



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Washburn Wire Company, Inc. Collection

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Robert Harding

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Washburn Wire Company, Inc. Collection
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.0074
Date:	1934-1979
Creator:	Washburn Wire Company (Author)
Extent:	1 Cubic foot (1 box)
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Collection donated by State University of New York, through Thomas Flagg, Department of Vision Science, November 22, 1982.

Provenance

Transferred from the Division of Mechanical and Civil Engineering (now the Division of Work and Industry) to the Archives, October 12, 1983.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Robert Harding, 1986

Preferred Citation

Washburn Wire Company, Inc. Collection, 1934-1979, Archives Center, National Museum of American History

Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

The Washburn Wire Company was originally founded in 1870 for the purpose of manufacturing insulated cable for the then fledgling telephone industry. In 1882, it was incorporated under the name "American Electrical Works, Inc." and subsequently moved to Rhode Island. In 1900 it was merged with the Washburn Wire Company of Maine. The Washburn Wire Company of New York was formed in 1916 and a year later, the Washburn Wire Company was incorporated in Delaware marking the beginning of the consolidation of the two separate operating divisions - one in New York City, and the other in Rhode Island.

The Washburn Wire Products, Inc. is a wire drawing fabricator. The plant converted rolled steel into many sizes of round, flat and shaped high carbon and alloy, cold rolled and cold-drawn, tempered and untempered wire. Major market concentrations were the automotive industry (regulator, chrome silicon, chrome vanadium) and the appliance industry (music wire and hose clay wire).

Washburn Wire Products, Inc. was the most recent acquisition of the Commonwealth Holding Company, the for-profit arm of the parent organization, the Harlem Commonwealth Council, Inc. (HCC). The HCC is a tax exempt, non-profit community development corporation, established in 1967 under the Title 1-D of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Its purpose was to provide leadership in its participation with the community in its overall physical and economic development.

In 1967 the company suffered a major blow in the loss of automotive valve spring to foreign competition.

Over the last few years, Washburn showed serious signs of decline. This occurred as a result of severe pension problems, strikes and critical decisions not to reinvest in capital modernization and improvement programs. Its Manhattan Plant was closed in 1981 in a bankruptcy sale.

Scope and Contents

These records consist of a copy of a legal agreement to convey real property between the Company and the City of New York; diagrams showing designation of buildings; illustrations; Business Plan and Loan Request, 1979-1980, 1980-1981; photographs; book of Plans for Plant Revision, which contains: monthly and yearly production charts, real estate map, machinery layout of present plant, present route charts, machinery layout of revised plant, revised route charts (...in the 1930's a highway was about to be run between buildings and the river, and space had to be made. Robert Moses was building East River Drive there; in return for the land he rebuilt Washburn's plant, and these are the drawings showing the machinery layouts and material routings, before and after); President's comment and report; and sales literature.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Mechanical engineering
Mechanical engineers

Types of Materials:

Manuscripts -- 20th century

Names:

Moses, Robert
Washburn Wire Company

Places:

New York (N.Y.)

Container Listing

Box 1, Folder 1	Copy of a legal agreement to convey real property between the company and the city of New York; copy of business plan and loan request for fiscal years 1979-1980, 1980-1981; Washburn Wire Company president's comment , 1979 - 1981
Box 1, Folder 2	Book of plans for plant revision, containing monthly and yearly production charts for 1908-1934, real estate map, 1934
Box 1, Folder 3	Diagram showing designation of the Washburn Wire Company building , undated
Box 1, Folder 4	Sales literature for the Washburn Wire Company , undated
Box 1, Folder 5	23 Black and white photographs of buildings , 1953 June 2