

WINSLOW BROS. & SMITH COMPANY

PAPERS, 1843-1998, n.d.

MSS #5
Vol.: 1 box, 1 oversize folder

Processed by: Jane E. Ward
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Provenance: A few items in this collection have provenance numbers on them that can be checked against the society's records. The series of 18 b&w photographs taken approximately 1998 in Box 1, Folder 12 were donated by Sandra Waxman in February 2002. The employee badge in Box 1, Folder 13 was donated by Patricia Fanning. The papers in Box 1, Folder 10 were the gift of the Norwood Town Building Inspector's Office on 10 February 2006 and have been marked accordingly. The provenance of the rest of this collection is unknown.

Conservation: Newspaper clippings have been photocopied onto acid-free paper; in some cases the original clippings have been discarded due to their condition. Photographs have been placed in plastic mylar sleeves.

Copyright: Requests for permission to publish material from this collection must be submitted in writing to the Executive Director of the Norwood Historical Society.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Winslow Bros. & Smith Company originally began life when John Smith hired George Winslow to work at his tannery in South Dedham, Mass., in the early 1820s. Winslow joined John Smith's son Lyman in the tannery and in 1843 John Smith turned over control of the tannery to his son Lyman and to Winslow, who had become his son-in-law in the mid-1820s.

Lyman Smith and George Winslow kept their partnership for ten years, dissolving in 1853. At that point, Lyman Smith built a new tannery near Norwood Station and continued doing business. His sons, John and Charles Smith, joined him in the business and in 1856 their company changed its name to Lyman Smith's Sons. Lyman Smith died in 1883, and in 1890, the company incorporated under the name Lyman Smith's Sons Company Inc.

After the 1853 dissolution, George Winslow retained control of the original tannery and his sons joined him in the business, which soon became known as George Winslow & Sons and then Winslow Bros. after George Winslow died in 1877. In 1895, George Willett, who had married Edith Winslow, granddaughter of George Winslow, gained a controlling interest in the Winslow tannery. Willett did the same to the Lyman Smith's Sons tannery in 1897 and consolidated the two businesses back together in 1901 under the name Winslow Bros. & Smith Co.

The business continued to grow until it became the largest handler of sheepskins in the world. In 1928, Winslow Bros. & Smith was merged with the Eastern Leather Co. At its peak in the 1920s, the company reached an aggregate tanning capacity of 9,000,000 sheepskins per annum. A 1938 strike hurt the company, however, and it continued to decline after World War II. In 1952 the Norwood plants were sold and the Smith plant was demolished by the early 1970s.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Winslow Bros. & Smith Company papers have been divided into three series: Lyman Smith's Sons; Winslow Bros.; and Winslow Bros. & Smith Co.

Series I, the Lyman Smith's Sons material, also includes the only materials in the collection pertaining to the company before the 1853 split: an 1843 deed from John Smith to his son, Lyman Smith, and an 1852 deed from Lyman Smith to Joseph Day and Joel Baker (F1). (Joseph Day married a cousin of Lyman Smith's; his son, Lewis Day, married Lyman Smith's daughter, Anna.)

Folder 2 contains a large number of deeds to property in and around Dedham and South Dedham (now Norwood), most purchased by Lyman Smith (or after his death by his sons, John and Charles), 1853-1886. Much of the property probably relates to the area where Smith built a new tannery in 1853, after the dissolution of the partnership with his brother-in-law, George Winslow. Folder 3 contains deeds to a leather factory in Nottingham, N.H., purchased by Lyman Smith's sons, John and Charles, in 1881, deeds relating to a furniture factory in South Dedham in 1867, and the transfer of a mortgage several times in 1877-79; the connection of this mortgage to either tannery is not clear.

The business papers in Folder 4 include an 1870 patent to John and Charles Smith for an improvement in tanning vats, and an ALS from William H. Monroe, the company's purchasing agent, dated Feb. 13, 1874 from Vienna, Austria. Monroe discusses the poor business atmosphere in Europe at the time. A typed transcription of the letter and a carte-de-visite photograph of Monroe are included here. Also found here are an 1899 balance sheet; business correspondence (1900-01); information on the 1908 surrender of two insurance policies on J. Daigneau by Lyman Smith's Sons; and several bills from 1876 demonstrating the type of goods sold by the tannery. The rest of the business papers primarily relate to the incorporation of the company in 1890 as the Lyman Smith's Sons Co. Inc.

The miscellaneous papers (F5) include copies of a company ad in the Norwood Business Directory, a genealogical sketch of Lyman Smith (done before 1883), a clipping from 1963 looking back at the company's history, and a list of the company's properties on the Norwood tax list.

The photographs in Folder 6 are all of the exterior of the plant, dating from 1853, 1885, and 1895. The undated photos have been identified as the "Smith" tannery, but it is possible that some of them may refer to the "Smith" plant after the reconsolidation in 1901. The photograph in Oversize Folder 1 is labeled ca.1890.

Series II, the Winslow Bros. papers relating to the Winslow Bros. tannery between the 1853 split and the 1901 reconsolidation, consist of photographs, primarily multiple copies of an 1885 photo, an undated stereograph photo of tannery workers, and several undated photos of tannery workers (F7). There is also an oversize, undated photograph of the Winslow tannery in Oversize Folder 1.

Series III, Winslow Bros. & Smith Co. papers, include two deeds (1904, 1906) of property sold to John C. Smith by Winslow Bros. & Smith Company and correspondence (1903-04) about this division of property (F8). Folder 9 contains a copy of the booklet produced for the Annual Meeting of the Mass. State Board of Trade, Oct. 15, 1913. (The booklet was produced entirely by Norwood businesses; another copy will be found in the Norwood Press papers.) Correspondence about the installation of elevators in the plant (1918-44) will be found in Folder 10.

Folder 11 contains copies of various newsclippings (1905-73, n.d.), many relating the history of the company as well as the 1929 fire, and a 1942 plan of the company's buildings. Folder 12 contains photographs of the plant, most undated, but there is one dated ca. 1905, some 1922 aerial views and a series of 18 black-and-white photographs taken in 1998 (?), showing the pond near the tannery site. The miscellaneous papers in Folder 13 include a Winslow Bros. & Smith employee badge, a description of the process of making Morocco leather and some mechanical drawings designed by W. H. H. Bowers.

CONTENTS LIST

Series I. Lyman Smith's Sons Co.

Box Folder

1	1	Deeds, 1843, 1852.
	2	Deeds in Dedham, 1853-1886.
	3	Deeds and mortgage transfer, 1867-1881.
	4	Business papers, 1870-1908.
	5	Miscellaneous papers, 1880s, 1900, 1963.
	6	Photographs, 1853, 1885, 1895, n.d.

Oversize Folder

1	Photograph, ca.1890
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Series II. Winslow Bros.

Box Folder

1	7	Photographs, ca. 1885, n.d.
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Oversize Folder

1	Photograph, n.d.
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Series III. Winslow Bros. & Smith Co.

Box Folder

1	8	Legal papers, 1903-1906.
	9	1913 booklet produced for Mass. Board of Trade meeting.
	10	Correspondence re: elevators, 1918, 1937, 1940-44.
	11	Newspaper clippings, 1905-1973, n.d.
	12	Photographs, ca. 1905, 1922, 1998, n.d.

Oversize Folder

1	Photograph of office workers, n.d.
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Box Folder

1	13	Miscellaneous papers & employee badge.
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