

# WHITFIELD, BRADLEY & CO.



*Cannon and Munitions Manufacturer*



When the war began, the South had few ironworks capable of producing cannons. Confederate Chief of Ordnance Josiah Gorgas noted that “we were not making a gun, a pistol nor a sabre, no shot nor shell.” Soon, however, Clarksville’s Whitfield, Bradley & Co. was among the Tennessee manufacturers casting cannons for the Confederate army.

To meet the demand for munitions, foundries quit making stoves, kettles, and agricultural implements and retooled to produce cannon, shot, and shell. Starting in June 1861, Whitfield, Bradley & Co. cast six- and nine-pounder guns (the weight of the projectiles they fired). Early in 1862, the firm began making twelve-pounder howitzers. The guns were tested for accuracy by



Whitfield, Bradley & Co., established in the 1840s (photo ca. 1860)  
Courtesy Charlie Reust

firing them at a tree across the Cumberland River. The Clarksville *Jeffersonian* reported that “Whitfield, Bradley & Co. are turning out some beautiful cannon.”

Several guns were sent to Fort Donelson. Confederate Maj. Jeremy Gilmer noted “2 small iron guns that were manufactured at Clarksville,” and battery commander Capt. B.G.

Birdwell described them as “two small 9 or 12 pounders, made in Clarksville, of very little account” in his after-action report.

The company produced shot and shell for field artillery and thirty-two-pounder canister rounds for heavy artillery. It also finished several guns for a major cannon manufacturer, Thomas M. Brennan’s Claiborne Machine Works in Nashville. After the surrender of Clarksville in February 1862, Union troops shuttered the munitions factory for the duration of the war. The company reopened with new owners and continues in business today in a different location.



Whitfield, Bradley & Co. Foundry ledger and ammunition - Courtesy Historic Clarksville 1784-2004



Canister and solid shot  
Courtesy Library of Congress



Clarksville Foundry reproduction 1841 six-pounder, fired March 2010 at Fort Defiance re-enactment - Frank Left

