

# James Sanks Brisbin papers, 1850-1891

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Creator</b>	Brisbin, James S. (James Sanks), 1837-1892
<b>Title</b>	James Sanks Brisbin papers
<b>Dates</b>	1850-1891 (inclusive) 1850 1891
<b>Quantity</b>	2 linear feet of shelf space
<b>Collection Number</b>	MC 39 (collection)
<b>Summary</b>	James Brisbin, a Boalsburg, Pennsylvania, native, served as an Army officer in the Civil War and the Indian Wars, 1868-1891. He was stationed at Fort Ellis, Fort Assiniboine, Fort Custer, Montana Territory, and many other western forts. Brisbin was also a writer and publicist. The collection contains a small amount of correspondence (1860-1890), and writings (1850-1891) concerning the Army, the Indian Wars, the West, and Montana Territory.
<b>Repository</b>	<a href="#">Montana Historical Society, Research Center Archives</a> Montana Historical Society Research Center Archives 225 North Roberts PO Box 201201 Helena MT 59620-1201 Telephone: 406-444-2681 Fax: 406-444-5297 <a href="mailto:mhslibrary@mt.gov">mhslibrary@mt.gov</a>
<b>Access Restrictions</b>	Collection open for research.
<b>Languages</b>	English
<b>Sponsor</b>	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

---

## Biographical Note

James Sanks Brisbin was born at Boalsburg, Pennsylvania, May 23, 1837. He attended Boalsburg academy and received a college education. Upon completion of his schooling, he purchased and edited the Centre Democrat, at Bellefonte, Pennsylvania. During the same period, Brisbin studied law and was later admitted to the bar of Pennsylvania. He was known in Pennsylvania as an anti-slavery orator. He enlisted in the Union Army in 1861, and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the First Dragoons. Brisbin subsequently served in both major theaters of the war, as a line officer, staff officer, and organizer of regiments of Negro cavalry. In this latter capacity he was promoted to Colonel of the 5th U.S. Colored Cavalry. During his war service, Brisbin attained the commissioned rank of captain and the brevet rank of major general of volunteers. After the war he remained in the regular army, aiding in the establishment of the Freedman's Bureau and in organizing the colored regiments. In 1868 he was stationed in the West. From 1868 until the time of his death in 1892, Brisbin served in the northwestern United States as an officer in several cavalry regiments, including the Second, Ninth, First, and Eighth regiments. During his western career, he was a staff officer, battalion or squadron commander, post commander, and regimental commander; and served at Fort D. A.

Russell, Fort Pease on the Yellowstone River, Boise Barracks, Omaha Barracks, Camp Stambaugh, Fort Ellis, Fort Assiniboine, Fort Keogh, Fort Custer, Fort Niobrara, Fort Robinson, Fort McKinney, and finally at Fort Meade in South Dakota. At the time of his death Brisbin was a colonel in command of the Eighth Cavalry Regiment and was in command at Fort Meade. In 1882 Brisbin purchased a ranch on the Yellowstone River and was very interested in agriculture, land, and cattle ranching, for which he acquired the nickname "Grasshopper Jim". He was also a prolific writer. His most widely known works are *The Beef Bonanza* and *Beldon, the White Chief*. Brisbin was a very active publicist and drew heavily upon his experiences and observations in the West to promote the area and its resources. Throughout his career he was a constant contributor of articles and letters to Eastern periodicals on a wide range of subjects. On June 15, 1861 James Brisbin married Mary Jane Wagner. The Brisbin's had four children, John, Marguerita, Alfred, and Catherine. Brisbin's wife died at Fort McKinney in 1887. He married his second wife, Amelia Wilson, in 1891 in Red Wing, Minnesota. In the 1880s due to failing health Brisbin was transferred to the east and resided in Red Wing. He died January 14, 1892 in Philadelphia and was buried in Red Wing, Minnesota.

## Content Description

Papers. 1853-1891. 2 linear feet. This collection consists almost exclusively of drafts and copies of James S. Brisbin's writings. These writings generally focus on his army career, the Plains Indian and the Indian Wars, and other facets of his experiences in the Northwest. Also included are articles and handwritten copies of letters to newspapers on a wide variety of topics. The collection also contains a small amount of correspondence, including Civil War era letters, family letters and correspondence on Brisbin's military career in the West. A portion of this collection has been microfilmed (Microfilm 328).

## Use of the Collection

### Restrictions on Use

Researchers must use collection in accordance with the policies of the Montana Historical Society. The Society does not necessarily hold copyright to all materials in the collection. In some cases permission for use may require additional authorization from the copyright owners. For more information contact an archivist.

### Preferred Citation

Item description and date. Collection Title. Collection Number. Box and Folder numbers. Montana Historical Society Research Center, Archives, Helena, Montana.

## Administrative Information

### Arrangement

Arranged by series. Some material housed in Archives map case. See inventory below for more information.

### Location of Collection

2:5-2

## Acquisition Information

Acquisition information available upon request

## Separated Materials

Maps transferred to Library. See inventory below for more information.

---

## Detailed Description of the Collection

The following section contains a detailed listing of the materials in the collection

### Biographical Materials

Container(s)	Description	Dates
<a href="#">Box/Folder</a>		
1 / 1	Personal record; special statement	1861, undated

### Incoming Correspondence

Container(s)	Description	Dates
<a href="#">Box/Folder</a>		
1 / 2	B-H (correspondents include J.V. Bogert; D.W. Benham; O.B. Harlan [?])	1865-1877, undated
1 / 3	Edmund Shurley	undated
1 / 4	S-W (correspondents include A.G. Shaw; C.R. Wade; unidentified)	1868-1888

### Outgoing Correspondence

Container(s)	Description	Dates
<a href="#">Box/Folder</a>		
1 / 5	Ezra Brisbin (re political conditions)	November 1860
1 / 6	W.B. Kelley (re organization of the Army)	1877

Container(s)	Description	Dates
1 / 7	Miscellaneous (correspondents include Statesman; wife Jane Brisbin; brother; U.S. Congress Committee on Public Lands; Col. George L. Andrews; Gen. E.S. Godfrey)	1867-1892

## Miscellaneous Correspondence

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
1 / 8	Letter from unidentified man to his brother	1868

## Legal Documents

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
1 / 9	Power of attorney	1876

## Maps

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Oversize Folder		
1	Map of Kittson County, Minnesota [Map Case]	undated
Box/Folder		
1 / 10	List of maps transferred to Library Map Collection	

## Reports

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		

Container(s)	Description	Dates
1 / 11	James S. Brisbin's report to General Sheridan on Indian agency fraud [draft]	1878
1 / 12	Appendix A [to Brisbin report]: Charles W. Hoffman statement	1878
1 / 13	Appendix B and E: Horace Countryman affidavit	1876
1 / 14	Appendix C: William Carr affidavit	1874
1 / 15	Appendix D: George Town affidavit	1876
1 / 16	Appendix F and L: H.A. Searls affidavit	1876
1 / 17	Appendix H: Charles W. Hoffman affidavit	undated
1 / 18	Appendix I: Ed Ball statement	1878
1 / 19	Appendix J: William B. McAdow affidavit	undated
1 / 20	Appendix K: Ed Ball, A.J. Hunter, and James Wilson affidavits	undated
1 / 21	Appendix M: George Town affidavit	1876
1 / 22	Appendix N: Ed Ball affidavit	undated
1 / 23	Appendix O, P, and Q: J.R. Wilson and C.L. Clark affidavits; Rev. T.C. Iliff statement	undated
1 / 24	Appendix S: Ed Ball report	1878
1 / 25	Appendix T: George S. Browning report	1878
1 / 26	Appendix V: George W. Frost indictment	1878
1 / 27	Appendix W: Henry C. Countryman, James Walters, Milligan, L. Bravo, J. Siverin, and C. Winckel affidavits	1878
1 / 28	Appendix X: H.C. Bulis orders	1878

## Speeches

Container(s)	Description	Dates
<b>Box/Folder</b>		
1 / 29	Death of Senator John Logan	1886
1 / 30	Fourth of July speech	1858
1 / 31	Fourth of July speech, Crawford, Nebraska	1889
1 / 32	"George Washington"	1881
1 / 33	Miscellaneous	1850s-1880s

## Writings

Container(s)	Description	Dates
<b>Box/Folder</b>		
1 / 34	"Adventures in the Far West, or Life in the Regular Army"	undated
1 / 35	"Adventures in the Far West Recalled from an Indian Campaign"	circa 1887
1 / 36	"Alfalfa: California Notes"	1875
1 / 37	"The Alfalfa Question"	1887
1 / 38	"An Appeal for the Army" (re the Springer Bill)	1888
1 / 39	Army	1888, undated
2 / 1	"Army Sports Out West"	circa 1882
2 / 2	"Bear Story"	undated
2 / 3	"Beef, Beef, Beef"	1884
2 / 4	"The Beef Kingdom"	1884
2 / 5	"The Beef Supply"	1882

Container(s)	Description	Dates
2 / 6	"A Big Horn Hunt" (Belden: the White Chief, chapter 24)	circa 1871
2 / 7	"A Bit of History: Xerxes"	undated
2 / 8	"Black Canon of the Big Horn, Goblin Land"	circa 1890
2 / 9	Black Hills of South Dakota	1875
2 / 10	Brisbin's life in the Army	undated
2 / 11	"The British Disserters"	undated
2 / 12	"A Buffalo Hunt" (Belden: the White Chief, chapter 25)	circa 1871
2 / 13	California	1876, 1878
2 / 14	"Cattle Growing Out West"	undated
2 / 15	"Cheyenne Indians" [outline for Captain Ewers)	undated
2 / 16	"Chicago's Indian Fighter" (re Edmund Shurley)	1889
2 / 17	"Close of a Great Political Campaign"	1886
2 / 18	Crow Indian lands	circa 1881
2 / 19	"Evidence that Diseased Pleuro-Pneumonial Cattle Are Sold for Human Food"	1884
2 / 20	"Farewell" [poem]	undated
2 / 21	"The Farmer's Daughter" [poem]	1856
2 / 22	"Field Notes: Glimpses of Army Life for Harper"	circa 1876
2 / 23	"Glimpses of Poe's Life"	1879
2 / 24	"The Grand National Concert"	circa 1877
2 / 25	"A Great Indian Battle" (re Wagon Box fight)	circa 1888
2 / 26	"The Great Kentucky Crow Roost"	undated

Container(s)	Description	Dates
2 / 27	"The Great Republic Lode"	undated
2 / 28	"Horse Growing Out West" (Beef Bonanza chapter 11)	circa 1881
2 / 29	"Hymen and Cupid" (re marriage and romantic love)	1850s
2 / 30	Indian Legends #1-19 [missing #4, #5, and #8]	undated
2 / 31	"Information for the People" (includes "A Curious Cat Fight" and "Public Land Becoming Scarce")	1891
3 / 1	Jefferson Davis	undated
3 / 2	"Justice to the Indian"	1886
3 / 3	"The King Maker" (re the Earl of Warwick)	circa 1886
3 / 4	"The Language of Signs" (includes glossary)	undated
3 / 5	"Life, Travel in the West, including the Custer Massacre"	circa 1883
3 / 6	"Maginnis Gold Mines"	1882
3 / 7	"Maxims of War" (re military science)	undated
3 / 8	"Montana" (re agricultural and mineral potential)	1878
3 / 9	National Indian policy	1878-1881
3 / 10	Nebraska	1875-1886, undated
3 / 11	Negroes	undated
3 / 12	"The New American Gold Fields" (re northern Idaho)	1884
3 / 13	"New Facts about Lincoln's Assassination"	1890
3 / 14	"The New West"	1890
3 / 15	"A Night in the Rebel Army"	1887



Container(s)	Description	Dates
3 / 16	"Not Only Across but Up and Down the Continent" [outline of proposed book]	undated
3 / 17	"Origins of the War" (re Sioux Indian War of 1866-1868; two versions)	1877, 1889
3 / 18	"Our Indian Problem"	1889
3 / 19	"Our Public Domain"	undated
3 / 20	"The Poe Controversy"	1879
3 / 21	Politics	undated
3 / 22	"The Powder River Country"	circa 1874
3 / 23	Precious metals production (re mining)	circa 1885
3 / 24	Reconstruction in Kentucky (two incomplete versions)	circa 1867
4 / 1-4	"Red Men of America" (book on Indians)	1881
4 / 5	"The Regular Army"	circa 1874
4 / 6	"Remarkable Indians" #1-8 (re Attakullakulla; Totapia; Woman Thief; Catherine Wabose; Black Beaver; John Bushman; Jim Ned; and Mahtotohpa)	undated
4 / 7	"Report of a Talk with Crow Chiefs at Ft. Custer, Mont."	1891
4 / 8	"Resources and Interests of Nebraska" #1, #3, #6, #8 (re tree growing, forest culture, etc.)	1873
4 / 9	Retirement of General John P. Hatch	1886
4 / 10	"A Ringing Army Letter" (re the Springer Bill)	1888
4 / 11	Santees (portion of Belden, the White Chief in different form)	circa 1871
4 / 12	"Scalps, etc." (Belden, the White Chief, chapter 16)	circa 1871
4 / 13	"Sheep Growing Out West (Beef Bonanza, chapters 8-9)	circa 1881

Container(s)	Description	Dates
4 / 14	"Sioux Language, a Complete Dictionary of the Sioux Language As Spoken by that Great and Warlike Tribe of the Plains"	undated
4 / 15	"Sketches of Noted Frontiersmen" (includes Jim Bridger, Sir George Gore, Mariano, Clyburn, Juan Galvan, and Captain Martin Scott)	1872
4 / 16	"The Snake Lands"	1878
4 / 17	"Steamboating on the Missouri" or "Sitting Bull's Country" (two versions of article)	1884
4 / 18	"Tracing the Red Men" (re origins of different Indian tribes?????)	undated
4 / 19	"The True Story of Poe's Life"	1879
5 / 1	"Under What King This Year?" (re American trotting horses)	1884
5 / 2	"Wants the Army Washed"	circa 1886
5 / 3	"The West"	1882
5 / 4	"What the Census Tells Us" (includes "Our Country," "The Roll of the States," "Our Agricultural Wealth," and "The Christian Religions in the United States")	circa 1881, 1888
5 / 5	"Where Gold Is"	1885
5 / 6	"William the Conquerer"	circa 1873
5 / 7	"Woman"	1853
5 / 8	Women	undated
5 / 9	Miscellaneous fragments	undated

## Miscellany

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		

Container(s)	Description	Dates
5 / 10	The Brady Guards of Boalsburg, Pennsylvania	1859
5 / 11	Constitution of the International Cattle and Horse Growers Congress	undated
5 / 12	"Flatboating down the Yellowstone" (written by unidentified woman)	undated
5 / 13	Folk songs	undated
5 / 14	Indian speeches (copied by Brisbin from various sources)	undated
5 / 15	List of artifacts transferred to Museum	
5 / 16	Messages from post commanders, etc. [copies]	1875-1876
5 / 17	Proposed bill allowing Brisbin's retirement as a brigadier general	circa 1887
5 / 18	"St. Xavier's Mission", written by P. Prando, S.J.	1890
5 / 19	Songs of Horace Greeley's presidential campaign	1872
5 / 20	Testimony of Two Belly Woman	1877

## Names and Subjects

### Subject Terms :

Frontier and Pioneer Life  
 Frontier and Pioneer Life--[1860S]  
 Frontier and Pioneer Life--[1870S]  
 Gold Mines and Mining  
 Authors--Montana  
 Crow Indians  
 Dakota Indians  
 Dakota Indians--Wars, 1865-1868  
 Federal Aid to Indians--Montana  
 Horse Industry  
 Indians of North America--Government Relations  
 Indians of North America--Languages  
 Indians of North America--Wars  
 Military Bases  
 Mines and Mineral Resources--Montana--Fergus County  
 Mines and Mineral Resources--Idaho

Missionaries  
Missouri River--Commerce  
Public Lands  
Sheep Ranches  
Steamboats--Missouri River  
United States. Army--Military Life

**Personal Names :**

Brisbin, James S. (James Sanks), 1837-1892  
(creator)

**Geographical Names :**

Bighorn Canyon (Mont. and Wyo.)  
Madison County (Mont.)  
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865

Finding aid prepared by MHS Staff  
2006



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License:  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Creative Commons Licenses in Archives West:  
<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/cc-attr.shtml>