Guide to the Ryder Mobile Homes Park Collection

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by Alison Oswald

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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Creator: Ryder Mobile Homes, Inc.
Title: Ryder Mobile Homes Park Collection
Dates: circa 1920s-2001
Quantity: 15 cubic feet, 44 boxes and 1 oversize folder
Abstract: The collection documents trailer park life, particularly the Ryder Mobile Homes Park founded by Ralph Ryder in New Haven, Connecticut in 1930.
Language: Collection text is in English.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information
The collection was donated to the Archives Center by Scott and Phillip G. Zink on July 10, 2001.

Processing Information
The collection was processed by Alison Oswald, archivist, 2002.

Preferred Citation
Ryder Mobile Homes Park Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History

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Historical note
Ryder Mobile Homes, Inc. operated a mobile home park in New Haven, Connecticut from 1930 to 1981. Ralph Ryder established the company in 1930. He built and lived in a house car, a trailer on a truck body, near New Haven, Connecticut. The company designed and built its own recreational vehicles in the 1940s and operated a dealership circa 1950 to 1981, where it sold many different brands of mobile home trailers.
and recreational vehicles. Ryder began selling trailers in 1936 and moved his sales operation and trailer home to a ten-acre wooded lot in Hamden, Connecticut, that he purchased from Henry Usher. He opened his trailer lot to other residents, creating one of the first mobile home parks in the United States. The trailer lot expanded to sixty acres and is still in operation. Ryder's nephew, Gary Zink, joined the business in 1947. Zink continued the business operations after Ryder's death in 1973 and then sold the business in 1999.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of photographs, trade literature, plans, park bulletins, specifications, sales materials and contracts from manufacturers, articles, and sales literature on the company's own products. There are some personal items relating to the company founder Ralph Ryder. The photographs depict the Ryder Mobile Homes Park, and its trailers and residents, as well as other mobile homes and recreational vehicles.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into seven series.

Series 1: Ryder Mobile Homes Park, 1930-1990s
Series 4: Mobile Homes Trade Literature, circa 1920s-circa 1970s
Series 5: Mobile Homes Accessories Trade Literature, 1945-1994
Series 6: Magazines, 1936-1973
Series 7: Photographs, 1928-1989

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Mobile home industry
Mobile home living
Mobile home parks
Mobile homes
Recreational vehicle industry
Recreational vehicle living
Recreational vehicles
Types of Materials:
- Advertisements--20th century
- Business records--20th century
- Photographs--20th century
- Trade catalogs

Names:
- Ryder, Ralph
- Zink, Philip G.
- Zink, Scott
Container Listing

Series 1: Ryder Mobile Homes Park, 1930-1990s

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- Box 1, Folder 2: Personal Correspondence, 1951, 1954
- Box 1, Folder 3: Trip Log, 1939
- Box 1, Folder 4: Trip Log, 1954

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- Box 1, Folder 6: Ryder Park Directories, 1964
- Box 35, Folder 2: Ryder Park Maps, undated
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- Box 1, Folder 8: Ryder Park Physical Plant Management Records, 1953, 1954, 1958, 1986
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Box 39, Folder 15  Ryder Park residents directory, 1964
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Box 40, Folder 2  Residents, undated
Box 42, Folder 5  Directory of Residents, 1964

Subseries 7.4: Ryder Mobile Homes Park Employees, 1964, undated
Box 40, Folder 3  1964 and undated

Box 40, Folder 4  Old ten-acre trailer park, undated
Box 40, Folder 5  1966
Box 40, Folder 6  1983
Box 42, Folder 6-9  1966
Subseries 7.6: Trailer Shows, 1948-1989

Box 40, Folder 7-9  Danbury, Connecticut Agricultural Fair, 1948
Box 40, Folder 10  Danbury, Connecticut Agricultural Fair, 1950?
Box 40, Folder 11  Danbury, Connecticut Agricultural Fair, 1953
Box 41, Folder 1  New England Trailer Coach Association Annual Clambake, 1948
Box 41, Folder 2  New Haven, Connecticut Trailer Show, 1952
Box 41, Folder 3  Atlanta, Georgia Trailer Show, 1966
Box 41, Folder 4  Unidentified trailer show, 1967
Box 41, Folder 5  Milford, Connecticut 350th Anniversary, 1989
Box 41, Folder 6-7  Unidentified trailer show, undated

Subseries 7.7: Trailers, 1938-1980

Box 41, Folder 8  Aerocar, 1938
Box 41, Folder 9  Amherst, undated
Box 41, Folder 10  Artcraft, 1980
Box 41, Folder 11  Boyerstown (Includes La Tortuga), undated
Box 41, Folder 12  Brenda Starr Rollin' Studio, undated
Box 41, Folder 13  Duo Express, circa 1950s
Box 41, Folder 14  Flixble Land Crusier, 1956
Box 41, Folder 15  Mid States Executive Flagship Trailer, circa 1953
Box 41, Folder 16  National Trailers, undated
Box 43, Folder 1  Oxford Body Company, undated
Box 43, Folder 2  Pontiac Trailer Home, circa 1950s
Box 43, Folder 3  Rollohome, circa 1953
Box 43, Folder 4  Tour Coach, 1953
Box 43, Folder 5  Trotwood Trailers Inc., undated
Box 43, Folder 6  Torch Industries, undated
Box 43, Folder 7  Travelhome Company of America, circa 1951  
Box 43, Folder 8  United Traveler, undated  
Box 43, Folder 9  Unidentified, undated  

Subseries 7.8: Miscellaneous, 1951, undated

Box 42, Folder 10-16  Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Steiler trailer home (installation, exterior and interior views), circa 1951  
Box 43, Folder 10-11  Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Steiler trailer home (installation, exterior and interior views), circa 1951  
Box 43, Folder 12  Unidentified (negatives), undated  
Box 43, Folder 13  Unidentified trailer park, undated  
Box 43, Folder 14  Unidentified group, undated  
Box 43, Folder 15  Damage to a trailer, undated