Guide to the The Salem China Company Collection

NMAH.AC.0325
Grace Angle
1989
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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title: The Salem China Company Collection
Identifier: NMAH.AC.0325
Date: 1930s-1981
Extent: 10.15 Cubic feet (26 boxes, 9 map-folder)
Creator: Salem China Company
American Limoges China Co.
Sebring Pottery Company
Crescent China Company
Leigh Potters, Inc.
Language: English
Collection is in English. Some materials in Japanese.
Summary: Includes records of the Salem China Company relating to the administration of the company, its sales and art department, and other material relating to plant operations prior to 1960, when the company ceased manufacturing and became a distributor only. Includes photographs of various promotions, Salem China patterns, factory buildings, sales staff, show rooms, etc. as well as extensive advertising material of the Salem China Co. and its competitors. Another series contains blueprints and drawings of the Salem China Company’s plant and equipment. Another series contains bulletins issued by the Associated Industries of Cleveland from 1977 to 1981.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Processing Information
Collection processed by Grace Angle, 1989.

Preferred Citation
Restrictions
Collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use
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Biographical / Historical

The Salem China Company of Salem, Ohio was founded in 1898 by Pat and John McNichol, Dan Cronin and William Smith, all from East Liverpool, Ohio. It was sold to the F.A. Sebrings of Sebring, Ohio in 1918. Until retirement in 1950, Floyd W. McKee, who had been with the company since 1918, was the general manager. When he retired in 1950 J. Harrison Keller, the husband of F.A. Sebring's granddaughter, Gretchen, took over the management of the company. Harrison Keller was also president of the United States Potters Association, the principal function of which was labor negotiations. From 1898 until 1960 the company was engaged in both manufacturing and distribution. Since 1960, its function has been distribution only.

In addition to the manufacture and distribution of dinnerware, novelty and souvenirware, the Salem China Co. distributed flatware, crystal and Corningware and was the American distributor for the James Sadler Company, English manufacturers of teapots. The company supplemented its sales to retail outlets by heavy reliance on bank, movie, drugstore and supermarket promotions. For example, Peoples Drug Co. used over 150,000 thirty two piece sets of dishes from the Salem China Co. in the 1930's with the buyer paying $2.98 for a set costing $2.72 at the factory. During the 30's also, about 130 carloads of Salem dinnerware were used by American Stores in Philadelphia in promotions. In 1993, the president of the Salem China Co. was Gary Keller.

Scope and Contents

The collection includes records of the Salem China Company relating to administration of the company, its sales and art department and other material relating to plant operations prior to 1960 when the company ceased manufacturing and became a distributor only. There are a number of photographs of various promotions, Salem China patterns, factory buildings, sales staff, show rooms, etc. There is extensive advertising material of both the Salem China Co. and of its competitors. Another series consists of blueprints and drawings of the Salem China Company's plant and equipment. There is also a series of bulletins issued by the Associated Industries of Cleveland from 1977 to 1981.

Series 1: General Administration, includes a history of Salem, Ohio as well as a history of the United States pottery industry written by Floyd W. McKee, long time manager of the Salem China Company, after he retired. Issues of the Stylon News from 1954 to 1957 indicate the company's interest in tile. Union materials relate to the several craft unions concerned with organizing pottery plants. There is some generalized anti union material.

Series 2 contains bulletins of the Associated Industries of Cleveland (AIC). These bulletins include material of general interest to members, bulletins from the legal counsel, a newsletter for executives, bulletins relating to the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration and surveys of management employee relations, salaries and benefits and wage settlements.
The third series consists of the Sales Department’s records, including advertising brochures, pamphlets and photographs relating to various promotions supermarket, bank, movie, department store as well as those for general advertising of Salem products, the records of a factory outlet store operated by the Salem China Company, bulletins, a notebook and other materials directed to the sales staff.

Art Department records incorporate mats, photographs, some drawings and occasional negatives of nearly 40 patterns of china as well as service plates and souvenir plates. The notebooks relate to premiums, specialized ware such as children’s ware, proofs, photos, half tones and ads.

Over 65 companies are represented in the competitors’ advertising material, most of which relates to china although there are a few tile and other manufacturers included.

With the exception of the art department notebooks, and the drawings and blueprints, most of the collection is in good condition.

Arrangement

The collection is divided into ten series.

Series 1: Executive and Administrative Records
Series 2: Labor Relations
Series 3: Sales Department Records
Series 4: Promotional Photographs
Series 5: Art Department Records
Series 6: Plant Operating Records
Series 7: Competitors’ Advertising
Series 8: US Potters Association
Series 9: Tile Industry
Series 10: Associated Industries of Cleveland

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:
Porcelain
Potters

Types of Materials:
Blueprints -- 20th century
Bulletins
Clippings
Drawings -- 20th century
Records

Names:
James Sadler Company

Geographic Names:
Ohio
Container Listing

Series 1: Executive and Administrative Records, 1914-1981

Box 1, Folder 1  Minute Book, October 1914 -December 1936
Box 1, Folder 2  Minute Book, February 1937- September 1939
Box 1, Folder 3  Minute Book, March 1940-September 1943
Box 1, Folder 4  Minute Book Special Meetings, September 1939- March 1940
Box 2, Folder 1  Minute Book, January 1917-December 1920
Box 1, Folder 5  Executive Committee Minutes, February 1937 -November 1939
Box 2, Folder 2  Executive Committee Minutes, September 1937- October 1940
Box 2, Folder 3  Executive Committee Minutes, September 1939- June 1940
Box 2, Folder 4  Policy Committee Minutes, December 1951- December 1963
Box 2, Folder 5  Agreements re: Bond Issues, undated
Box 2, Folder 6  Claim for Damages Against Cooper Garrett Trucking Company, 1979- 1981
Box 2, Folder 7  Dinnerware as Premiums by Floyd W. McKee, undated
Box 2, Folder 8  History of U.S. Pottery Industry by Floyd W. McKee, 1955
Box 3, Folder 1  Appraisal Cole Thayer Trumbell Co., undated
Box 3, Folder 2  Appraisal West Brothers, 1946
Box 3, Folder 3  Appraisal Boston Manufacturers Mutual Insurance Company, 1953 -1968
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<th>Research Papers on Business Management, 1958 -1980</th>
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<td>Box 3, Folder 8</td>
<td>The Romance of Your Dinnerware published by Salem China, undated</td>
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<td>Box 3, Folder 9</td>
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Box 4, Folder 2  Personnel Management (Miscellaneous), ca. 1977

Box 4, Folder 3  Sebring Equipment Company Personnel Data, 1976 -1977

Box 4, Folder 4  Allied Industrial Workers, 1975 -1979

Box 4, Folder 5  Anti Union Materials, 1972 -1980

Box 4, Folder 6  International [and National] Brotherhood of Operative Potters, 1940- 1962

Box 4, Folder 7  International Brotherhood of Pottery and Allied Workers, 1970- 1980

Box 4, Folder 8  Newsclippings re: Unions, 1976 -1977

Box 4, Folder 9  Union Pension and Retirement Plans, 1969 -1971

Box 4, Folder 10  United Brick and Clay Workers of America, 1972 -1976


Box 4, Folder 12  United Rubber Cork Linoleum and Plastic Workers of America, 1976

Box 4, Folder 13  Wage Policy and Rates (Salem), 1979 -1980

Box 14, Folder 4  Wage Rate Comparisons, 1979 -1980

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Series 3: Sales Department Records, 1930s -1988

Box 5, Folder 1  Achievement Reports, 1963 -1965
Box 5, Folder 2  Advertising Brochures and Price Lists Salem
Box 5, Folder 3  Bank Promotional Brochures Crystal
Box 5, Folder 4  Bank Promotional Brochures Dinnerware
Box 5, Folder 5  Bank Promotional Brochures Flatware
Box 5, Folder 6  Bank Promotional Brochures Goblets
Box 5, Folder 7  Bank Promotional Brochures Miscellaneous
Box 5, Folder 8  Bank Promotional Brochures Place Settings
Box 5, Folder 9  Bank Promotions Newsclippings
Box 5, Folder 10  Carry Hom (Quaker China)
Box 5, Folder 11  Corning Ware (Salem Advertising)
Box 5, Folder 12  Correspondence, 1952 -1970
Box 5, Folder 13  Costs, 1978
Box 5, Folder 14  Credit Store Merchandising Plan
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Box 5, Folder 16  Factory Outlet Store I
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<td>Advertising Photographs Nationally Advertised Dinnerware</td>
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Map-folder 7  Salem China Company, site plans, 1981
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Map-folder 8  Miscellaneous, 1910-1950s
   Includes proposed additions to exiting buildings, site and plot maps, automatic
   jigers, circular glost kiln, and a right of way map for the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne
   and Chicago Railway.
Map-folder 9  Miscellaneous, circa 1940s
Includes electrical plans, automatic cup stamping machine, requisitions for repairs, roof framing, and a ware forming machine.

Miscellaneous
Includes automatic jigger, elevation drawings of Salem China Co., and a sales banner, “Save on Christmas Eve place settings while stocks last.”

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