Darby Corporation Records, 1928 – [1989?]

Manuscript Collection No. 812

Preliminary Inventory

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- Scope and Contents of the Records
- Organization of the Records
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Collection Summary

Repository

Kansas Historical Society (Topeka)

Creator

Darby Corporation (Kansas City, Kan.)

Title

Darby Corporation records

Dates

1928–[1989?]

Quantity

ca. 486 cu. ft.

Abstract


Administrative records, correspondence and other files pertaining to the corporation, stock, finances, legal policy, insurance, licensing, leases & property, union matters, and contracts; a small quantity of personal papers & files of Harry Darby, Jr.; records identified by the Darby family or the Darby Corporation staff as "archival"; account books & related records pertaining to financial transactions; payroll registers & related records; engineering records typically consisting of orders, specifications, drawings, materials lists, & other documents relating primarily to water towers & other pressure vessels; records relating to the manufacture of rail cars & equipment; and separate engineering work orders & project files for the subsidiary Leavenworth Steel Co.
Identification

Ms. Coll. 812
Shelf location: 124-01-01-01 thru 124-05-05-13

Language

Text is in English.

Notes

This finding aid describes materials on microfilm held by the Kansas Historical Society. Materials may be used in the State Archives and Library during regular research hours. Support for telephone, mail, and online reference and research is limited.

In a continuing effort to improve the completeness and accuracy of finding aids, revisions are made as more or new information becomes available. Consequently finding aids in paper format, on microfilm, and on the Society's web site may differ slightly.

Descriptions are often based on a preliminary inspection of the material. As such, they may contain misspellings or other inaccuracies based on folder headings and other sources within the materials. As the collections are arranged and as time permits, these finding aids are improved and corrected. If you spot an error, please feel free to report it to the reference staff or an archivist.

History of the Darby Corporation

Harry Darby, Sr., started the Missouri Boiler Works Company in Kansas City in 1895. Later he moved the firm to Kansas City, Kansas, and changed its name in 1904 to the Darby Products of Steel Plate Corporation. After Darby's death in 1923, his son — Harry Darby, Jr. — bought the company and established Darby Steel Company. The firm grew steadily until the Great Depression of the 1930s, when Darby was forced to lay off half his workforce. Despite setbacks, in 1938 Darby purchased the Kaw Steel Construction Company which was in bankruptcy. From the two firms, he formed the Darby Corporation.

In World War II, the Darby Corporation made bombs and other war material, but it was best known for its amphibious landing craft, known as LCTs (Landing Craft, Tanks) and LCMs (Landing Craft, Mechanized). Production increased to one ship per day or approximately 1400 for the duration of the War. Ships were floated down the Kansas, Missouri, and Mississippi rivers to New Orleans for launching. The military used Darby manufactured craft in the invasions of Italy, France, and islands in the Pacific Ocean. The company was also a major producer of railroad locomotives and 1000 pound bombs. At its height, the Darby Corporation was one of the largest steel plate manufacturing enterprises in the United States.

After the War, the company continued to fabricate steel plate and other products, particularly water towers and railroad equipment. In 1954 a subsidiary, Darby Railway Cars, incorporated in Kansas. The Darby Corporation acquired Leavenworth Steel Company and opened a subsidiary plant in Coffeyville, Kansas. The Darby Corporation closed in 1989, two years after the death of Harry Darby, Jr.

Scope and Contents of the Records

This description is based primarily on box descriptions and labels augmented by some verification as the records were re-boxed. As additional archival work is performed on this collection, descriptions will undoubtedly become more complete and accurate. The information presented herein should be taken as preliminary and incomplete.

The records appear to have been organized into broad areas that have been incorporated as archival series in this finding aid: administrative records, personal papers of Harry Darby, "archives" records, accounting records, payroll records, engineering records, railroad cars records, and Leavenworth Steel records. More details about each of these series are found in the Detailed Description of the Records section of this register.

The largest series, and clearly the focus of this collection, is the Engineering Records, series 6. These typically consist of orders, specifications, drawings, materials lists, and related documents. These records relate primarily to water towers and related structures and other kinds of pressure vessels.

Closely related to the Engineering Records are the Railroad Cars Records, series 7. These files contain similar items as the Engineering Records series but relate to rail cars, railroad equipment, and automobile racks on rail cars.
Separate from the records of the Darby Corporation in Kansas City are the engineering work orders and project files for jobs performed by the subsidiary Leavenworth Steel Co. in its Leavenworth and Coffeyville, Kansas, plants. Included are corporate minutes for Leavenworth Steel Company.

The collection also contains a small quantity, five cubic feet, of personal papers and files of Harry Darby, Jr. However, most of Harry Darby's personal papers, 1925 - 1985, 513 feet, were donated to the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library (Abilene, Kans.) At the present time (2009), access to the personal papers at the Eisenhower Library is closed pending processing.

The Eisenhower Library also holds 168 feet of Darby Corporation records for the period 1942 - 1946. At the present time (2009), access is closed pending processing.

Organization of the Records

Collection (no. 812). Organized by originating office or type of record.


Related Papers

All of the microfilm listed below is available through interlibrary loan.

- Gene Anderson, collector. CRI&P locomotive and food service car designs: Pullman car lists, 1917 - 1950 (Microfilm MS 768.02)
- Willard J. Breidenthal papers, 1924 - 1937 (Ms. Collection [MC] 4)
- Joseph A. Butler & Son Funeral Home records (Microfilm MS 1600 - MS 1624)
- Bryan O. Foreman papers (Sunflower Ordinance Works documents), 1941 - 1945 (MC 805)
- Charles Sumner Glead papers, 1876 - 1928 (MC 34)
- Hiram Hill papers, 1823 - 1910 (MC 382)
- Lewis Walter Keplinger papers, 1882 - 1928 (Microfilm MS 739.03)
- McEntire-Brooke family papers, 1758 - 1982 (MC 426)
- Rex W. Maneval papers, 1939 - 1974 (MC 128)
- Holly Marks Reichart papers, 1929 - 1972 (MC 220)

Other Finding Aid

Copies of this finding aid are available in the Kansas State Historical Society's Library and on its web site.

Bibliography


Kansas Business Hall of Fame. Welcome to Emporia State University: Academics: Colleges - Schools: School of Business Homepage: Community: KBHF: Contemporary: Harry Darby: "Contemporary Honors Award Recipient: Harry Darby, 1996,

Index Terms

Persons


Corporate Names

Darby Corporation (Kansas City, Kan.)
Darby Corporation (Kansas City, Kan.) – Archives.
Darby Corporation (Kansas City, Kan.) – Records and correspondence.
Darby Steel Company.
Leavenworth Steel Co. (subject and co-creator)

Geographic Names

Kansas City (Kan.)
Leavenworth (Kan.)

Subjects

Commercial leases – Kansas – Kansas City.
Corporate insurance – Kansas – Kansas City.
Corporations – Kansas – Kansas City.
Corporations – Kansas – Kansas City – Finance.
Industrial real estate – Kansas – Kansas City.
Industrial relations – Kansas – Kansas City.
Management contracts – Kansas – Kansas City.
Materials – Kansas – Kansas City.
Plates, Iron and steel.
Pressure vessels – Design and construction.
Railroad cars – Design and construction.
Railroad equipment industry – Kansas – Kansas City.
Steel plate industry – Kansas – Kansas City.
Steel plate industry – Kansas – Kansas City – Licenses.
Water towers – Design and construction.

Document Types

Account books – Kansas – Kansas City.
Business records – Kansas – Kansas City.
Business records – Kansas – Leavenworth.
Engineering contracts – Kansas – Kansas City.
Engineering drawings.
Payrolls – Kansas – Kansas City.

Functions

Railroad engineering – Kansas.
Military engineering – Kansas – Kansas City.
Water-supply engineering – Kansas.

Restrictions on Access

None
Restrictions on Use

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Preferred Citation

Darby Corporation records, ms. collection 812, State Archives & Library, Kansas Historical Society.

Acquisition Information

Gift: Harriet Darby Gibson and other daughters of Harry Darby, Jr., 1990, through the co-operation of Jim Haynes and JoAnn Meador, executive secretary, The Darby Corporation; accession no. 1990MS048.01.

Processing Information

Description based on a preliminary survey of the collection.


Accruals

No additions to the collection are anticipated.

Detailed Description of the Records

Archival records are typically organized by series, a group of records that has a common element or function and a distinct organizational structure of its own, for example Correspondence Files, arranged chronologically, or Registers of Military Enlistments, arranged by regiment. Within series, records may be further organized by subseries, such as Letters Received within the series Correspondence Files; or arranged into volumes, folders, or items.

Series Descriptions

NOTE: This description is based primarily on box descriptions and labels augmented by some verification as the records were re-boxed. As additional archival work is performed on this collection, descriptions will undoubtedly become more complete and accurate. The information presented herein should be taken as preliminary and incomplete.

No attempt has been made at this time to physically rearrange the boxes into series. Researchers will need to consult the box contents spreadsheet to determine the shelf location of desired material.

Ser. 1. ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS, 1932-1986. 91 cu. ft.

Correspondence and other records primarily pertaining to the corporation & its stock, financial & legal policy, insurance, licensing, leases & property, union matters, and contracts. Includes advertising & promotional materials, plant accident reports, memorabilia, minutes, patents, photographs, and publications.


A small quantity of personal papers and files of Harry Darby, Jr. Most (513 ft.) of Harry Darby's personal papers, 1925-1985, are at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library (Abilene, Kans.)

Records identified by the Darby family or the Darby Corporation staff as “archival,” possibly intended for the Eisenhower Library, but not included in the records and papers acquired by them. The boxes are mostly labeled Abilene with no additional contents information.


Account books, checks, work papers, invoices, vouchers, purchase orders, financial correspondence, statements, and related records pertaining to financial transactions.

Ser. 5. PAYROLL RECORDS, 1946-1985. 8 cu. ft.

Payroll registers and related records relating to wages and salaries of employees.

Ser. 6. ENGINEERING RECORDS, 1941-[1989?] 218 cu. ft.

Records relating to specific jobs or projects undertaken by the firm. Included are estimates & quotations, blueprints, orders, engineering files & drawings, and testing data relating to landing craft, water towers & related structures, and pressure vessels. Projects pertaining to rail cars are described in Ser. 7.

Arranged primarily by project or order number.


Correspondence, estimates, financial documentation, project files & drawings, and related records pertaining to the construction of rail cars, rail auto racks, and similar equipment. Included are accident reports.

Files are arranged by project number. Some are organized by client name.


Engineering work orders and project files for jobs performed by the Leavenworth Steel Co. in its Leavenworth and Coffeyville, Kans., plants. Included are corporate minutes for the firm.

Project files arranged by project number.

Series / Box List

See spreadsheet
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**ABSTRACT:** Administrative records, correspondence and other files pertaining to the corporation, stock, finances, legal policy, insurance, licensing, leases & property, union matters, and contracts; a small quantity of personal papers & files of Harry Darby, Jr.; records identified by the Darby family or the Darby Corporation staff as "archival"; account books & related records pertaining to financial transactions; payroll registers & related records; engineering records typically consisting of orders, specifications, drawings, materials lists, & other documents relating primarily to water towers & other pressure vessels; records relating to the manufacture of rail cars & equipment; and separate engineering work orders & project files for the subsidiary Leavenworth Steel Co.


Collection (no. 812). Organized by originating office or type of record.

Gift: Harriet Darby Gibson and other daughters of Harry Darby, Jr., 1990; accession no. 1990MS048.01.

Information on copyright available from the Kansas Historical Society (Topeka).


Description based on a preliminary survey of the collection.


(continued on next page)