

WORCESTER HISTORICAL MUSEUM

30 Elm Street
Worcester, Massachusetts

ARCHIVES

American Steel & Wire
Company Collection

2000.76

Processed by William F. Carroll, C.A.
November 2000

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Collection Information

Abstract : Wire manufacturing plant established in 1831 by Ichabod Washburn, became in 1850 Washburn & Moen Company, which affiliated with other wire companies to form American Steel & Wire Co. in 1899, part of U. S. Steel after 1901. Company was an international leader in wire production, peaking during World War II with 4000 employees. Operations ceased by 1977 as a result of high transportation costs, obsolete equipment, and foreign competition

Finding Aid : Finding Aid in print form is available in the Repository.

Preferred Citation : Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Provenance : In part purchased of Kenneth Schneringer, Woodstock, Ga., June 2000; in part various accession numbers; in part FIA.

MARC Access : Collection is cataloged in MARC under the following subject headings (lcsh, aat, tgm, gmgcp)

American Steel & Wire Co. (Worcester, Mass.) – History.
Washburn & Moen Co. (Worcester, Mass.)
Iceboat Washburn, Wire Manufacturer (Worcester, Mass.)
United States Steel Corp. American Steel & Wire Division. (Worcester, Mass.)
Industries – Massachusetts – Worcester.
Worcester (Mass.) – Manufactures.
Wire industry – Massachusetts – Worcester.
Wiredrawing machines – Massachusetts – Worcester.
Wire products industry – Massachusetts – Worcester.

North Works (Worcester, Mass.). local
Central Works (Worcester, Mass.). local
South Works (Worcester, Mass.). local

Historical/Biographical Notes

In 1831 Ichabod Washburn and Benjamin Goddard established a wire manufacturing plant in Worcester in the Northville (now Chadwick Square) area. The company soon outgrew its quarters at Northville, and in 1834 commissioned Stephen Salisbury to construct a new plant on Grove Street (Grove Mill), the first of many building which would eventually become the North Works. Goddard bought out Washburn's share of the original Northville plant, and continued in the manufacture of woolen machinery at that site. Washburn assumed management of the new Grove Mill, under the name of Ichabod Washburn, Wire Manufacturer. In 1850 Phillip L. Moen, Washburn's son-in-law, became a partner and the firm name of Washburn & Moen was adopted. The company was an industrial leader in the wire industry, and distinguished by its successes, including the first American-made telegraph wire in 1847, design of the first wire gauge for determining size in 1849, first American-made piano wire in 1851, first continuous rod rolling mill in United States in 1868, first open hearth furnace in New England in 1889, first American-made insulated cables in 1891, and many other "firsts".

In 1899 the Washburn & Moen Company relinquished its individual name and grouped itself with other Worcester wire companies as part of American Steel and Wire. In 1901 American Steel & Wire Company became a subsidiary of United States Steel Corporation.

Additional facilities were constructed throughout Worcester. The North Works occupied an extensive site on Grove Street, the South Works a very extensive site in Quinsigamond Village, and the Central Works, off Cambridge Street near Southbridge Street. The North Works and the Central Works closed in 1943 and all operations were consolidated in the South Works plant.

Production by American Steel & Wire Company reached its maximum during the World War II years, with some 4000 workers employed by the Worcester facility. Postwar years showed a decline in the business. In 1958 the company stopped making steel in Worcester, and the employees numbered 2300. By 1971, only the Electric Cable Division remained in the city, with 500 employees. By 1977, even that was gone.

High transportation costs, obsolescence of the machinery and equipment, foreign competition, and new anti-pollution legislation all contributed to the closing of American Steel & Wire, after nearly 150 years of operation in Worcester.

Scope and Content

The collection includes histories of the company and various aspects of its operations, 1920s to 1950s; manuals and procedure books, 1905-1969; catalogs, 1890s-1920s; company serial publications, 1920s-1930s; copy of article *Story of wire in picture and product* / by John Nelson, reprinted from *The iron age*, March 15, 1923; and miscellaneous items, many relating to the company's 125th anniversary in 1956. The collection also includes lists of company employees, with dates of employment and related information, prepared in 2000 as part of an American Steel & Wire Company exhibit at Worcester Historical Museum.

Series Description

Series 1: Histories. Includes histories of United States Steel, 1901-1951; histories of operations in Worcester; and histories of wire and nails. (7 items)

Series 2: Personnel. Includes lists of personnel, dates of employment, related records. (2 folders)

Series 3: Catalogs. Includes catalogs of fencing supplies and equipment, rail wire bond supplies and equipment, and other products. (5 items)

Series 4: Manuals. Manuals, handbooks, etc. relating to company products and equipment. (16 items)

Series 5 : Serials. Company newsletters, serial publications, etc. (2 items)

Series 6: Miscellaneous. Letters, clippings, exhibition materials, notes. (10 items)

American Steel & Wire Co. Collection
2000.76
Series 1, Histories

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	1	2000.76.1.1	“Story of wire in picture and product” / by John Nelson; relating to the Industrial Museum of American Steel & Wire. Reprinted from <i>The Iron Age</i> , March 15, 1923. 7 p. 2 copies
1	1	2000.76.1.2	“Unlocking past at the old wire mill”, in Waukegan, Illinois News-Sun, Saturday/Sunday July 30/31, 1988. Relating to Waukegan plant of U. S. Steel Corp. 2 p. aqp
1	1	2000.76.1.3 .3a	“The common nail, an historical outline” / Arthur G. Warren, Secretary, Industrial Museum Committee, American Steel & Wire Co. Typescript, 4 p. aqp
1	2	2000.76.1.4	“People, progress & products, a story of 125 years of wire making / American Steel & Wire Division, United States Steel. 12 l., ill.
1	3	2000.76.1.5	“The longest cable ever shipped from Worcester, 1930”, relating to 8 mile long submarine cable. Scrapbook, clippings, maps, prints. 12 l.
1	4	2000.76.1.6a-b	“American Steel & Wire Division, United States Steel, Worcester Works, presents a birds eye view of its people, progress and products” 42 p., ill. 2 c., 1953 (a) and 1956 (b) editions.
1	BV	2000.76.1.7	“Steel serves the nation, 1901-1951; the fifty year story of United States Steel” / by Douglas A. Fisher, 1951. 227 p., ill.

American Steel & Wire Co. Collection
2000.76
Series 2, Personnel

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	5	2000.76.2.1	Lists of employees with dates of employment (partial), lists of retirees, lists of departments, etc. / research by Bill Jones, August 2000.
1	6	2000.76.2.2	American Steel & Wire Company "Citation for Meritorious Service", presented to August Norsten, April 18, 1946. 2 copies. aqp

American Steel & Wire Co. Collection
2000.76
Series 3, Catalogs

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	7	2000.76.3.1	American field and hog fencing and gates ... : catalog, 32 p., ill. / American Steel & Wire Co., ca. 1899. [Accessioned as 1983.9.5]
1	7	2000.76.3.2	American Steel & Wire Co. fence advertising : flier for dealers. ca. 1900.
1	7	2000.76.3.3	“American fence is a household word”: catalog of fencing materials and supplies, 52 p., ill. / American Steel & Wire Co., ca. 1900. [Accessioned as 1977.109.1]
1	7	2000.76.3.4	Catalogue of Anthony steel gates and fence, with farm account book : 32 p., ill. / American Steel & Wire Co., January 1922.
1	BV	2000.76.3.5	Rail Bonds and appliances, Catalogue No. 3 : catalog and manual, 192 p., ill. / American Steel & Wire Company, 1911.

American Steel & Wire Co. Collection
2000.76
Series 4, Manuals

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	8	2000.76.4.1	American Society for Testing and Materials, Standard specification for music steel spring wire, and related specifications : 8 l. / August 15, 1968.
1	8	2000.76.4.2	Electrical wires and cables – a rail bond catechism ... : 19 p. / read before Public Service Corporation, Chicago, October 30, 1913.
1	9	2000.76.4.3-.6	Manual of carpentry and catalogue of American nails, ... : variable pagination, ill. / American Steel & Wire Co., March 1, 1927; December 1927; 1936, January 1942. 4 items.
1	10	2000.76.4.7	Sizes, weights and lengths of round wire : 32 p. / American Steel & Wire Co., April 1905. [Accessioned as 1985.4.1A]
1	10	2000.76.4.8	Mechanical springs, their engineering and design : 106 p., ill. / Wallace Barnes Co., Bristol, Conn., 1944.
2	BV	2000.76.4.9	Manual of spring engineering : 132 p., ill. / American Steel & Wire Co., 1941. [Accessioned as 1993.47]
2	11	2000.76.4.10	Wire reinforcing fabric in buildings : 57 p., ill. / American Steel & Wire Co., March 1928.
2	11	2000.76.4.11	Cold rolled strip steel : 42 p., ill. / American Steel & Wire Co., Bulletin No. 3, 1931. [Accessioned as 1993.47]
2	11	2000.76.4.12	Reinforced roads and streets : 90 p., ill. / American Steel & Wire Co., 1928.
2	12	2000.76.4.13a-d	Making steel and wire : 40 p., ill. / American Steel & Wire Co., 1934. 4 c. [Accessioned as 1985.4.5]

Series 4, continued

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| 2 | 13 | 2000.76.4.14 | Reference manual – wire, strip, bars : 63 p., ill. / American Steel & Wire Co., ca. 1950. [Accessioned as 1993.47] |
| 2 | 14 | 2000.76.4.15 | Manual of wire for manufacturing purposes : 96 p., ill. / American Steel & Wire Co., 1932. 4 copies. |
| 2 | BV | 2000.76.4.16 | Electrical wires and cables, catalogue and handbook : 234 p., ill. / American Steel & Wire Co., 1910. |

American Steel & Wire Co. Collection
2000.76
Series 5, Serials

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	15	2000.76.5.1	<i>South Works Wire</i> , published monthly in the interest of the employes by the American Steel & Wire Company South Works : 24 p., ill. / March 1921.
1	15	2000.76.5.2	"? ? ?", published by the American Steel & Wire Company in the interest of the employees of Worcester District : 24 p., ill / April 1935.

American Steel & Wire Co. Collection
2000.76
Series 6, Miscellaneous

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
2	16	2000.76.6.1	“Blueprint cache brings an industry to life”, in <i>News of the future</i> , Worcester Historical Museum newsletter, Summer 1990.
2	16	2000.76.6.2	“No city on the continent ...” : flier of opening Fuller Gallery industrial exhibit, Worcester Historical Museum, May 28, 1998.
2	16	2000.76.6.3a-b	“All wire is not cylindrical” : display label, American Steel & Wire Company Industrial Museum. n.d. 2 items.
2	16	2000.76.6.4	Program, 125 th anniversary luncheon, April 25, 1956.
2	16	2000.76.6.5	Miscellaneous notes.
2	17	2000.76.6.6	Letter, from Mary Goodley, N. Chicago, Ill., requesting information, August 10, 1988. 2 p.
2	17	2000.76.6.7	Notebook, leather bound, embossed American Steel & Wire Company. n.d.
2	17	2000.76.6.8	New frontiers, an American Steel & Wire publication : story of barbed wire in comic book format, 1958.
2	17	2000.76.6.9	Open hearth steel, in Worcester Sunday Telegram, July 5, 1987. Clipping.
2	17	2000.76.6.10a-b	Aerial view of North Works and vicinity, Worcester, Mass., 1928. 2 views. aqp