Guide to the Fellows Gear
Shaper Company Records

NMAH.AC.0856
Mitch Toda.
2004
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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title: Fellows Gear Shaper Company Records
Identifier: NMAH.AC.0856
Date: 1896-1999
(bulk 1915-1970)
Extent: 31 Cubic feet (62 boxes, 3 map-folders)
Creator: Fellows Gear Shaper Co., Springfield, Vermont
Regency Savings Bank
Language: English
Summary: The records document primarily the financial aspects of the Fellows Gear Shaper Company and consist of meticulously maintained journals and ledger books. Fellows Gear Shaper Company was a leader and dominant figure in the manufacturing of precision gear production, gear cutting tools, and optical inspection machines in the first half of the 20th century. The company's contribution to the industry enabled the manufacture of gears for textile, automobiles, factory machinery, and other industries.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information
Regency Savings Bank of Houston, Texas, donated the records to the Archives Center on March 2, 2004.

Provenance
In 2002, following the Goldman bankruptcy, these papers were found by Marley Environmental while cleaning out the abandoned Fellows Gear Shaper Company building. Subsequently, the bank that owned the building, Regency Savings Bank of Houston, Texas, donated them to the Archives Center on March 2, 2004.

Processing Information
Processed by Mitch Toda (intern), July 2004; supervised by Alison Oswald, archivist.

Preferred Citation
Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

The Fellows Gear Shaper Company was founded in 1896 by Edwin R. Fellows (1865-1945) in Springfield, Vermont. With only one year of high school education, Fellows was employed as a department store clerk and window dresser before entering the machine tool industry. He got his start in the business after becoming acquainted with James Hartness of the Jones and Lamson Machine Company in 1885. Hartness offered Fellows a job at his company which Fellows eventually accepted, going to work for Hartness in 1889.

While his first few weeks at Jones and Lamson were spent working on a screw machine, Fellows was soon working with Hartness in machine design and Fellows's efforts led to the development of the flat-turret lathe. Immersed in the machine tool industry, Fellows developed an interest in gear-cutting problems. After some time spent at his drafting board, Fellows developed a new principle in gear manufacturing.

His new process was a great improvement upon previous methods of gear cutting. At the time, gears were cut by milling cutters formed to the shape of the desired teeth. A tooth was cut, then a gear blank was indexed and the next tooth was cut at the appropriate distance from the first. To facilitate this, an intermittent indexing mechanism was used, which was prone to slight errors in tooth spacing.

In order to alleviate such problems Fellows invented the Gear Shaper and the Gear Shaper Cutter which was shaped like a gear and was provided with relieved cutting edges. The Gear Shaper utilized the molding-generating principle, the cutter being reciprocated as it rotated in harmony with the gear that was being cut. Since no intermediary devices were used, chances for error were eliminated.

With the encouragement and financial backing of Hartness, Fellows took his idea and started his own company. The first model was the 36-inch Gear Shaper, which when finished was sent to Prentice Brothers at Worcester, Massachusetts; Prentice Brothers became Fellows's first customer. The revolutionary nature of Fellows's concept caused many to shy away from his products, and early troubles in product development added to the difficulty of achieving acceptance. However, slight operating losses in 1898 and 1899 were replaced by profits in subsequent years. In 1899, Fellows was awarded the John Scott Legacy Medal by the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia.

Fellows went on to develop a machine to grind the involute profiles of the cutter teeth. With these machines, cutters could be ground to a high degree of accuracy after hardening. The introduction of the cutter with ground involute profiles and the increasing requirements for accuracy necessitated the development of a dependable method of inspection. Since such instruments for the accurate inspection of involute teeth shapes were unknown, Fellows designed and built the Involute Measuring Machine to fill this void.

The coming of the automobile was fortuitous for the machine tool industry. In 1900, Fellows developed a rack shaper, and in 1902 he developed the 24-inch gear shaper, which was principally created to cut automobile gears. The fortunes of the company came to be interwoven with the automobile industry. As
early as 1898, one of Fellows' machines went to the Electric Vehicle Company. Automobile companies
such as Packard Motor Car Company, Olds Motor Works, Cadillac Motor Car Company, and Buick Motor
Company were among the automobile manufacturers counted as Fellows's customers.

The company was divided into two divisions, the Machine Division and the Cutter Division. The Machine
Division was responsible for the manufacture of gear shaping machines, gear shaving machines, gear
lapping machines, gear measuring equipment and attachments, masters, and other tools required in
conjunction with this equipment. The Cutter Division was responsible for the manufacture of gear shaping
cutters, shaving tools, master gears, burnishing gears, form ground cutters, rack cutters, cutters for
steering sector worms, and other cutting tools.

For the Fellows Gear Shaper Company, the 1920s was a time of growth and product development,
and the 1940s heralded the design and production of nine new kinds of machines, including in 1947 a
mammoth rotary gear shaper, the 80,000 pound ten-spindle gear shaper. In 1977 Fellows introduced its
new series of Hydrostroke machines and in the early 1980s introduced computer numerical control (CNC)
machines.

In 1970, the company changed its name to Fellows Corporation. Four years later, Fellows was acquired
by the Emhart Corporation and in 1987 Fellows was acquired by Goldman Industrial Group. Goldman filed
of Hoffman Estates, Illinois, acquired the gear shaper machine tool manufacturing assets and the gear
shaper cutting tool manufacturing assets respectively.

Reference

Broehl, Wayne G. Precision Valley: The Machine Tool Companies of Springfield, Vermont: Jones and

Scope and Contents

The bulk of materials deals with the financial aspects of the Fellows Gear Shaper Company and
consists of meticulously kept journals and ledger books (Series 2). Of interest are the photographs and
architectural plans regarding the construction of the 1969 North Springfield plant (Series 4), as well as the
details of the activities of the Fellows Gear Shaper Foundation which awarded scholarship loans to high
school students (Series 5).

Series 1, Executive Records, 1896-1993 This series is composed of a variety of materials including:
articles of association, articles of incorporation, by-laws, licenses, contracts, agreements, and annual
reports. Of particular interest is a 1953 defense study by the company as part of the Industry Defense
Study for Measures to Minimize Loss of and Resume Production after a nuclear war, materials from
1963-1971 related to a contract with Colt Manufacturing Company, and two volumes regarding the Emhart


This series of records form the bulk of the collection and are divided into eleven subseries, Subseries
1, Corporate Summary Ledgers, 1896-1960; Subseries 2, Journals, 1903-1962; Subseries 3, General
Financial Ledgers, 1918-1963; Subseries 4, Cash Received/Cash Paid Ledgers, 1896-1919; Subseries
5, Cash Received Ledgers, 1920-1954; Subseries 6, Bills Receivable Ledgers, 1910-1962; Subseries
7, Petty Cash Ledgers, 1910-1951; Subseries 8, Monthly Reports, 1922-1941; Subseries 9, Treasurer's
Annual Reports, 1898-1960; Subseries 10, Financial Statements, 1963-1968; and Subseries 11, Machine
The materials in this series provide a thorough financial picture of the company from its founding in 1896 to approximately 1960. The journals and ledgers cover such areas as: profits, sales, payroll, marketing, overhead, depreciation, taxes, liabilities, assets, insurance, cash received and paid, petty cash, and machines purchased. Also included are monthly reports, most likely of the general manager, and the treasurer's annual reports.

Series 3, Stock Records, 1896-1974

These records contain notes indicating the company's initial stockholders, the amount of stockholder investments, minutes of stockholder meetings from 1954-1974, notes and correspondence from 1961-1965 that include lists of company employees who did and did not own stock, a list of the dates of regular and special stockholders meetings, and stock certificates.

Series 4, Property Records, 1898-1999

This set of materials covers the real estate and property owned by the company. Such records include: deeds, oversize topographic maps and architectural plans, and insurance appraisals. Of note are the photographs documenting the construction of the 1969 North Springfield, Vermont, plant and its corresponding building plans.

Series 5, Employee Records, 1915-1999


The General Employee Records include materials on wage rates, bonuses, sales incentives, and union contracts. Of interest are the employee cards of those who were killed in action during World War II. These include a chronology of the positions held by the employee, a brief evaluation statement of performance, wage information, and a short obituary. The materials in the Fellows Gear Shaper Foundation subseries contain information about the Foundation's scholarship loan activities. They include such items as the Secretary's report from 1954-1977, documentation of the application process, and a sample student file. The Events subseries covers the Company Veteran's Dinners that celebrated those employees who had been working for the company for over 25 years, both current and retired. There are programs for the dinners from 1948-1970 as well as photographs from the 1967 and 1970 dinners. NOTE: Social Security Numbers and phone numbers were redacted from materials in this series to protect the privacy of individuals. The employee newsletters are fragmented and include Fellows Cutting Stroke, Fellows Pitchline and NewShaper. The employee reminiscence includes a typescript reminiscence by Alice Marchand Tier Emerson a stenographer in the Stenographic Department, and two original letters. The photographs depict employees at work with various pieces of Fellows equipment.

Series 6, Pension Plan and Trust Records, 1923-1985

This series contains materials regarding a pension plan and trust fund created by Fellows Gear Shaper Company for its employees. It consists of examples of trust agreements and declarations, correspondence, payment ledgers, Internal Revenue Service information returns, audited financial statements, and lists of those employees receiving a pension. NOTE: Social Security Numbers were redacted from materials in this series to protect the privacy of individuals.


The series contains technical publications copyrighted and published by Fellows Gear Shaper Company.

Series 8, Miscellaneous materials, 1942-1987
The series contains a variety of materials, company history, E.R. Fellows Memoriam, citations and awards given to the company, an engineering department organizational chart, lists of patents awarded to E.R. Fellows and other employees of Fellows Gear, press releases, and product literature.

**Arrangement**

The collection is divided into eight series.

**Series 1, Executive Records, 1896-1993**

**Series 2, Financial Records, 1896-1973**

Subseries 1, Corporate Summary Ledgers, 1896-1960
Subseries 2, Journals, 1903-1962
Subseries 3, General Financial Ledgers, 1918-1963
Subseries 4, Cash Received/Cash Paid Ledgers, 1896-1919
Subseries 5, Cash Received Ledgers, 1920-1954
Subseries 6, Bills Receivable Ledgers, 1910-1962
Subseries 7, Petty Cash Ledgers, 1910-1951
Subseries 8, Monthly Reports, 1922-1941
Subseries 9, Treasurer’s Annual Reports, 1898-1960
Subseries 11, Machine Sales and Finances, 1920-1961

**Series 3, Stock Records, 1896-1974**

**Series 4, Property Records, 1898-1999**

**Series 5, Employee Records, 1915-1999**

Subseries 1, General Employee Records, 1915-1987
Subseries 2, Fellows Gear Shaper Foundation, 1954-1977
Subseries 3, Events, 1948-1970
Subseries 4, Newsletters, 1943-1999
Subseries 5, Employee reminiscences (Alice Marchand Tier Emerson), 1944 and undated
Subseries 6, Photographs, 1976-1977

**Series 6, Pension Plan And Trust Records, 1923-1985**

**Series 7, Publications, 1964-1998, undated**
Series 8, Miscellaneous materials, 1942-1987

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements

Gloves must be worn when handling unprotected photographs and negatives.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:
  Gear industry
  Gear-shaping machines
  Machine-tool industry

Types of Materials:
  Account books
  Administrative records
  Business records -- 19th century
  Business records -- 20th century
  Financial records
  Minute books
  Photographs -- 20th century
  Sales records
  Topographic maps

Names:
  Bourn & Koch, Inc.
  Colt Manufacturing Company.
  Emhart Corporation.
  Goldman Industrial Group.
  Star-SU, Inc.
## Container Listing

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