Industrial Business Collections:
A Retrospective on Acquisitions Practice

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Introduction

*Historians rely on surviving material evidence as the basis for their research*

- Which institutions in the United States have taken the lead in collecting and preserving historical records documenting American industry, technology, and business?
- What has been their practice in collecting these materials? Which individual archivists and curators have been involved in this work?
- What factors affect the selection of these materials?
- What lessons can be learned?
- How might this affect current and future practice?
Methodology

• Historic research method
• Examine primary and secondary sources
• Ethnographic component: interviews
• Case studies: institutions
• Case studies: collections
• Analysis
• Compare / contrast practice at different institutions
Sample Case Study

Nordberg Manufacturing Company
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
1890-1970
Company History

Product Lines:
Mining Machinery
Company History

Product Lines:
Large Diesel
Surviving Documents
And potential for research

Whistles In The Woods
The Museum of Early Technology

ROBERT L. JOHNSON
MARY ELLEN JOHNSON

ROUSEVILLE, GEORGIA 30741
PHONE 404 375-4326

August 11, 1979

Ms. Theresa Spence
M.T.U. Archives
Michigan Technological University
Houghton, Michigan 49931

Dear Ms. Spence:

It was a distinct pleasure to have the opportunity to meet with Patterson, and to learn of the establishment of an archive at Michigan Technological University. I am certainly glad to learn that the materials we discussed can be preserved there for posterity. I trust that the acceptance of the materials from the Calumet and Hecla office collection of materials and to break it up would be tragic.

The groups of blueprints from Nordberg, which document materials much better than I had realized when I first saw them. Since I returned to Rexnord, and we sorted out these groups of blueprints with each and every one individually. There was even more machinery sent to the copper range than I had realized before inspection; therefore it certainly seemed most appropriate to materials to your archive.

Enclosed is the MTU copy of the appraisal that this writer prepared. The term "bunches" will be met with from time to time, and it is simply a term that Nordberg/Rexnord uses for the blueprint groups pertaining to a given subject.

The appraisal is in two parts: an 8-page appraisal report in total amount in dollar value and count of the groups or bunch to MTU, and a 4-page report which describes blueprints and an detail. The appraisal report is primarily centered around exp for historic engineering documents. I fear these make rather are new to antique collecting and its marketplace, it might p

I look forward to working with you on the CAM materials on a you have any questions relative to engineering history, please touch.

cc: Mr. Richard R. Bains, c/o Rexnord
Surviving Documents
Nordberg Cortus Cylinders

January 16th. Rack & Schenck 10 - 10' 6" 92 1/4 Holes
1 Cylinder 30 x 60 1 1/4 hp $133.35
1 10" 6" 24 3/4" 92 1/4 10 1/4 $81

June 16th. Rack & Schenck 10 - 10' 6" 92 1/4 Holes
1 Cylinder 30 x 60 1 1/4 hp $133.35

June 29th. John Anderson
1 16 x 36 Cylinder $351

July 1st. Friedrich
1 16 x 40 Cylinder $351

1-7722 Osceola Consolidated Mining Co. Calumet Mine

For Osceola #5 shaft. 53" 1 2 3 8"

1 80x80 32 x 72" Pentracting Engine
2 30 x 72" Pentracting Engine
2 30 x 72" Pentracting Engine
1 20 x 42" Pentracting Engine
1 20 x 42" Pentracting Engine
1 20 x 42" Pentracting Engine
1 48 x 60" Pentracting Engine
1 48 x 60" Pentracting Engine
1 48 x 60" Pentracting Engine
1 48 x 60" Pentracting Engine

Cryptic notes:
- Grooves in drums for 1 3/8" rope
- Some notes are difficult to decipher.
- Notes mention various engine specifications and sizes.
Surviving Documents
Photographs

Nordberg Manufacturing Co.
Milwaukee, Wis.
Main Machine Bay, July 1918
Surviving Documents

Photographs

Nordberg
Fire Brigade, 1918
Surviving Documents

NORDBERG MANUFACTURING CO.

MILWAUKEE, WIS. U.S.A.

November 11, 1939

 Quincy Mining Company,
 Hancock, Michigan

Attention: Mr. Chas. B. Leaton, General Mgr.

Dear Sirs:

This is in reply to a part of your letter dated November 13 dealing with the matter of safety devices for your No. 2, No. 3 and No. 4 hoists.

I have just looked into the question of adjusting the setting of No. 2 hoist so that the steam control can be closed at an earlier point down the shaft. I find this is a very easy thing to do. In the back of each of the indicators on No. 2 hoist there is a cam shaped as I am sketching below:

On one of the outer edges of this "Y" shaped cam there are three bolts which clamp it to the worn-out revolving ring on the indicator. There are also two bolts which clamp to the center shaft. By loosening or tightening these two bolts in the center and the three bolts on the star diameter this cam can be moved either upward or downward and thus affect the turning off of the steam.
Discoveries & Discussion

• Is any collecting activity idiosyncratic by its very nature?
• Do existing archival collections adequately document industrial sites, processes, and community?
• Are we falling short?
Next Steps

- Study acquisitions and appraisal literature
- Examine recent publication in fields of history
- Select additional case studies
- Follow an existing industrial collection from corporate ownership through appraisal, selection, and transfer to a public repository.

I welcome input, sources, informants, and additional institution & collection case studies
Questions?

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