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Finding Aid for Guardsman Products Collection 511

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on May 14, 2022.
Description is written in: English.
Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Grand Rapids History Center

111 Library Street NE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

localhis@grpl.org

URL: <https://www.grpl.org/research/history/>

Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Biographical / Historical	3
Scope and Contents	4
Administrative Information	4
Controlled Access Headings	5
Collection Inventory	5

Summary Information

Repository:	Grand Rapids History Center
Title:	Guardsman Products
ID:	Collection 511
Date [inclusive]:	1962-1983
Physical Description:	1 Linear Feet
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	Grand Rapids Varnish Corporation began operations in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1915, manufacturing and selling varnishes to furniture manufacturers. As the company grew to meet specific needs of various industries, it continued to research and develop several products. The range of industries included household furniture, office and kitchen equipment, mobile homes and appliances. With products such as varnish, enamel and stains and lacquers in the market, the company expanded its territory nationally and ultimately changed its name to Guardsman Products. This collection includes the financial records of the company which documents its various listing and share holder meeting information.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical / Historical

Wallace E. Brown began the Grand Rapids Varnish Corporation in September 1, 1915. Having humble beginnings as a child, Brown initially worked as brush hand at a Grand Rapid furniture plant and eventually began selling finishes. His work experience includes a job with Lilly Varnish Company of Indianapolis. His return to Grand Rapids led him to deciding on the location and business plan for selling varnish; with a few investors and Brown's personal savings account, it all began. Hiring his brother George Brown who worked for a varnish maker, was key to a good varnish recipe and the start of research for the company. The company grew with record sales and research that led to producing the first flat finish in the market known as SIL-KOTE. His passing in 1944 led to a change in management at the company. The company continued to grow with increasing sales, research and development of various products. The trade name "Guardsman" was used since 1937 for the company. On

January 1, 1963 the company's name was changed to Guardsman Chemicals Coatings, Inc. This was part of an expansion program incorporating companies with a strong position in the industry. With headquarters based in Grand Rapids, Michigan and plants located in key industrial areas, the goal was to market nationally. This expansion advanced research and the name change was key to the image of the company on a national platform. Similarly, Guardsman Products was an inevitable name change adopted in 1987.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Contents

This collection includes three binders of financial statement records and miscellaneous supporting documents. These were donated to the archives by the law firm Warner, Norcross and Judd. Attorney CE Thornquist was Member of the Board of the company and attorney for the law firm Warner, Norcross and Judd at that time; these binders include his correspondence and filings.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

This collection was donated by Stephen Waterbury, attorney at Warner, Norcross and Judd, 2022.005

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Controlled Access Headings

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History
- business records
- Industries -- Michigan -- Kent County
- Guardsman

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances	
Financial records, annual reports, shareholder correspondence and meeting minutes., 1962-1971	Box 1	binder 1
Financial records, annual statements, shareholder meeting minutes., 1969-1971	Box 1	binder 2
Financial statements, appraisal of Meadowview office building, shareholder meeting minutes, 1980-1983	Box 1	binder 3