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American Society of Mechanical Engineers Collection

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Alison Oswald

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	American Society of Mechanical Engineers Collection
Date:	1926-2003
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.1522
Creator:	American Society of Mechanical Engineers.
Source:	National Museum of American History (U.S.). Division of Work and Industry
Extent:	2.25 Cubic feet (7 boxes)
Language:	English .
Summary:	Collection documents the activities of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME).

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Collection assembled by the Division of Work and Industry.

Provenance

Collection ransferred to the Archives Center from the Division of Work and Industry, February 2022.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Alison Oswald, archivist, 2023.

Preferred Citation

American Society of Mechanical Engineers Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History

Restrictions

Collection is open for research. Unprotected photographs must be handled with gloves.

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Historical

ASME was founded in 1880 to provide a setting for engineers to discuss the concerns brought by the rise of industrialization and mechanization.

The Society's founders were some of the more prominent machine builders and technical innovators of the late nineteenth century; led by prominent steel engineer Alexander Lyman Holley, Henry Rossiter Worthington and John Edison Sweet.

Holley chaired the first meeting, which was held in the New York editorial offices of the American Machinist, on February 16th, with thirty people in attendance. From this date onward, the society ran formal meetings to discuss development of standard tools and machine parts as well as uniform work practices. However, it wasn't until 1905 that a major turning point gave new definition to ASME's purpose and impact on civilian life.

Steam powered the technology of the late 19th century. Despite their power, boilers and pressure vessels were temperamental, requiring constant attention and maintenance. Although there were numerous boiler explosions throughout the 19th century, there were no legal codes for boilers in any state in the Union. Undoubtedly one of the most important incidents that proved the need for developing boiler laws was the Grover Shoe Factory Disaster in Brockton, Massachusetts on March 10, 1905.

An older boiler, used as a backup during maintenance on the newer model, exploded, rocketing through three floors and the building's roof. Broken beams and heavy machinery trapped many workers who survived the initial explosion and collapse. Burning coals thrown from the boiler landed throughout the crumbling superstructure, starting fires that were fed by broken gas lines. The explosion resulted in 58 deaths and 117 injuries.

It was this catastrophe that gave Massachusetts the impetus to establish a five-man Board of Boiler Rules, whose charge was to write a boiler law for the state; this board published its boiler laws in 1908.

Having established the Boiler Testing Code in 1884, ASME formed a Boiler Code Committee in 1911 that led to the Boiler & Pressure Vessel Code (BPVC) being published in 1915. The BPVC was later incorporated into laws in most US states and territories and Canadian provinces.

ASME's rich publication history—including standards, theory, and technical journals—made a great deal of technical and biographical information available to engineers and policy makers. These publications form a substantial and tangible connection to the past that proves inspirational to ASME members to this day.

Source

American Society of Mechanical Engineers website, https://www.asme.org/about-asme/engineering-history (accessed on September 19, 2023)

Content Description

Collection consists of pamphlets, brochures and correspondence, and publications for the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), especially the Applied Mechanics Division. Also included is documentation for the History Heritage Committee of ASME, particularly nomination forms and brochures for the Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark Program.

Arrangement

Collection is arranged into three series.

Series 1: History and Heritage Commission, 1970-1984

Series 2: National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark Brochures National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark Brochures, 1973-2003

Series 3: Applied Mechanics Division Applied Mechanics Division, 1926-1981

Names and Subject Terms

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

Types of Materials:

Brochures
Correspondence
Pamphlets

Names:

National Museum of American History (U.S.). Division of Work and Industry
Vogel, Robert M.

Container Listing

Series 1: History and Heritage Committee, 1970-1984

Scope and Contents: This series documents the activties of the History and Heritage Committee which was founded to educate the general public and engineer about America's rich technological heritage. Two major programs are carried out by the Committee, a listing of industrial operations and related mechanical engineering artifacts in local Historic Engineering Records and a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark Program. Materials include correspondence, annual repots, annual meeting minutes and agendas, and nominations for the Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmarks Program.

Box 1, Folder 1	American Society of Mechanical Engineers, History , 1984, undated
Box 1, Folder 2	American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Correspondence, 1970
Box 1, Folder 3	American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Correspondence, 1972
Box 1, Folder 4	American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Correspondence, 1973
Box 1, Folder 5	American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Correspondence, 1974
Box 1, Folder 6	American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Correspondence, 1975
Box 1, Folder 7	American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Correspondence, 1976
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Box 1, Folder 9	American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Correspondence, 1978
Box 1, Folder 10	American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Correspondence, 1979
Box 2, Folder 1	American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Correspondence, 1979
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Box 2, Folder 4	American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Correspondence, 1982-1983
Box 2, Folder 5	Guide to History and Heritage, 1972
Box 2, Folder 6	Mechaical Engineering A Century of Progress, 1979
Box 2, Folder 7	Turning Points in History, 1990

Box 2, Folder 8	American Society of Mechanical Engineers, News clippings , 1968, 1970
Box 2, Folder 9	Design Engineering Division Newsletter, 1972-10
Box 2, Folder 10	Pressure Vessels and Piping Division News, 1976-04

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Series 2: National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark Brochures, 1973-2003

Scope and Contents: this series consists of brochures documenting the Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark elected by the Americn Society of Mechanical Engineers. the brochures detail the hsitory of the designated landmark site, important dates in its history, The materials are arranged chronologically.

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Box 4, Folder 11	National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark Brochures, nomination, 1998
Box 4, Folder 12	National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark Brochures, 2000
Box 4, Folder 13	National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark Brochures, 2001
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Box 4, Folder 15	Historic Engineering Landmarks, brochure about program , 1983
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Series 3: Applied Mechanics Division, 1926-1981

Box 4, Folder 17	Applied Mechanics Division, Correspondence , 1926-1928
Box 4, Folder 18	Applied Mechanics Division, History, 1938-1957
Box 4, Folder 19	"Some Notes on the Origin of the Applied Mechanics Division and the Journal of Applied Mechanics" , 1926-1934, 1962
Box 5, Folder 1	Applied Mechanics Division, By-Laws, 1950-1952
Box 5, Folder 2	Applied Mechanics Division, History , 1956-1976
Box 5, Folder 3	Applied Mechanics Division, History , 1956-1977
Box 5, Folder 4	Applied Mechanics Division, History , 1956-1977
Box 5, Folder 5	Applied Mechanics Division, 25th Anniversary Dinner , 1952-12-02
Box 5, Folder 6	Professor Stephen Timoshenko Luncheon , 1953, 1974
Box 5, Folder 7	Applied Mechanics Review, 1947-1956
Box 5, Folder 8	Applied Mechanics Division, Editorial Board , 1955-1956
Box 5, Folder 9	Applied Mechanics Division, Correspondence , 1965-1968
Box 6, Folder 1	Journal of Applied Mechanics, Correspondence, 1964-1967
Box 6, Folder 2	Journal of Applied Mechanics, Reviews, 1968-1971
Box 6, Folder 3	Applied Mechanics Division News, 1966-1969
Box 6, Folder 4	Applied Mechanics Division News, 1970-1979
Box 6, Folder 5	Applied Mechanics Division, Revisions to By-Laws, Rules and Meeting Manual , 1975-1977
Box 6, Folder 6	Applied Mechanics Division, Pocket Subject List, 1976
Box 6, Folder 7	International union of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics , 1976
Box 6, Folder 8	Applied Mechanics Division, Semicentennial Celebration, 1927-1977, 1977
Box 6, Folder 9	Applied Mechanics Division, R.E. Peterson Interview , [1975?]

	1 Cassette tape Notes: Includes typescript transcript of the interview. Side two of the tape includes dictation by [Professor F.C. Hurlburt?].
Box 6, Folder 10	Applied Mechanics Division, J.P. Den Hartog Interview, 1977-02-10 1 Cassette tape Notes: File includes a typescript transcript of interview.
Box 6, Folder 11	Applied Mechanics Division, Indexing of Journal at Battele Memorial Institute , 1966-1967 Notes: File contains a "Guide for Source Indexing and Abstracting of the Engineering Literature," by the Engineers Joinbt Council, February 1967.
Box 6, Folder 12	American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Organizational Records at the Smithsonian , 1979
Box 7, Folder 1	International Congress for Applied Mechanics , 1924, 1934, 1938
Box 7, Folder 2	International Congress for Applied Mechanics , 1946, 1948
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