

WORCESTER HISTORICAL
MUSEUM

30 Elm Street
Worcester, Massachusetts

ARCHIVES
2011.FIA.06

Merrifield Buildings Trust Collection

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January 2012

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Collection Information

Abstract: Trust, Accounts, Bills, Certificates, Contracts, Checks, Correspondence, Photographs, Plans, Architectural Drawings and Specifications, Appraisal, and Insurance Policies.

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

Preferred Citation: Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Provenance: Donated to Worcester Historical Museum in 1981, 1991 and 1997 by Linwood M. Erskine, Jr. (great-grandson of William T. Merrifield).

Historical/Biographical Notes

The Merrifield Buildings Trust (MBT) was established to manage the industrial properties held by the estate of William Trowbridge Merrifield (1807-1895) (WTM) (grandfather of Worcester-bred author Esther Forbes). William T. Merrifield followed his father into the contracting business and was very successful. He established a facility on Union Street in Worcester, manufacturing sashes, shutters and blinds. He set up a steam-driven sawmill in Princeton, MA for logging operations. WTM won the contract to build Lancaster Mills in Clinton, MA, which was then the largest textile mill in the New England. With profits from this job, he invested in more property on Union, Exchange and Cypress Streets in Worcester, where he built brick industrial buildings (the "Merrifield Buildings"). The first of these buildings was constructed in 1848 and was expanded over time. He leased the Merrifield Buildings for manufacturing and supplied power to these operations with overhead belts connected to steam engines. The Merrifield Buildings have been called the first industrial park in America. A fire in 1854 in the buildings resulted in the loss of 50 different businesses. WTM immediately reordered a new steam engine and rebuilt the buildings, which reopened in seven months. The MBT undertook a large scale renovation of the buildings in 1903. A second fire destroyed part of the complex in 1921. The last tenant departed in 1958 and the complex was demolished for parking space. The Worcester Civic Center is now located on the site.

The businesses located in the Merrifield Buildings over the years included The Worcester Knitting Company, Ethan Allen Firearms, Frank Wesson Firearms, and Forbush and Crompton Company (forerunner of Crompton and Knowles).

Upon WTM's death, the MBT was established by his estate to manage the property on behalf of his heirs and other investors over time.

Izard, Holly V. and Hofstetter, Vanessa J., *Merrifield at 23 Trowbridge Road 1856 – 2002*, Worcester, MA: Worcester Historical Museum, 2004. Erskine, Margaret A., *Heart of the Commonwealth Worcester An Illustrated History*, Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, 1981.

Scope and Content

The Merrifield Buildings Trust Collection (1830 – 1964) is comprised of two boxes and one oversize folder containing the papers of the MBT. The collection includes documents relating to the establishment, management and financing of the MBT and the operation of the Merrifield Buildings, related correspondence, plans, architectural drawings and specifications and contracts relating to the 1903 renovation, 1936 appraisal, an 1875 water rights agreement with the City of Worcester, insurance policies, and 16 photographs of the buildings in 1923, 1936 and 1938.

Series Descriptions

Series 1: Will of William T. Merrifield and Probate Papers (1894 – 1918)

Series description: This series contains the will of WTM and related probate documents.

Series 2: Business Papers of the MBT (1904 – 1972)

Series description: This series contains the business papers of the MBT divided into three subseries: Corporate/Trust Papers; Finance Papers; and Correspondence.

Series 3: Materials Related to Construction/Expansion/Maintenance (1875- 1936)

Series description: This series contains materials related to construction, renovations, expansions and maintenance of the Merrifield Buildings.

Series 4: Photographs, Pamphlets, Survey/Plot Plans, & News clippings (1830 – 1964)

Series description: This series contains photographs of the Merrifield Buildings taken in 1923, 1936 and 1938, pamphlets advertising space for lease in the Merrifield Buildings, Survey/Plot Plans of the MBT properties and property located at 23 Trowbridge Street owned by the Merrifield family and news clippings from 1958 and 1964 describing the MBT property.

Merrifield Buildings Trust Collection
 2011.FIA.06
 Series 1, Will of William T. Merrifield and Probate Papers (1894 – 1918)

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	1	2011.FIA.06.1.1	1894 Will of WTM
1	1	2011.FIA.06.1.2 – 2011.FIA.06.1.22	Probate related papers (1894 -1918)

Merrifield Buildings Trust Collection
 2011.FIA.06
 Series 2, Business Papers of the MBT (1904 – 1972)

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	2	2011.FIA.06.2.1.1- 2011.FIA.06.2.1.41	Corporate/Trust Papers (1904 – 1917)
1	3	2011.FIA.06.2.1.42- 2011.FIA.06.2.1.64	Corporate/Trust Papers (1918 – 1972)
1	4	2011.FIA.06.2.2.1- 2011.FIA.06.2.2.10	Finance Papers (1905 -1920)
1	5	2011.FIA.06.2.2.11 - 2011.FIA.06.2.2.88	Finance Papers (1925 – 1937)
1	6	2011.FIA.06.2.3.1 - 2011.FIA.06.2.3.62	Correspondence (1897 – 1926)

Merrifield Buildings Trust Collection
 2011.FIA.06
 Series 3, Materials Related to Construction/Expansion/Maintenance (1875- 1936)

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
2	1	2011.FIA.06.3.1- 2011.FIA.06.3.38	Materials related to the 1903 renovation and expansion of the Merrifield Buildings
	OVS	2011.FIA.06.3.39	Foundation Plans 1-8 for 1903 expansion
	OVS	2011.FIA.06.3.40	1903 building specifications by Frost, Briggs,

Chamberlain, Architects

	OVS	2011.FIA.06.3.41	Architectural plans for 1903 expansion
2	2	2011.FIA.06.3.42- 2911.FIA.06.3.59	Materials related to other construction projects from 1875 – 1931
	OVS	2011.FIA.06.3.60	1936 Plot Plan by Francis S. Bailey, Appraiser
	OVS	2011.FIA.06.3.61	Tissue copy of 1936 Plot Plan by Francis S. Bailey, Appraiser
2	3	2011.FIA.06.3.62 – 2011.FIA.06.3.64	1936 Appraisal of the MBT property

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Series 4, Photographs, Pamphlets, Survey/Plot Plans, & News clippings (1830 – 1964)

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
2	4	2011.FIA.06.4.1 - 2011.FIA.06.4.16	Photographs of the Merrifield Buildings taken in 1923, 1936 and 1938.
2	5	2011.FIA.06.4.17 – 2011.FIA.06.4.23	Pamphlets describing Merrifield Buildings for lease
2	6	2011.FIA.06.4.24 – 2011.FIA.06.4.30	Survey/Plot Plans of MBT property (1830- (1924)
	OVS	2011.FIA.06.4.31	Undated plot plan of lots on Institute Road, Einhorn Street, and Bismuth Street
	OVS	2011.FIA.06.4.32 – 2011.FIA.06.4.34	Undated rendering and plan of Merrifield Buildings by Lockwood, Greene & Co., Architects & Engineers, with plans
2	7	2011.FIA.06.4.35 - 2011.FIA.06.4.38	News clippings from 1958 and 1964 about the Merrifield Buildings