

REGISTER OF THE M. LOWENSTEIN CORPORATION (1889-1986) RECORDS, 1902-1982

Mss 134 M. Lowenstein Corporation Records
2 cu. ft. including 1 legal size box, 3 oversize boxes, 3 oversize folders, 4 folders of positive prints, 2 folders of negatives

Introduction

The records of M. Lowenstein Co. were collected from: John J. Lyons Jr., Stella Thompson, Norman Hammett, and Hunter Gallman. They include material accessioned as 87-53, 87-57, 87-83 and 88-43. In addition, two issues of *Textile Labor* with articles related to Lowenstein have been transferred from the Clifton Mills records to this collection. Mike Kohl processed these records and prepared this register in 1992 as part of the South Carolina Textile Records Research Access Grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

Corporate Histories

This collection consists of records from two mill operations: the Orr Mill in Anderson South Carolina, and the Chiquola Mills in Honea Path South Carolina, an oversize folder of plant layouts for Pacific Mills and an oversize folder of printed material related to the Rock Hill Printing and Finishing Plant. The Rock Hill Plant was founded by Lowenstein and the Orr, Pacific, and Chiquola Mills came under that firm's control in the 1950s. In 1986, M. Lowenstein was purchased by Springs Industries.

M. Lowenstein Companies

The M. Lowenstein Company began in 1889 in New York City as a small textile importing business. Morris Lowenstein and his sons Abram and Leon expanded the firm by providing cloth directly to small garment manufacturing firms and selling fabrics with slight flaws in them. The company was incorporated in 1918 with a net worth of \$2.7 million.

During the 1920s, the firm determined that its future lay in

controlling product quality by building its own finishing plant. In 1929, the Rock Hill Printing and Finishing Plant was built. After the Second World War, Lowenstein expanded into the manufacturing of grey cloth by purchasing well-established textile mills in the Southeast. Merrimack Manufacturing Mills in Huntsville, Alabama and Orr Mills in Anderson, South Carolina were purchased in 1946. During the 1950s, Lowenstein acquired further grey goods plants: Aleo Manufacturing in Rockingham, North Carolina; Spofford Mills in Willington, North Carolina; Chiquola Mills in Honea Path South Carolina and Covington Mills in Covington, Georgia. The firm broadened its product line through the purchase of Wamsutta Mills in New Bedford, Massachusetts with its garment, industrial fabrics, towels, and sheet lines and the Pacific Mills in Columbia and Lyman, South Carolina with their sheet, industrial fabrics, and towel lines.

The corporation prospered during the 1960s and 1970s but retrenched during the 1980s by closing some mills, selling off certain product lines such as its urethane plant at Rock Hill, South Carolina and its children's wear fabrics at Rockingham, North Carolina. In 1986, Springs Industries purchased M. Lowenstein and merged its operations with its own operations.

Orr Mills

Orr Mills was founded in 1899 by Colonel James Orr Jr. It was the first textile mill in South Carolina to use electricity for all its power. The firm first produced course sheeting for export but then switched to print cloths. John Lyons served as mill superintendent from 1899 through the 1950s. In 1930, the mill employed 750 workers who operated more than 62,000 ring spindles and over 1500 broad looms which made print cloths and pajama checks. During the Second World War, the plant produced wide print cloth.

It was acquired by M. Lowenstein in 1946, when it employed 1100. The sale of the Orr Mill village in 1949 followed Lowenstein's policy of providing home ownership at a modest cost to its employees while reducing the corporation's extraneous administrative responsibilities. In 1953, long time Rock Hill Finishing Plant executive, A.O. Joslin, served as president when the firm employed 1300 on 1900 looms and consumed 24,000 bales of cotton.

Developed in 1958, the new Lyons Division of M. Lowenstein

produced spun synthetics. In 1957, Leon Lowenstein became the chairman and president of Orr Mills. His title was changed to executive chairman in 1960 and John Lyons served as president.

In 1986, the Orr-Lyons Mills division of M. Lowenstein was acquired by Springs Industries. The division employed 660 persons in 1988 and 450 in 1990 at the time that it was closed. The Lyons Division continued to operate.

Chiquola Manufacturing Company

Was founded in 1902 and produced coarse sheeting. By the 1930s it had moved into the area of print cloth with L.O. Hammett as President and 650 employees. The mill expanded during the 1940s and produced tobacco cloths, broadcloths, gauze, as well as print cloths with 750 employees. M. Lowenstein acquired the firm in 1958. It switched to blended sheetings and industrials during the 1970s and in 1970 employed 800 while consuming 20,000 bales of cotton that year. In 1986, it was acquired by Springs Industries. In 1992, Chiquola employed 500 and consumed 12,000 bales.

Rock Hill Printing and Finishing Plant

The building of the Rock Hill Printing and Finishing Plant moved M. Lowenstein halfway along the way to becoming a totally integrated producer of textiles. The Rock Hill plant bleached, dyed, printed and finished cloth purchased from a variety of sources, primarily in the South. The rapid expansion of Lowenstein through the acquisition of textile mills produced the raw material for the plant and resulted in its own expansion. By the early 1960s, it grew from a plant with 200,000 square feet to one with more than 2 million which bleached, dyed, and finished both cotton and synthetic fabrics. New processes such as sanfordizing and the use of Scotchgard permitted it to create permanent press cloth during the 1970s. Acquired by Springs Industries in 1986, the plant included 23 roller printers and 7 screen printers.

Pacific Mills

Pacific Mills was founded in 1852 in Lawrence, Massachusetts. It manufactured prints and fancy cottons as well as worsted goods in its

woolen mill operations. In the early 1900s, Pacific Mills acquired several cotton mills in Columbia, South Carolina that produced broad clothes and shirting and one in Lyman, South Carolina which produced sheets and pillow cases and included a finishing operation. In 1955, M. Lowenstein acquired the Pacific Mills. In 1992, the Lyman Printing and Finishing Company was a division of Springs and did bleaching, dying, printing, and finishing with seventeen dye machines and seven screen printers. The Columbia Division of Springs included the Granby and Olympia Mills which employed 1300 in 1992 with 134,540 ring spindles and 1450 broad looms.

Information for these histories has been found in *Textile Leaders of the South* by James and Marjorie Young pp.131, 307-16, and 777-8; *The Lowenstein Story, Dockham's Annual Report and Directory, 1903*, and following editions of *Davison's Textile Blue Book: 1930, 1941, 1943, 1947, 1949, 1951-3, 1956-7, 1959, 1960, 1965, 1968-70, 1986-8, 1990-92.*

Scope and Content Note

The M. Lowenstein Records consist of material documenting three South Carolina textile mills which Lowenstein owned for at least a portion of the time they were operating. There is one issue of a Rock Hill newspaper for 1949 celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Rock Hill Printing and Finishing Plant along with two 1956 issues of the Textile Workers Union of America newsletter, *Textile Labor*, related to a strike at that plant.

Material related to the Chiquola Manufacturing Company includes an insurance map of the plant from 1902, financial and stockholder reports, 1902-1958, and photographs from the 1930s. Some of the photos document community life such as sports and fraternal organizations.

The records about the Orr Mills include a variety of records related to its fiftieth anniversary celebration in 1950 including a scrapbook and photographs. The documentation about the sale of the mill village in Anderson during 1949 details the process of liquidating these assets and includes names of purchasers and amounts paid.

There is an oversize folder of copies of blueprints of plant layouts for Pacific Mills factories in Columbia and Lyman, South Carolina

which were drawn in 1945 and another oversize folder with plant layouts for Orr Mills drawn in 1955 and 1957 .