

Newton & Thompson Manufacturing Co.
Account Books, 1876-1915
XMSC 161, MSA 897, Size D

Introduction

This collection contains eleven ledgers created by the Newton & Thompson Manufacturing Company of Brandon, Vermont, and research materials on the company. The collection was given to the Vermont Historical Society by Charles Herrmann in 2020. The collection is composed of one archival flip-top box, 11 oversized items, and one Size D folder. The collection consumes 2.75 linear feet of shelf space.

Company History

Newton & Thompson Manufacturing Company was established at Brandon, Vermont, by Alexander Newton, Edward C. Thompson and Benoni Howard in 1856. The original name was Howard, Newton and Co. The company's main factory was in Forestdale (a village in Brandon); the company also had a plant in Pittsford, a sawmill in Sudbury, and the Sucker Brook Mill in Salisbury.

The company was founded on Newton's uniquely designed auto lathe, the first such automatic novelty wood-turning machine. An advertisement announced that Newton & Thompson Manufacturing Co. was "the only manufacturers of Newton's Patent Self-Operating Machines, for making pill boxes, spools, tassel moulds, &c." A.S. Newton held Patent No. 18,646, issued Nov. 17, 1857, for "Turning Regular Forms".

Newton's intent was to produce an inexpensive pill box, along with matchboxes and other utilitarian turnings. The company's product line changed as market demands dictated. They turned to making button forms, clothespins, shaker boxes for bluing, and other domestic products. Toy production played no role at this early stage of development, but by 1886 they were listed in the Brandon directory as both a novelty-turning and toy works.

It was not until the 1890s that they began to act as a jobber for New York toy companies. The company made a variety of wooden toys and games. During the 20th century, the company developed nickel and dime boxes filled with miniature toys and dolls' things. Millions were sold. Some of the major accounts for the year 1913 included Milton Bradley Co., Hammascher & Schlemmer, B.J. Toy Manufacturing Co., Schoenhut Co., and others.

The Newton & Thompson Manufacturing Co. was incorporated in 1885, with Newton as president; Charles H. Bump, vice president; Thompson, secretary; and Lewis Fortier, treasurer. I.C. Newton was listed as bookkeeper for the company in 1886; Irving C. Newton was born around 1863, son of Alexander S. and Esther Austin Newton. Charles H. Bump and his sons Lewis C. and Guy H. were long associated with the company. L.C. Bump was president of the company ca. 1929. By 1931, they had an office on Fifth Avenue in New York, with factories in Vermont and New Hampshire.

The company filed for bankruptcy in 1937, and was purchased in 1942 by Carl D. Gray and Charles B. Malone of Stamford, Connecticut, at which time the name changed to Newton & Thompson, Inc. A succession of other companies purchased the firm over the subsequent years, discontinuing the toy lines and manufacturing various products. Newton & Thompson finally closed in the 1960s.

The Brandon Directory for 1886 noted that Newton & Thompson was the largest manufactory in Brandon, with about 100 employees. In 1926, the company employed about 200 workers; circa 1929, 175 workers; and by 1961, 125 workers.

The company owned and carefully managed 8,000 acres of forest, insuring a continuous supply of raw material. As far back as the 1880s, Newton realized the need for planting and harvest management; the company may thus be recognized for forest conservation.

Biographical Notes

Alexander Selkirk Newton was born February 7, 1823 in Hubbardton, Vermont to Rufus Newton and Sarah Brown. Alexander Newton apprenticed as a cabinetmaker in Brandon. He died April 28, 1905, in Brandon.

Edward C. Thompson established a wood-turning shop in Clinton, Maine, in 1849, which he was running prior to joining forces with Newton in Brandon.

Benoni Howard was born April 1820 to Hiram Howard and Nancy Stoodley. Benoni Howard died May 18, 1903, in Brandon.

Scope and Content Note

The collection comprises 11 annual account books, spanning the years 1876 to 1915, and research material collected by the donor on the Newton & Thompson Manufacturing Company of Forestdale (Brandon), Vermont.

The account books are organized in various ways. Some are day books; some are ledgers, some are indexed and some are not. Notes inserted by the donor to highlight various aspects of the company remain in the books.

In some of the books, accounts were balanced for each department of the company (e.g. "By Mdse Acct", "By Supply Acct", "By Team Acct", "Box Shop", "Sucker Brook Mill Acct"), sometimes for each entry in a daybook, sometimes at the end of each year. Other ledgers include these as individual accounts.

In addition to suppliers, buyers, and internal accounting, the account books include the company's payroll, usually paid by cash but also seemingly sometimes through the Brandon National Bank.

Research material on the company assembled by the donor is stored in five letter-sized folders and one oversized folder. Almost all the items in this section are photocopies; many were mounted for display by the donor. Oversized, mounted photocopies that arrived with the collection have been photocopied and reduced to fit into letter-sized folders for ease of storage. The research material includes one original sign from the factory and three original photographs; otherwise, all items in this group are reproductions.

Related Collections

Four photographs that were received with the collection are housed in the Picture File under Size C F-MI-Brandon (one original photo and two copy photos) and one copy photograph is in Size B F-MI-Brandon.

The Vermont Historical Society museum collection includes at least five items produced by Newton and Thompson and donated at the same time as the ledger books and research files by Mr. Herrmann (mus. acc. no. 2020.22).

Inventory

XMSC 161.1	Daybook, 1876
.2	_____, 1890
.3	_____, 1893
.4	_____, 1896
.5	Ledger, 1897
.6	_____, 1900
.7	_____, 1905
.8	Daybook, 1911
.9	_____, 1912
.10	Ledger, 1913
.11	Daybook, 1915
MSA 897:01	Articles about Newton & Thompson
:02	Compiled lists of employees, 1881 and 1882
:03	Products
	<i>Includes:</i> Compiled list of products manufactured in 1876, photocopy of undated catalog of "Wooden Souvenir Novelties," photocopies of advertisements, photocopy of one page from ledger showing 269,000 toy blocks made in 1915 for \$94.38
:04	Billhead (194_) and covers of two catalogs (1931 & 32), photocopies
:05	Photographs
	<i>Includes:</i> Guy Bump (1900), Minnie Lawrence and Frank A. Bump (no date), Whitcomb home in Forestdale and family members (1897), Graystone house in Forestdale (1897 & 2014), photocopy of two pages from UVM's Landscape Change website showing intersections in Forestdale and Brandon
Size D	Paper sign, "Employees only allowed in shop ..."
	Photograph, Turning room, 1890 (reproduction)

- _____, Pittsford plant, circa 1900 (reproduction)
- _____, Ariel view of plant, 2010
- _____, Office entrance and Jack Brown, 2008
- _____, Office entrance, 2015
- _____, “Box Shop, Forestdale, Vt.,” photocopy of postcard

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