

Finding Aid for the Wolverine Brass Company collection Collection 170

Finding aid prepared by John Kaiser

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
October 1994
111 Library Street NE
Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49503
616-988-5400
localhis@grpl.org

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Summary Information

Repository	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Creator	Cornelius, Louis A, 1870-1953
Creator	Wolverine Brass Works.
Title	Wolverine Brass Company collection
Date [inclusive]	1896-1986
Extent	4.9 Linear feet 12 boxes
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Wolverine Brass Company was a brass goods manufacturer in Grand Rapids, Mich. They mainly manufactured plumbing supplies. This collection contains catalogs, company publications, and business records detailing the growth, expansion and ultimate demise of the company. Also included are personal information, scrapbooks and photographs on the company's founder, L.A. Cornelius (1870-1953) and his service on various social, service and charitable organizations.</p>

Biographical/Historical note

The Wolverine Brass Company was founded in 1896 by Louis A. Cornelius and a dozen helpers. They began manufacturing in a small plant on Shamut St. and a year later moved into larger quarters at 256 Canal St. (now 620 Monroe Ave., NW). By 1909 the firm had become one of the leading industries in Grand Rapids. It manufactured a wide variety of brass goods, mainly plumbing fixtures. The company's business increased yearly and during both world wars. During WWII, Wolverine Brass Co. produced airplane and tank parts. In recognition for meeting production and efficiency goals, the company received many awards including the Army/Navy "E" Award in 1944.

Outside of the firm, Wolverine Brass President, L.A. Cornelius, was involved in the community. He was a member of many organizations, clubs and societies including the Masonic Country Club, the Grand Rapids Trust Company, the American Society of Sanitary Engineering, the Rotary Club and The Saladin Shriners. In 1932, Cornelius became City Welfare Director for no pay, due to the vagaries of the Great Depression. He served as President of Wolverine Brass until 1951, and died in 1953. Franklin Cornelius, his son, succeeded him as president.

In 1964 Wolverine Brass bought Bal-Cam Corp. and Rasco Inc., both brass-making competitors. In 1968 the plant underwent a \$4.3 million expansion, much of the money going into the creation of a new foundry. At the same time the firm reorganized and took the name Wolverine Industries Inc., with the Wolverine Brass Co. name applied to one of the divisions.

In the early 1970s Wolverine Brass formed Citation Companies, a holding company for new enterprises and expanded operations. Citation Companies was purchased by Dayton-Walther in 1980 and renamed Citation-Walther, with Wolverine Industries as a division of the new firm. The Grand Rapids plant closed in 1986, due to competition from foreign and domestic manufacturers.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department October 1994

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Franklin Cornelius, Jr., accession number 1992.023

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Coll 015-3-10: Bird's eye photo including the Wolverine Brass Works.

Coll. 054-48-7, 054-3.5: Photographs

Coll. 246-8: General Trade Catalogs

Coll. 046-27-43: Chamber of Commerce Photographs.

Coll. 227-1-13: Image. Laser copy.

Coll. 285-14-9: Wolverine Faucet magazine, 1 issues

Controlled Access Headings

Genre(s)

- business records

Geographic Name(s)

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History

Subject(s)

- Plumbing equipment industry -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- World War, 1914-1918 -- War work -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- World War, 1939-1945 -- War work -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids

Series I. L.A. Cornelius Personal Records, 1916-1955, n.d.

Collection Inventory

Series I. L.A. Cornelius Personal Records, 1916-1955, n.d.

Scope and Contents note

Contains information on L.A. Cornelius from newspaper articles on his death, his social life, his business role and his job as welfare director, Shriner and Scottish Rite awards and pamphlets, and books about ecology he authored.

	Box	Folder
Grand Rapids Spectator article on L.A. Cornelius, 1928.	1	1
Newspaper articles, 1921-46, 1953.	1	2
Roster, L.A. Cornelius class, DeWitt Clinton Consistory, 1919.	1	3
Saladin Temple Golden Jubilee booklet, 1935.	1	4
Scottish Rite of Grand Rapids booklet, 1926.	1	5
Shriner information, 1955, n.d.	1	6
Standard specifications for brass goods, 1916.	1	7
They Die From Neglect by L.A. Cornelius, 1936.	1	8

Series II. Business Records, 1899-1986.

Series II. Business Records, 1899-1986.**Scope and Contents note**

Contains business records, advertisements, blueprints, correspondence, the Army/Navy "E" award from world war II, information on products, newspaper articles and stock certificates.

	Box	Folder
"They Die From Neglect"	1	8
Advertisement booklet, n.d.	1	9
Advertisement in Camp Sherman souvenir pamphlet, 1918.	1	10
Blueprint, 1932.	1	11
Correspondence with U.S. War Department, 1909-1955.	1	12-14
E Award, 1944.	1	15-16
Historical information, 1938-1947.	1	17
History of the Single Control "CC" Interrupter Gear, Selfridge Field "Air Fighters" souvenir, 1919.	1	18
Kenosha Evening News, "E" Award goes to Frost Co., 1944.	1	19
Ledger, 1914-1923.	1	20

Series III. Newspaper Articles

The Magic of Plumbing by R.M. Alexander, 1971.	1	21
Stock certificates, 1899-1902.	5	1
		Box
Patent. No. 21871. 1895. Louis A. Cornelius. British. "Improvements in devices for repairing the spuds or nipples of sanitary closet bowls."		12
Series III. Newspaper Articles		
	Box	Folder
Closing of Wolverine Brass, 1986.	1	22
Miller, Edward C.	1	23
Company History, 1953.	1	23
Employees, 1927.	1	23
Whitworth, George, 1925, n.d.	1	24
Whitworth, J. Arthur, 1930, n.d.	1	24
The Wolverine Brass Corp., 1928-1967, n.d.	1	25
Series IV. Company Publications, 1911-1980.		
Scope and Contents note		

Employee Information

Contains company publications, company magazines, cards, bulletins, safety instructions, salesman information on conferences, sales, and advertisements, and plant information.

	Box	Folder
Brass Craft Clippings, 1923-1927.	1	26-27
Bulletins and various information, 1917-1980.	2	1
Christmas cards/parties, 1911-1930.	2	2-3
The Commonwealth, 1921.	2	4
The Commonwealth, 1927.	5	2
Employee Information		
	Box	Folder
Business cards, n.d.	2	5
Safety Instructions, 1949.	2	5
Retirement information, 1952.	2	5
Picnic handout, 1926.	2	5
Employee savings, 1927.	2	5
	Box	Folder

Salesman Information

Michigan Plumbing and Heating Dealer magazine, 1930.	2	6
Out Of The Faucet #11, 1928.	2	7
Plant modernization pamphlet, 1939.	2	8
Plant tour pamphlet, 1951.	2	9
Salesman Information		
	Box	Folder
Salesman instructions, n.d.	2	10
Salesman conference, 1921-26.	2	10
Yuletide Greetings, 1927.	2	10
Advertisements, n.d.	2	10
The Wolverine Plumblin, Sep 1948-Mar 1950.	2	11-14
The Wolverine Faucet, 1943-61.	2	15-18
Wolverine High Lights, Feb 1970.	2	19
Various, n.d.	2	20

Series V. Catalogs, 1900-1986

Series V. Catalogs, 1900-1986

Scope and Contents note

Contains Wolverine Brass catalogs of plumbing parts, catalogs of a division of Wolverine Brass, Rasco Inc., and price lists.

	Box	Folder
Illustrated Catalog "B", ... Manufacturers of Plumbers' Supplies ...1900.	3	1
Illustrated Catalogue "E", Brass, Rubber and Leather goods, Specialties, Tools, Etc.	3	2
Catalog "C", Brass Bath Room Fixtures and ... Appliance / Wolverine Brass Works, 1903.	3	2
Revised Catalog – M / 1938.	3	3
Revised Catalog – M / 1938.	3	4
Revised Catalog – M / 1938.	3	5
"Laboratory Plumbing Fixtures" 7-9-39 (4 sheets)	3	6
Wolverine Temporary Price List, Apr. 1, 1946	3	7
Wolverine 1949 Catalog. Spiral bound with orange covers.	3	8

Series V. Catalogs, 1900-1986

Wolverine Price List, May 1, 1950	3	9
Wartime Production. Awarded June 29, 1944.	3	10
Laboratory Brass Fixtures and Accessories (4 slim catalogs): Catalog D, Jan. 1960; Catalog E, Jan. 1961; Catalog F, Jan. 1962; Catalog G, 1962.	3	11
Catalog W. 1963.	3	12
Laboratory and Hospital Fixtures with accessories (2 slim catalogs): Catalog I, n.d. (ca. 1965?); Catalog J, c. 1965	3	13
Ultra Lab TM (3), circa 1969	3	14
Ultra Lab TM. Preferred Laboratory Service Fixtures and Accessories. c. 1980.	3	15
Catalog 84. Sections A-F	3	16
[1986, part 1]	3	17
[1986, part 2]	3	18
Catalogs, 1986, n.d.	4	1-4
		Box
Rasco Inc. catalog E, n.d.		5

Series VI. Photographs, 1896-1958, n.d.

Price List, 1914.	6
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Price List (3), 1924, 1928, 1931.	7
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Series VI. Photographs, 1896-1958, n.d.

Scope and Contents note

Images of awards, artwork, sports teams, parties, the interior and exterior of the factory, people and products.

	Box	Folder
Army-Navy "E" Award, 1944.(20)	8	1
Army-Navy "E" Award, 1944.(14)	8	2
Army-Navy "E" Award, 1944.(11)	8	3
Basketball, 1914. (2)	8	4
Bathrooms, n.d. (6)	8	5
Celebrations of end of World War One, Wolverine Truck, 1918. (1)	8	6
Christmas, 1945, n.d. (3)	8	7
Living Rooms, n.d. (1)	8	8

Groups. Oversized photos. (8 photos + 1 sheet w graphic clippings either s...

Offices, 1914-17, 1948, n.d. (14)	8	9
Chapman, "Pop", 1906. (1)	8	10
Cornelius, H.C., 1920, n.d. (4)	8	11
Cornelius, L.A., n.d. (2)	8	12
Groups, 1975, n.d. (3)	8	13
Groups. Oversized photos. (8 photos + 1 sheet w graphic clippings either side)		
		Box
Aircraft Workers panorama.		11
Factory workers panorama. Gillette		11
National Research Council Party, Oct. 1931.		11
Group of six men: Glidden, Goodspeed, Abbott, Workman, Niles, Powers.		11
Interior. Salesman's Convention, ca. 1912-1913 (2)		11
Camera Shop Photo, Dec. 20, 1940. Includes names and position. (2)		11
Graphic clippings of individual portrait images, with clippings of products on the back side.		11

Groups. Oversized photos. (8 photos + 1 sheet w graphic clippings either s...

	Box	Folder
Groups, identified, 1905,1929-1931,1958. (5)	8	14
Whitworth, George G., n.d. (1)	8	15
Picnics, n.d.	8	16
Products, 1896-1937, n.d. (10)	8	17
Products, 1896-1937, n.d. (16)	8	18
Products, 1896-1937, n.d. (11)	8	19
Salespeople, 1910-47. (23)	8	20
Storefronts, n.d. (1)	8	21
Strikes, 1955. (2)	8	22
Trucks, n.d. (2)	8	23
Factory cafeteria, 1945. (1)	8	24
Factory Exteriors, 1896-1944. (6)	8	25
Factory Exteriors, 1896-1944. (13)	8	26

Groups. Oversized photos. (8 photos + 1 sheet w graphic clippings either s...

Factory Exteriors, 1896-1944. (10)	8	27
Factory Interiors, 1914-1941, n.d. (13)	9	1
Factory Interiors, 1914-1917 (14)	9	2
Factory Interiors, 1914-1917 (16)	9	3
Factory Interiors, 1917 (13)	9	4
Factory Interiors, 1917 (16)	9	5
Factory Interiors, 1917, 1921 (14)	9	6
Factory Interiors, 1939, 1941 (32)	9	7
Factor Interiors, n.d. (13)	9	8
Factor Interiors, n.d. (20)	9	9
1 8x10 Negatives illustrating parts & tags	9	10
Building photos, n.d. (2): Exterior - mansion in tropical setting; "8013" interior – employee recreation room.	9	11
		Box
H.C. Cornelius n.d. Portrait image. Source unknown.		11

Panoramic Photographs.

Wolverine Catalog K. Product Display. See trade catalogs.			11
Panoramic Photographs.			
		Box	Folder
Aircraft Workers of the Wolverine Brass Works, Grand Rapids, Mich. Nov. 11, 1918		12	1
American Society of Sanitary Engineers. Grand Rapids, Mich. Aug. 2, 1917 / compliments of the Wolverine Brass Works		12	2
Fragment. ...Convention of Mich... Master Plumbers, Grand Rapids, March. 25, 1914. ...taken in front of Wolverine Brass Works Plant		12	3
Wolverine Brass Works Picnic, Ramona Park, Aug. 8th, 1925		12	4
Oversized Photographs			
		Drawer	Folder
2 copies of panoramic photo by Royal Photo Co. showing a line of men in front of a brick building		FF.IX.D	1
Fourth Annual Picnic Wolverine Brass Works. Fruitport, Aug. 8th, 1914		FF.IX.D	2
	Collection	Box	Folder
[Salesman's Convention ca. 1921].	224	32	2

Series VII. Scrapbooks, 1909-1942.

Verso: Salesman's Convention at WBW, ca. 1917-1918	224	32	3
Three pieces of one original panoramic photo "Wolverine Brass Works Fifth Annual Picnic, Jenison Park. Sat., Aug. 14, 1915	224	32	4
3 pieces, perhaps for one panoramic photo. Verso "1924" [Picnic (?) perhaps at Ramona Park]	224	32	5

Series VII. Scrapbooks, 1909-1942.**Scope and Contents note**

Two scrapbooks, one on L.A Cornelius' job as City Welfare Director, and one on freemasonry and the Saladin Temple in Grand Rapids.

Box

Scrapbook 1, 1932-33.

10

Scrapbook 2, 1909-42.

10

Series VIII. Miscellaneous, 1918-1938.**Scope and Contents note**

Blueprints, magazines, awards, and advertisements.

Original Illustration

Architectural and industrial plans

	Box	Folder
Wolverine Brass Co. truck "Plumbing". Pencil & crayon.	11	5
Architectural and industrial plans		
		Box
Wolverine Brass Plant floor plans, annotated. 6 Blueline prints.		11
Blueprint for Piece no. J109-78A, unidentified object, n.d. / Wolverine Brass Works.		11
Gun Control Operating Cable End. Piece No. 13936. Blueline print. Apr. 8, 1918.		11
		Drawer
Gun control operating cable and bracket assembly, 1918. U.S.A. Standardized Aircraft Drawings. (2 blueprints)		FF.IX.D
Faucet, n.d. Blueline print.		FF.IX.D
Graphics		
		Box
Ever-Ready Pipe Strap Advertisement, n.d. (2)		11
Publications		
		Drawer

Awards & Certificates

Grand Rapids Herald. Feb. 2, 1919. "Industry, tuned up to war-time pitch, now settles back to resume peace production, better equipped than before. (4 full newspaper pages)	FF.IX.D
	Box
Commonwealth. Reprint from Feb. 1921. L.A. (Louis A.) Cornelius and Wolverine Brass Works. Image on cover of Electric Furnace Department.	11
Your Host / Michigan Tourist & Resort Association, Grand Rapids, Mi. n.d. [ca. 1930s?]	11
Awards & Certificates	
	Drawer
Adoption into the Oldest Tribe of the Hope. Certificate. North American Indians of Arizona. Hopi tribe induction for Louis Alexis Cornelius, Feb. 14, 1930	FF.IX.D
	Box
The Imperial Council of the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine for North American. Louis A. Cornelius, member of the Saladin Temple. June 10, 1930. Shriners Certificate.	11
Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite Award. Northern Masonic Jurisdiction. Valley of Bay City, Michigan. To Louis Alexis Cornelius, 33 degree, Oct. 27, 1938.	11
	Drawer
War Department of the United States of America. ... in the war with the Imperial German Government and the imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian Government. [WWI?] Wolverine Brass Works. n.d.	FF.IX.D