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Archives of Appalachia NEWSLETTER



Vol. XIV, No. 1

Fall, 1992

HARRIS RECORDS DONATED TO ARCHIVES

This past summer the Archives of Appalachia was pleased to receive the Harris Manufacturing Records and Allen Harris, Jr. Family Papers. The collection, donated by Eva Stanley Harris Conour, consists of over 400 linear feet of materials which document the creation and operation of Harris Manufacturing and the activities of the Harris family as they related to the hardwood flooring business, 1873-1990. Included in the documentation are 387 boxes, 51 oversized ledgers and six oversized file folders which contain accounting ledgers and other financial records, personnel files, production files, correspondence, maps, blueprints, and photographs.



Harris Flooring on East Maple Street, Johnson City, Tenn.,
about 1919.

History of Company

Harris Manufacturing Company was founded in 1898 by William Pond Harris, who had moved to Tennessee eight years earlier as a railroad construction superintendent with the Charleston, Cincinnati and Chicago Railroad (CC&C). Upon the CC&C's failure during the Panic of 1893, Harris became division superintendent for the Southern Railroad. He remained in that position until 1898, when he organized and became the first president of Harris Manufacturing Company. In 1902 W.P.'s son, Allen, joined the company, and upon W.P.'s death in 1915, assumed the presidency of the company.

The company began by making plow handles and wagon wheel rims.

At its inception Harris manufacturing consisted of a shop on Buffalo Street which made plow handles, golf club shafts and heads, trunk slats, bed slats, and wagon wheel rims. By 1908 the company had moved to East Maple Street, and had begun to manufacture strip flooring, initially a by-product of making bed-slats. Flooring quickly became the primary product of Harris Manufacturing. From 1910 to 1928 the company experienced a period of unprecedented growth, with the establishing of Harris Flooring Company, New York City; Harris Hardwood Company, Inc., Roanoke, Virginia; and Cherokee Flooring Corporation, Burlington, North Carolina.

Allen Harris, Jr. joined the firm in 1929. Fresh out of college with an MBA from Harvard University, Harris began work as a salesman with the New York City office. The stock market crash in 1929 inaugurated the great Depression, but it was not until the early to mid-thirties when the flooring industry really felt the effects of the economic slowdown. Demand for wood flooring plummeted as construction of new buildings came to a standstill.

During World War II Harris Manufacturing joined the war effort by making prefinished flooring for military housing, and other products for war-time use. Allen Harris, Jr. also became part of the war effort by enlisting in the Navy, where he served in Newfoundland, England, Africa, and the Pacific.

After the war's end, the demand for wood flooring skyrocketed, so that Harris operated at full capacity. But during the fifties asbestos tiling and carpet gained in popularity, while strip flooring declined. In 1954 Harris, under Swiss License, introduced a specially designed parquet flooring called Bondwood, for installation over concrete or wood. From the mid-1950s through the 1960s Bondwood sales flourished, while strip flooring continued to decline. By 1972 strip flooring had become, at best, a break-even proposition, and Harris

discontinued this product and concentrated instead on Bondwood, plank and other specialty flooring.

In 1968 Allen Harris, Jr. became president, with Harris, Sr. becoming Chairman of the Board. Harris, Sr died in 1973. Allen Harris III joined the firm in 1972.

Allen Harris, Jr.
became president of
the company in 1968.

In 1983 Harris Manufacturing was sold to the Tarkett group of the Swedish Match Company. The sale was beneficial to both companies, with Tarkett being able to penetrate the American market, and Harris being able to utilize Tarkett's resources. About eight years after the sale, in 1991, Harris Tarkett opened a new flooring plant in Johnson City. This plant became the first United States company to manufacture long-strip prefinished laminated flooring.

Today Harris-Tarkett employs 225-250 workers at two locations in Johnson City, Eddie Williams Road and East Maple Street. The former location houses the strip flooring and laminated strip flooring manufacturing facilities, while the latter houses the Bondwood flooring manufacture, maintenance, and the lumber yard and kilns.

THANK YOU!

The archives staff thanks everyone who responded to our request for donations to the archives' program. The contributions have been added to either the Archives of Appalachia fund or the Tom Daniel Memorial Fund, as requested, and will be used to help continue our programs of preserving the documented heritage of South Central Appalachia.

STAFF NEWS

Norma Myers, director of the archives, gave a presentation entitled "Appalachian or American? Exploring the Stereotype and Documenting Reality," at the March 1992 Appalachian Studies Conference held in Asheville, North Carolina. She also attended the Library Information Technology Association meeting held in Denver, Colorado, September 13-16, 1992.

Scott Schwartz, technical services archivist, gave a paper entitled, "Fire Handling in Appalachia: Myth, Magic or Just Good Old-Fashioned Folklore?" at the March 1992 meeting of the Appalachian Studies Conference held in Asheville, North Carolina. He recently had two of his photographs published in Journey Through Fantasy Literature. He continued to direct the ETSU Collegium Musicum this past season in performances of English and Scottish Renaissance music.

Marie Tedesco, public services and audio-visual archivist, presented two papers: "Appalachia Becomes Mainstream: The Disappearance of Down-Home Baseball in Johnson City, Tennessee, 1886-1991," to the March 1992 meeting of the Appalachian Studies Conference held in Asheville, North Carolina; and "Feminist Voices: Feminism, Vegetarianism, and Abolition, 1820-1860," to the September 1992 Women's Studies Conference held at Western Kentucky University. For the academic year 1991-92 Tedesco received a grant from the

university's Research Development Committee to pay for transcribing interviews she has conducted with workers at North American Rayon in Elizabethton, Tenn.

Ed Speer, library assistant and Georgia Greer, secretary, attended a DOS workshop held at ETSU. Greer also attended a LOTUS 1-2-3 workshop held at the university.

STUDENT STAFF NEWS

The archives welcomes six new student workers, including two graduate and four undergraduate students. Jerry Stinson, a first-year graduate student in sociology, is the new graduate assistant. He received a B.S. in criminal justice from ETSU in 1989. His graduate studies will focus on the sociology of the Tennessee criminal justice system.

Kimberly Burch is a first year graduate student in marriage and family therapy. She received her B.S. in human ecology from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville in 1992, and is interested in entering private practice after completing her Masters Degree.

Anthony Blair Altizer, a junior geography major joined the staff of the archives this summer. He is interested in pursuing a Masters Degree in cultural geography once he has completed his Bachelors Degree.

Anthony Blankenship, is a senior marketing and office management major. He is

interested in pursuing a career in the insurance industry once he has completed his course work at ETSU.

Lisa Yeary is a sophomore psychology major from. She is interested in clinical psychology.

Crystal Lamb is a first year radiology student. Her long term goal is to become an emergency room x-ray technician.

RECENTLY PROCESSED

Archives staff has processed the following collections: H. Phil Carr Family Papers; the Lewis Family Papers; the Nat E. Hyder Papers; the Jack Tottle Bluegrass and Old-Time Music Tapes; the Cynthia A. Cornwell Tapes; the WCYB Radio Collection; the Kenneth Spaulding Photographs; and the Barnicle-Cadle Collection.

The H. Phil Carr Family Papers (1792-1929) consists of one purchase agreement, and copies of warranty and sheriff's deeds, dated between 1792 and 1949 and documenting the purchase of Johnson City property; the Lewis Family Papers (1890-1973) contains a general store ledger (1890s) and enumeration of school population (1916-18) in Carter County, Tenn., and family photographs. The Nat E. Hyder Papers (1802-1930) contain account books, genealogical notes on several Carter County families, correspondence, photographs and legal documents on the Hyder family. The Jack Tottle Bluegrass and Old-Time Music Tapes (1950-1976), contain 63 reel-to-reel audio tapes of recordings of live bluegrass and old time music performances by such musicians as Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs, Bill Monroe, the Lonesome River Boys and the Osborne Brothers. The Cynthia A. Cornwell Tapes (1987) contain eight audio cassettes of interviews concerning the history of Milligan College, while the WCYB Radio Tapes (1947-49) contain seven reel-to-reel audio tapes of WCYB programs featuring Curly King and the Tennessee Hilltoppers. The Kenneth C. Spaulding Photographs (1939 and undated) depict rural scenes and homes in Rabun Gap, Georgia; Ocoee, Tennessee; and New Found Gap, Tennessee and North Carolina. In addition processing of the Barnicle-Cadle Collection, not completed as of the Winter 1992 newsletter, now is completed.

SELECTED RECENT ACQUISITIONS

THOMAS BURTON COLLECTION, 1970-92. Eight audio cassettes; 4 reel-to-reel audio tapes; and 2 file folders. ADDITION. Consists of tapes documenting the following: Tennessee Department of Conservation's Roan Mountain Exhibition Development program; bluegrass music performed by Delmar Herington; interview with Teresa Herington Burchett by Ramond Burgin; and interview with Ray Hicks by Thomas Burton. Manuscript materials include a report on the Roan Mountain

project and partial transcriptions of the Hicks tapes. Donated by Thomas Burton, English department, ETSU.

J. E. BROOKS COLLECTION, 1927-92. Twenty-seven audio cassettes; 6 discs; and 8 file folders. Consists of audio cassettes and discs of Carter Family recordings, together with written documentation on the Carters and on early country music. Donated by J. E. Brooks, Brentwood, Tennessee.

WAR IN THE MODERN WORLD COURSE COLLECTION, 1987-92. Forty-nine audio cassettes and 2 file folders. Contains 49 tape-recorded interviews with veterans from World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War and Persian Gulf Conflict, and interview releases. Donated by Colin F. Baxter, history department, ETSU.

APPALACHIAN-SCOTTISH STUDIES COLLECTION, 1987-92. Ninety-eight video cassettes; 20 audio cassettes; and 4 file folders. ADDITION. Consists of video footage used to make the documentary "The Appalachian-Scottish Connection;" audio cassettes of lectures and performances given during the 1992 Appalachian-Scottish Studies Program. Donated by Thomas Burton, English department, East Tennessee State University and Alyne H. Jones, Edinburg, Scotland.

HELEN BULLARD COLLECTION, 1910-1977, 2 rolls of microfilm. Consists of two rolls of microfilm containing images of correspondence, newsletters, newsclippings, subject files, and miscellaneous papers that document Helen Bullard's research for her book, Craftsmen of the Tennessee Mountains. Donated by the Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tenn.

JAMES WILLIAM NORRIS COLLECTION, c. 1789-1983, 1.5 linear feet. ADDITION. Consists of one box containing deeds, wills, receipts, correspondence, genealogy notes, photographs, and miscellaneous papers documenting the Jones, Norris, Haun, McInturff, Swingle, Brown, Kuhn, and Sevier family histories. Donated by James Norris, Unicoi, Tenn.

SAMUEL N. CRAMER, JR., PERSONAL PAPERS, 1929-1984, 2 linear feet. Consists of correspondence, account ledgers, newsclippings, research papers and hand-written copies of sermons documenting Samuel Cramer's career as a Presbyterian minister working in Appalachia. Donated by Judith Kite, Johnson City, Tenn.

APPALACHIAN LITERATURE: THE ADULT AND THE CHILD COURSE COLLECTION, 1992, 15 cassette audio tapes and 1 file folder. Consists of cassette audiotapes and a syllabus for a course entitled, "Appalachian Literature: The Adult and the Child," that was taught by Roberta Herrin and Jack Higgs, June 1992. Transferred by Roberta Herrin and Jack Higgs, Department of English, ETSU.

TENNESSEANS AGAINST CHEMICAL HAZARDS RECORDS, 1966-1983, 3.5 linear feet.

Consists of five boxes of newspaper clippings, reports, correspondence, minutes, press releases, receipts, and photocopies of miscellaneous legal briefs. The records document the general activities and operation of TEACH. Donated by Shirley Harkins, Knoxville, Tenn.

CHARLES E. PRICE COLLECTION, 1916-1992, 1 cassette audiotape and 2 boxes. ADDITION.

Consists of 2 boxes of research notes, photocopies of news articles, drafts of a book, miscellaneous documents, and a cassette audiotape. The material documents the hanging of "Murderous Mary," and East Tennessee ghostlore. Donated by Charles E. Price, Johnson City, Tenn.

COAL EMPLOYMENT PROJECT RECORDS, 1980-1990, 4.5 linear feet.

ADDITION.

Consists of three boxes of correspondence, reports, financial statements, accounting ledgers, and miscellaneous records documenting the activities of the Coal Employment Project. Donated by Madeline Rogero, Knoxville, Tenn.

CLARENCE W. HOBSON COLLECTION, c. 1934-1981, 4 file folders.

Consists of photocopies of newspaper clippings, photographs, research notes, family trees, and "Appalachia Is My Home: A Memoir." The collection documents the Clarence W. Hobson family genealogy. Donated by Clarence Hobson, Johnson City, Tenn.

ALFRED ALEXANDER TAYLOR FAMILY PAPERS, 1815-1869 and 1906-1972, 2.5 linear feet, 8 photographs.

Consists of 3 scrapbooks, 8 photographs, newspaper clippings, correspondence, newspapers, programs, broadsides, and miscellaneous papers documenting the political activities and careers of Alfred and Robert Taylor, Alfred Taylor family history, the history of Landon C. Hayes, and the early history of Milligan College. Donated by Sandra Graf Green, Johnson City, Tenn.

HARVEY LEE HUGHETT COLLECTION, 1950-1977, 82 audio tapes. ADDITION.

Consists of 51 cassette audio tapes and 31 reel to reel audio tapes containing interviews with East Tennessee religious and lay church leaders from rural Appalachia. Donated by Harvey Lee Hughett, Jr., Moscow, Idaho.

Spencer Rex Gervin Collection, c. 1879-1988, 6.5 linear feet.

Consist of 7 boxes of newspaper clippings, correspondence, research notes and photocopies of Washington County Court records that document the history of Jonesborough and Washington County, and John Mosby's Civil War command. Donated by Ann Gervin Koehler, Johnson City, Tenn.

EDWARD G. DEVAULT FAMILY PAPERS, 1850-1885, 2 file folders.

Consists of one physician's notebook and one Washington County Justice of the Peace ledger for the years 185-52. Donated by Edward G. DeVault, Jonesborough, Tenn.

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**Appalachian Studies Conference to
Meet at ETSU**

The sixteenth annual Appalachian Studies Conference will be held at East Tennessee State University on March 19-21. The sixth annual Appalachian Youth Conference will be held in conjunction with the Appalachian Studies Conference. For additional information write Norma Myers, Archives of Appalachia, Box 70665, ETSU, Johnson City, TN 37614-0665, or phone, 615/929-6991.

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