



Guide to
MS 025
Critchett and Ferguson
Assayers Records

Span Dates 1902 - 1918,
Bulk Dates 1911 - 1918,

1 foot

Processed by Abbie Weiser
May 14, 2007

Donated by John Ferguson

Citation: Critchett and Ferguson Assayers Records, 1902 – 1918, MS 025, C.L.
Sonnichsen Special Collections Department. The University of Texas at El Paso
Library.

C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department
University of Texas at El Paso

Biography or Historical Sketch

The Custom Assay Office, also known as Critchett and Ferguson, began in El Paso around 1902 and continued until 1950. Otis A. Critchett (1876? – 1950?) and George W. Ferguson (1872 – 1940) worked as assayers, metallurgists, and chemists for individuals and several mining companies in Texas, New Mexico, and Mexico. Critchett and Ferguson (whose sister, Belle, married Critchett in 1901) represented ore shippers, conducted assays and analysis of metals and ores, and did sampling work of car lots at the El Paso smelter. The firm originally began as a partnership between Critchett and Godfrey Hughes in its early years. In 1905 Ferguson joined the business and the Custom Assay Office became known as Critchett and Ferguson, and the business later hired several employees to work in its laboratory. Critchett and Ferguson's office and laboratory, first at 210 San Francisco Street and later at 105 S. Santa Fe Street, often served as an afternoon meeting place for miners waiting the results of assays. Financial transactions, pending the outcome of assay results, also occurred at their office. Critchett and Ferguson's clients included Tom Lea, Sr., Western Copper Company, American Smelting and Refining Company, Pioneer Smelting Company, Sonora Ore Buying Agency, Lone Star Wichile Mining Company, and other mining and ore companies throughout the Southwest.

Series Description or Arrangement

The Critchett and Ferguson Assayers records are arranged in three series:

I. Correspondence

Series is arranged chronologically by date.

II. Account/assay record books

Series is chronologically by date.

III. Other business records

Series is arranged chronologically by date.

Scope and Content Notes

The Critchett and Ferguson Assayers records date 1902 – 1918, bulk 1911 – 1918. Types of records include correspondence, hardcover bound copy books, bills and invoices, and other printed material. Arranged in three series (Correspondence, Account/assay record books, and Other business records), these records document the business activities and assay research and results of the Custom Assay Office, run by

Otis A. Critchett and George W. Ferguson.

The Correspondence series covers the communications between Critchett and Ferguson and mining and ore companies, such as Western Copper Company, American Smelting and Refining Company, Pioneer Smelting Company, Sonora Ore Buying Agency, Lone Star Wichile Mining Company, and several others in the Southwest. Correspondence is primarily incoming and typically requests Critchett and Ferguson to assay samples of metals and ores or deals with other business matters. The correspondence series also includes information about the types of metals that were tested and the methods used by Critchett and Ferguson. The Account/assay record books series documents their research and assay results for various companies and individual clients. These are copy books and the pages are very fragile. The Other business records series contains records of payment and invoices and an assaying certificate from El Paso Smelting Works.

Provenance Statement

Donated by John A. Ferguson in 1998.

Restrictions

Literary Rights Statement

Permission to publish material from the Critchett and Ferguson Assayers records, must be obtained from the C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, the University of Texas at El Paso Library. Citation should read, Critchett and Ferguson Assayers records, C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, the University of Texas at El Paso Library.

Notes to the Researcher

Most of the Critchett and Ferguson Assayers records are fragile and brittle. Please handle with care. Photocopying of materials in poor condition might be restricted.

Researchers should also see:

Belle Christie Ferguson Critchett papers, C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, the University of Texas at El Paso Library.

Container List

Series I. Correspondence

Box #	Folder #	Title	Date
1	1	General business correspondence	1911
1	2	American Smelting and Refining Company express orders	1912
1	3	General business correspondence, 1 of 4	1912
1	4	General business correspondence, 2 of 4	1912
1	5	General business correspondence, 3 of 4	1912
1	6	General business correspondence, 4 of 4	
1	7	General business correspondence	1918
1	8	Separated telegrams and other highly acidic papers	1911 – 1912, 1918

Series II. Account/assay record books

Box #	Folder #	Title	Date
2	1	Bound assay record book (very brittle)	about 1902
2	2	Bound assay record book (very brittle)	about 1908

Series III. Other business records

Box #	Folder #	Title	Date
2	3	Bills and records of payment	1918
2	4	Assay certificate	after 1902