

BIRD & SON

PAPERS, 1902-2004, n.d.

MSS #6
Vol.: 1 box: .5 linear feet

Processed by: Jane E. Ward
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Provenance: The provenance of the majority of this collection is unknown.

Conservation: Newspaper clippings have been photocopied onto acid-free paper; in some cases the original clippings have been discarded due to their condition. Photographs have been placed in plastic mylar sleeves.

Copyright: Requests for permission to publish material from this collection must be submitted in writing to the Executive Director of the Norwood Historical Society.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Bird & Son began life in 1795 in Needham, Mass., when George Bird established a small paper mill on the banks of the Charles River. In 1803, Bird moved his mill to Mother Brook in Dedham, Mass., and then in 1817, Bird began operating a small mill on the Neponset River in South Dedham. In 1838, Bird purchased the Neponset Paper Co. in East Walpole, Mass., which became the long-time site of the East Walpole plants and offices.

Francis Bird took over sole control of the two mills from his father, George, in 1845, and ran them for many years. Francis's son, Charles Sumner Bird, joined the business in 1877 and began experimenting with new products, including waterproof wrapping paper and roofing. The company built its first roofing plant in 1904 in Norwood, followed by the Norwood Floor Covering Plant in 1911. The company also

built or purchased plants in Phillipsdale, R.I. (1907, 1942); Hamilton, Ontario (1905); Pont Rouge, Quebec (1908); Chicago (1917, 1962); Arkansas (1937-sold in 1957); Shreveport, La. (1937, 1949); Auburn, Me. (1944); Manchester, N.H. (1951); Charleston, S.C. (1954); St. Louis, Mo. (1957); Lawrence, Mass. (1958); Perth Amboy, N.J. (1962); Waterville Me. (1964); Bardstown, Ky. (1967); and Martinez and Wilmington, Calif., Portland, Ore, and Fair Oaks and San Mateo, Calif. (1968). By 1969, Bird & Son employed nearly 2500 employees and produced such products as shoe cartons, asphalt shingles and siding, tack boxes, frozen food containers, boxboard, paper and plastic flower pots, roll roofing building papers, soffit systems and roof edgings, coatings and cement, roofing asphalt, and roofing pitch.

The floor covering division was sold to New London Mills, Inc., of New London, Conn., in 1963; New London continued to run the Norwood plant. At some point in the 1970s or 1980s, Bird & Son sold all of its roofing assets, except the Norwood plant, to Genstar. In 1998, the company sold its Norwood roofing plant to CertainTeed Corp. of Valley Forge, Pa., which still operates the plant today.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The papers of Bird & Son give only a glimpse of the activities of this long-time Walpole/Norwood business. Folder 1 contains a collection of clippings and articles depicting the company's history (1923-73), including a 1963 clipping on the sale of the flooring plant, and a 1970 reprint from Industry on the company, which was repeated in the 1972 Norwood Centennial commemoration. The 125th anniversary booklet from 1920 (F2) gives an in-depth view of the company's history and the services it offered its employees to that point in time. Folder 3 contains copies of the Bird Neponset Review, the monthly newsletter edited by company employees (very similar to the company newsletters issued by the Plimpton Press), 1937, 1940-41. Folder 4 contains a Quarter-Century Club certificate issued to Anne Kelliher and Kelliher's copy of the souvenir program from the Quarter-Century Club dinner at the Copley Plaza in Boston in 1950. The Quarter-Century Club honored employees who had 25 or more years service to the company.

A 1969 employee booklet, which was apparently issued to new employees, will be found in Folder 5. The booklet includes a history of the company to that point, as well as employee information. A history of the roofing plant from 1904 to 2004 will be found in Folder 6. George Smith wrote a history of the plant in 1949, which was supplemented by Jack Reddick, who covered the years 1950 to 1984, and John Hardy, who brought the history up to 2004.

The photographs in Folder 7 consist of two copies of an aerial shot taken in 1929, and an undated photo of a small number of workers, possibly taken ca. 1900. The miscellaneous papers in Folder 8 consist of a 1902 company postcard, although the message is not relevant to the company.

CONTENTS LIST

Box Folder

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| 1 | 1 | Clippings, history of company, 1923-73. |
| 2 | | 125 th anniversary booklet, 1920. |
| 3 | | <u>Bird Neponset Review</u> , 1937, 1940-41. |
| 4 | | Quarter-Century Club, 1949-50. |
| 5 | | Employee booklet, 1969. |
| 6 | | “The History of the Norwood Roofing Plant from 1904-2004.” |
| 7 | | Photographs, 1929, n.d. |
| 8 | | Miscellaneous papers, 1902. |