

Grand Rapids History & Special Collections

Archives

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Finding Aid for the

Globe Knitting Works Collection

Collection # 062

September 2007 Version

Abstract

The Globe Knitting Works Collection contains primarily 4x5 photographic contact prints and 8x10 original photographs of views of this 1897 incorporate Grand Rapids, Michigan company. Some exterior views exist, but most views are interiors, including various departments involved in the knitting process. Images begin with the drying and cutting processes through to the final stages of packaging and shipping. One interior shows a women's softball team. A 2003 gift adds an image of a post-war 1940's mens' baseball team, as well. An album contains twenty-one (21) original 8x10 photographs, taken by Hesselink & Phillips studio of Grand Rapids, each with a paragraph description. A 7-paged typed history accompanies the photos. Published documents have been added to the collection for additional context and history. Eilert Alfred Clements founded the business October 27, 1897, to produce underwear with an improved fit and appearance. He later brought his sons into the business. But in 1952, the company was sold to Active Industrial Corporation of New York, which moved the entire company to the south.

Collection #: 062

Accession #: 1985.017 ; 2003.017; 00.[2589].1 ; 00.[2527].1

Donor: Nellie Clements Mead ; Gerry Thornton, 2003.

Span dates: 1900-1920s

Processor: Original processor, Gerard Gregels, January 1988.

Inventory, Jason Shoup, Aug. 24, 2000.

Box Summary, Marcella Beck, August 31, 2000.

Finding Aid revisions & additional processing, R. Mayne, 2000-2005.

Size: .42 linear ft. (5 inches)

Box Summary

Box No.	Description of Contents	Box Description
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Box Inventory 9/2009		
1	Documents. Contact prints.	slim
2	Original photos	Slim
Rearranged 11/10/2003		

Reboxing 11/10/2003.

- Paper documents & contact prints are located in Box 1. Patrons should use the contact prints first, which include all of the images in the album.
- Original photo album moved to Box 2, along with other loose original photos. The originals should only be used when absolutely necessary, in order to preserve them for the long-term.

Processing note

2/2003

The labeling on the folders & on the photographs is backwards, placing the folder number before the box number. That is, normal location citations read Collection-Box-Folder. For example, the album in this collection is in 67-1-7, Coll. 67, Box 1, folder 7. However, the citations in this collection have instead been recorded Collection-Folder-Box, 67-7-1, which might suggest that there are seven boxes, instead of 1 box with 7 folders. This confusion will be corrected with additional processing.

11/10/2003

It was discovered that the original photographic prints did not have negative numbers recorded on them, while the contact prints did. Also, the abbreviation “neg.” before the number was absent, and may have been misread as simply a photo number, rather than a negative number in the past. Subsequent processing corrected these problems, with fuller item level descriptions of the images for the various negatives, and documentation of duplicate negatives, inadvertently created due to the original omission of the numbers on the original photos.

## History

The early history of The Globe Knitting Works chronicles the early days of Mr. Eilert Alfred Clements who founded the business; the history describes his experiences that lead him to establishing Globe. It describes the strong market for the newly conceived underwear design that Mr. Clements developed. It also presents a fairly detailed account of the company's early expansion leading up to its production of underwear for the armed services during WWI and WWII. The individuals who made up the Board of Directors including the roles of Mr. Clements two sons are also described.

## Scope and Content

The Globe Knitting Works, established in Grand Rapids on October 27, 1897, produced underwear with an improved fit and appearance. This was accomplished by cutting and sewing fabric to fit the body. Mr. Snitseler of Voigt-Herpolsheimer Co. was the first buyer for the newly formed company. Employing 8 persons at the onset, Globe eventually expanded into a number of different buildings and employment grew to over 100 employees. The founder, Mr. Eilert Alfred Clements, involved his 2 sons in the company until the year 1952, when the company was sold to Active Industrial Corporation of New York. They moved the entire company to the south.

Contents

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
		<b>Series I. Documents</b>
1	1	History
1	1.5	E.B. Fisher "History of Grand Rapids & Kent County" Datasheet. "Industries" for "Globe Knitting Works." 00.[2589].1 9/23/2003 Formerly in Vertical File
1	2	Ca. 1950's? PR flyer, with letter on first page. Images of factory & workers as centerfold. 00.[2527].1 2/20/2003 Formerly in Vertical File
		<b>Series II. Images</b>
		<b>A. Contact Prints</b>
		Note:
1	3	Contact prints corresponding to original Album photos in Box 2. (21)
1	4	Exterior views of plant (8)
1	5	Interior views of plant (47)
1	6	Offices (10)

**Series II. Images**

**B. Original Photos**

Set 1. Album of 21 original, linen-backed photos, 8x10, with 2 holes at left margin.

Album was disbound 11/10/2003.

Note: The description on the back of the photos is not the description for that photo, but for the image that previously faced the description within the album. These descriptions have been photocopied, and each photo now sits in its own folder, with the correct description. A "Do not use" note, in pencil, on the old label, warns users.

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 2 | 1 | Album Image #1 Exterior "Globe Knitting Works" on side of brick building, with fence on roof, autos & people on the street, water tank center left.  |
| 2 | 2 | Album Image #2. Yarn Cleaning Dept. Cotton being wound from cops & cones. Extra cleaning for finer quality for underwear. Woman with plaid blouse center right with hands on cones(?), and woman with print dress at near machine.   |
| 2 | 3 | Album Image #3. Winding Room. A room full of machines with bobbins(?) across the top, being supervised by women. Building pillars to the left, windows at the right in the image.  |
| 2 | 4 | Album Image #4. Latch Needle Knitting Dept. Open floor space in foreground. Man working on small counter attached to a pillar, center right. Man behind this pillar, near a machine.   |
| 2 | 5 | Album Image #5. Knitting Dept. View down aisle between rows of machines. Belt from machine to ceiling. Women in foreground working on the machines. Woman at left in print dress wearing a hairnet(?). Men in background. Cloth falling into the contained below, lower right corner, etc. |
| 2 | 6 | Album Image #6. Spring Needle Knitting Dept. View down aisle between rows of machines. Belts from the machines attached to the ceiling. Rolls of cloth(?) on the machines, with bobbins(?) on the floor. Men & women working on the machines.  |

- 2 7 Album Image #7 Cuff Knitting Dept. Shows a woman working near a machine with a belt to an overhead pipe, and a man standing at the end of a machine (#410)
- 2 8 Album Image #8. Washing, Dyeing, Bleaching Dept. No workers. Steps up to equipment vat(?) level in foreground. Overhead equipment??
- 2 9 Album Image #9. Drying Dept. Cloth bags full on cart with wheels, and on table in back room. Cloth hanging from machines at right and upper left. Cutting(?) device hanging on pillar in center of front room.
- 2 10 Album Image #10. Cutting Dept. View down an aisle of tables next to the windows at left, crowded with men & women workers. Cutting devices supplied with power from the ceiling.
- 2 11 Album Image #11. Seaming Dept. Women seated at sewing machines. A cloth bin at the left of the sewer holds the product. Men & women standing in the background at left, viewing the photographer. Pillars along the left.
- 2 12 Album Image #12. Inspection Dept. Row of tables against with windows at left. Garments piled at right near the pillars. Women reviewing the items at the tables. Others in the background at right, viewing the photographer.
- 2 13 Album Image #13. Pressing, Folding, & Boxing Dept. Shows women at tables with large bins at the end. Table right center has stacks of items piled high, with woman in white at end of the table examining one of the piles.
- 2 14 Album Image #14. Shipping Department. Shows men seated at desks in foreground, doing paperwork. Shows men standing at the back, working with crates. Man moving a crate near a hanging no. "3", perhaps part of a calendar? Telephones on front desk.
- 2 15 Album Image #15. Stock Room. Numbered aisles 51 to 56, with boxes of complete items.
- 2 16 Album Image #16. Office interior. July 1, 19?? Calendar on far wall. Desk with rubber stamps in foreground. Mostly women workers at the desks, but a couple of men in the right row of desks.

- 2 17 Album Image #17. Yarn Storage Dept. Large wooden crates. Mechanical devise for water(?) control near pillar at right.
- 2 18 Album Image #18. Engine Room. Two Ames Unaflow engines drive the dynamoes that generate the power. A man in overhauls works at the controls, near a roll-top desk and double doors to the space.
- 2 19 Album Image #19. Boiler Room. Page-Burton water tube boilers, 550 horse-power, equipped with Jones stokers. Provide steam for the engines and hot water for the departments. A man in overhauls shovels coal into the boilers. Double doors at back of space. Bird's eye view.
- 2 20 Album Image #20. Dining Room of Cafeteria for Midday (Noon) meal. Long tables with stools. Curtains on windows.
- 2 21 Album Image #21 Album Image #21. Globe's Indoor Base Ball Team. City league. Women's (girls) baseball/softball team. Interior view in dining room, arms crossed, ball & bat on floor in front. 9 women in uniforms.
- 2 22 Exterior views, original photos.
- Camera Shop #29231. Commerce & Goodrich Sts. Winter view. "Globe Knitting Works" carved about the left double entrance door. Auto near doors. Autos lower left near telephone pole. 6 story building, with emergency fire escape on left side. 8X10
  - Unidentified building, but could be the bottom 3 floors of the lower left corner of the building above, i.e. an earlier building before renovation/additions.
- 2 23 Interior views, original photos.
- Exhibit. Grand Rapids Textile Machinery Co. "Shield Method of handling cloth. 3 men of various ages standing at tables or seated at desk, behind the exhibit barriers. Patriotic banners overhead. Stamp on verso: W.N. Jennings, 1305 Arch St., Philadelphia (photographer). Verso ID has "Globe Knitting Works"—handwritten in pencil. Names in ink: Earle A. Clements, Milton Middy?
  - Interior view of a later generation of mechanize factory. Men at the equipment. Stamp on verso: Baker Photo Co., Grand Rapids Mich.
- 2 24 New Photo accessions  
Men's baseball team, ca. postwar 1940's. Copy photo. 2003.017