Biography

The E. Murdock & Company was founded by Elisha Murdock in 1834. Murdock hailed from Winchendon, Massachusetts, a small town outside of Boston. Elisha Murdock was the third child of Ephraim and Zibah Murdock. He was born on August 27, 1802.

Elisha Murdock's family dabbled in many industrial and educational pursuits. His father, a builder of sleighs, eventually founded the first public high school in Winchendon, Massachusetts in 1843. Eventually his son Ephraim Murdock, Jr. inherited the task of establishing a self-supporting high school in Winchendon. In 1887, the institution was dubbed "The Murdock School" and was considered one of the best equipped high schools in Massachusetts. In 1961, the school became known as "The Murdock Junior High School".

Elisha's and Ephraim Jr.'s brother William established the first machine shop in Winchendon in 1831. This shop manufactured many items including cotton and wool.

Elisha employed himself in the manufacturing of tubs, pails and other wood wares using machinery invented by his father. For one-hundred years, from 1831-1931, Winchendon was known as "The Home of Woodenware Manufacture".

In 1840, Murdock's first wooden ware factory in Winchendon burned. In 1895, a second fire destroyed an even larger plant. After the 1895 fire, however, a new factory was erected and a variety of products were offered. The new plant's dimensions measured 700' X 40'.

Murdock also established a plant in Boston, in the industrial area of Market Street. The Boston plant was listed in the city directory until 1882. In 1882, Elisha Murdock, Jr. died and the company's leadership was handed to William and Elisha Whitney. As of 1882, Boston no longer listed E. Murdock and Company in its directory.

From 1883-1929, little is recorded about E. Murdock & Company. In 1929, Murdock's Company, Keene Woodworking Company in New Hampshire and the West Swanzey plant merged to form the New England Woodenware Corporation. However, the Winchendon unit was still supervised by Elisha and William Whitney, with two-hundred and twenty-five employed operatives.
According to Murdock's great-great granddaughter Margaret Urquhart, the current president of E. Murdock, Inc., the company moved from Massachusetts to New Hampshire in 1958, where it is now a personal holding company with no employees. In 1951, the company ceased its production of wooden artifacts and began producing boxes. In 1982, the company moved from Winchendon to Gardener, Massachusetts.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of correspondence from customers, catalogues, monthly statements, and receipts from various shipping companies. Also included in this collection are price lists and miscellaneous items such as bulletins, advertisements and a census report. These papers indicate the kinds and the amounts of transactions that E. Murdock & Co. engaged in throughout most of its history.

The correspondence series consists of four folders. From 1866-1890, customers ranging from grocers, oil manufacturer’s and paper manufacturers to other wooden ware manufacturers who ordered items from Murdock's companies. These manufacturers ordered from E. Murdock and Company in 1891. However, due to the enormous volume of letters in that year, the letters were divided into files of October, 1891 and November, 1892. After 1891, the letters date until January of 1939.

The series from 8/1863-6/1893 includes monthly statements and receipts from Murdock's customers. Shipment confirmations by freight companies supply yet a third series in Murdock's papers. The invoices' dates range from February, 1864 to November, 1891.

Also included are price lists for wooden ware and electrical items, 1901-1964, catalogues of items sold to and by Murdock, n.d., and some miscellaneous items, 1918-1954 including bulletins, advertisements, law notices, and a census report.

The papers in this collection are legible. The papers themselves are in fairly good condition.

Provenance

Transferred from the Warshaw Collection 7/14/87