.V. Eng'rs ... I.H. Bonsall, Art., approximately 1865** 
 Physical Description: mount 38 x 46 cm
Note
 39 head-and-shoulder portraits of the officers of the 1st United States Veteran Volunteer Engineers, centered around a larger portrait of Col. William E. Merrill, pasted on board with decorative border, with names captioned below each photograph. Title transcribed from handwritten caption.
- Item 53 **Non-Com'd State, 1st U.S.V.V. Engr's, approximately 1865** 
 Physical Description: mount 38 x 46 cm
Note
 8 head-and-shoulder portraits of non-commissioned officers of the 1st United States Veteran Volunteer Engineers, centered around a larger portrait of Lieutenant Horace D. Olds, pasted on board with decorative border, with names captioned below each photograph. Title transcribed from handwritten caption.