

Collection #
M 0657
OM 0324

**JOSEPH LAY COMPANY
RECORDS, 1843–1925 (BULK 1900–1920)**

Collection Information	1
Historical Sketch	2
Scope and Content Note	4
Series Contents	5

Processed by
Charles Latham
4 May 1995
Updated 31 January 2005

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	5 manuscript boxes, 3 oversize manuscript folders, 2 photograph folders
COLLECTION DATES:	Inclusive 1843-1925; bulk 1900-1920
PROVENANCE:	Robert M. Taylor, Jr., Indianapolis, IN, 28 November 1994
RESTRICTIONS:	None
COPYRIGHT:	
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.
ALTERNATE FORMATS:	None
RELATED HOLDINGS:	None
ACCESSION NUMBER:	1995.0080
NOTES:	Photographs are copies of originals at the Ridgeville Museum, Ridgeville, Ind.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

This collection concerns Joseph Lay, his son Samuel C. Lay, and The Joseph Lay Company which they operated together for three decades.

Joseph Lay (1830-ca 1914) was born in Seneca County, New York, the son of Samuel A. and Lucetta (Moore) Lay. After schooling, he taught school for two years in New York State. In 1853 he moved to Olmsted Falls, Ohio, just southwest of Cleveland. There he and his brother John for some years manufactured bentwood. In 1875 Lay began to make brooms and brushes, and in 1877 he obtained a patent for a broom on which the fibers were held together by a metal band.

In 1879, after surviving two lawsuits about the patent, Lay incorporated a company in which equal shares were held by himself and his two sons, Samuel C. and Frank R. Lay. Samuel C. Lay (1857-ca 1921), who figures prominently from this point on, was born in Olmsted Falls. He attended Baldwin University in nearby Berea, but before graduating began to work for his father. He was later a trustee of the university. In 1881 he married Alice Damp.

Within a few years (either 1881 or 1885) Frank Lay withdrew from the firm. The main product was a metal-banded broom with a broom-corn center and with hickory splint on the outside. Some brooms were also fastened with metal staples, but this process could not be patented. The firm also made snow shovels and wood forks.

A flood in the Rocky River damaged the Olmsted Falls plant in 1883. Three years later the Lays moved the company to Ridgeville, Randolph County, Indiana. They took over an abandoned brewery (which looked something like an Eastern Orthodox Church) and the buildings of a defunct college. The business prospered, thanks both to a quality product and to an aggressive sales campaign, both by mail and through traveling salesmen. The chief customers were manufacturers, street commissioners, hardware stores, and railroad purchasing agents. In 1892-1893, the firm spun off a banking business (Joseph Lay's daughter Gertrude married the new bank's head), and in 1898 it briefly operated a gas and oil business. In 1896 a branch factory was established at Columbus. By 1900 there was another branch factory at Mattoon, Illinois, and later another at Saratoga, Indiana.

In 1900 the Joseph Lay Company was negotiating to purchase a factory in Indianapolis. Instead, a former employee, M. R. Stratton, along with another Ridgeville native, George Lemaux, bought the factory. They established the Indianapolis Brush and Broom Manufacturing Company, and a suit between them and the Lays immediately ensued. One result of this suit was that the Lays made special efforts both to patent their Lay brooms and Victor brushes and to register trademarks for their distinctive labels.

In 1904 there was a suit between the Lays and a German exporter of broom corn, Oscar Steidtmann of Hamburg, about the payment of import duties and shipping costs. About

1910 the firm seems to have taken the lead in trying to organize a national association of broom manufacturers, partly in order to stabilize the price of broom corn.

The Lays made a modest effort to join the automobile manufacturers who were springing up all over Indiana. In 1906 they set up the Victor Automobile Company, and engaged two local mechanics, John Oliver Carpenter and Joe Landwich, to produce the Ridgeville Senator automobile. The firm made a wooden frame, "armored" with metal, but bought the mechanical parts elsewhere, notably a four-cylinder air-cooled Carrico engine and a transmission made by the Marion Motor Company. The Senators did not give complete satisfaction; two buyers in Mattoon found that hills made the engine overheat and lose power. A verbose lawsuit resulted, in which the crucial question was whether the Senator was "as good as a Buick," and whether the Lays had claimed that it was. The Victor Company ceased in 1912, having produced a total of seven cars.

In 1912 Frank R. Lay, who had apparently been at odds with his brother for many years, persuaded Joseph Lay, then over eighty years old, to leave the Joseph Lay Company and join him in founding the Joseph Lay Broom and Brush Company. The result was a memorable tangle, with one company receiving and filling orders intended for the other. Of course, there was another suit. In 1914, probably because of Joseph Lay's death, the rival company was dissolved.

Samuel C. Lay continued the company until his death. While he spent his summers in Petoskey, Michigan, he let his son Arthur manage affairs. In his correspondence, particularly the letters about his Packard and Cadillac automobiles, he enjoyed arguing about details, and when he used lawyers he did not hesitate to question their fees. The company continued under his sons until at least 1925.

Sources: Materials in collection

Robert M. Taylor, Jr, "As Good As A Buick," *Traces of Midwestern and Indiana History*, Spring 1994, p. 18-23

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection, filling five manuscript boxes and three oversize folders, contains correspondence, deeds and certificates, legal briefs, business papers, photographs, and artifacts, from the period 1843-1925. It is arranged chronologically.

Series 1 contains historical material, and items from the firm's history up to 1904. This includes records from the original patent suit (Folder 2); deeds to their first property in Olmsted Falls, Ohio (Folders 3-4); and records of the suits against Indianapolis Brush and Broom Manufacturing Co. (Folder 11) and Oscar Steidtmann (Folder 18).

Series 2 continues the firm's operations 1904-1913. Of special interest are employee contracts of 1906-1910 (Folder 3); proposals for a national association of broom manufacturers (Folders 10-11); and records of the 1911-1912 suit about the Senator automobile (Folders 13-15).

Series 3 continues the company's operations from 1913 to 1924. In Folders 4-6 are materials about the lawsuit between the two Lay companies. Folders 17-27 contain company correspondence 1919-1924.

Series 4 contains Samuel C. Lay's voluminous correspondence about his personal automobiles (Folders 3-8); inventories (Folders 9-15); insurance (Folders 16-17); items on employee liability (Folders 18-22); and deeds (Folders 26-30).

Series 5 contains financial records: tax assessments and returns, and bankbooks.

SERIES CONTENTS

SERIES 1: Historical, 1878-1904

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Historical	Box 1, Folder 1
Patent Application	Box 1, Folder 2
Deeds-- Olmsted Falls, ca 1879	Box 1, Folder 3
Deeds-- Olmsted Falls, 1843-1879	OM 0324, Folder 1
Photograph-- factory at Ridgeville, Ind.	Visual Collection: Photographs, Folder 1
Agreement, F. R. Lay to leave firm 1885; manufacturing instructions 1880s	Box 1, Folder 4
Correspondence 1890-1899	Box 1, Folder 5
Ridgeville Bank 1892-1893	Box 1, Folder 6
Catalog 1895	Box 1, Folder 7
Lay Gas and Oil Co. 1898, 1900	Box 1, Folder 8
Joseph Lay Co. vs Indpls. Brush & Broom Mfg. Co. 1901-1910	Box 1, Folder 9
Day & Lay, specialties in wood ca 1900	Box 1, Folder 10
Correspondence 1900-1903	Box 1, Folder 11
Inventory 1903-1904	Box 1, Folder 12
Inventory, Ridgeville 1904	Box 1, Folder 13
Correspondence 1904	Box 1, Folder 14
Agreement to sell 1904	Box 1, Folder 15
Oscar Steidtmann vs Joseph Lay Co. 1904	Box 1, Folder 16

SERIES 2: 1904-1913

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Oscar Steidtmann vs Joseph Lay Co. II	Box 2, Folder 1
Correspondence 1905-1906	Box 2, Folder 2
Employee contracts 1906-1910	Box 2, Folder 3
Correspondence 1907-1910	Box 2, Folder 4
Controversy with Hermann Pauli 1908	Box 2, Folder 5
Trademarks 1908-1910	Box 2, Folder 6
Signs and labels	Box 2, Folder 7
Advertisements and brochures	Box 2, Folder 8
(ART) 2 newspaper cuts	Box 2, Folder 9
Proposal, Broom Manufacturers Association 1909	Box 2, Folder 10
Proposal, Mfrs. Broom Corn Co., n.d.	Box 2, Folder 11
Correspondence 1911	Box 2, Folder 12
Photos, curved-dash and Senator automobiles	Visual Collections: Photographs, Folder 2
Checkley vs. Victor Auto Co. 1911	Box 2, Folder 13
Correspondence re: Senator automobile 1912-1913	Box 2, Folder 14

SERIES 3: 1913-1924

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Company memos 1913, 1916, n.d.	Box 3, Folder 1
Correspondence 1913-1916	Box 3, Folder 2

Agreement, Joseph Lay and Joseph Lay Co. 1913	Box 3, Folder 3
Mail dispute 1914	Box 3, Folder 4
F. R. Lay application for injunction 1914	Box 3, Folder 5
Jos. Lay Co. vs Jos. Lay Brush & Broom Co. 1911	Box 3, Folder 6
Jos. Lay Co. vs Jos. Lay Brush & Broom Co.-- depositions	Box 3, Folder 7
Jos. Lay Co. vs Jos. Lay Brush & Broom Co.-- letters	Box 3, Folder 8
Newspapers-- <i>Ridgeville News</i> 1893-1921, <i>Ridgeville Record</i> 1903, <i>Broom and Broom Corn News</i> 1914; Dissolution of Joseph Lay Broom & Brush Co.	OM 0324, Folder 2
Termination of Jos. Lay Co. vs Jos. Lay Brush & Broom Co. 1914	Box 3, Folder 9
Report of operations 1915	Box 3, Folder 10
Correspondence 1915-1917	Box 3, Folder 11
S.C. Lay Diary, 1918	Box 3, Folder 12
Stockholders & directors meetings 1919-1920	Box 3, Folder 13
Partnership agreement S. C. Lay and L. P. Sims	Box 3, Folder 14
Company operations 1919-1920	Box 3, Folder 15
Correspondence-- 1919-- Jan. - Mar.	Box 3, Folder 16
Correspondence-- 1919-- Apr. - June	Box 3, Folder 17
Correspondence-- 1919-- July - Sept.	Box 3, Folder 18
Correspondence-- 1919-- Oct. Dec.	Box 3, Folder 19
Correspondence-- 1919-- 1920-- Jan. Feb.	Box 3, Folder 20
Correspondence-- 1919-- Mar.	Box 3, Folder 21
Correspondence-- 1919-- Apr. - June	Box 3, Folder 22

Correspondence-- 1919-- July - Sept.	Box 3, Folder 23
Correspondence-- 1919-- Oct. - Dec.	Box 3, Folder 24
Correspondence-- 1919-- 1919-1920	Box 3, Folder 25
Correspondence-- 1919-- 1921-1924, n.d.	Box 3, Folder 26
Inventory, Illinois Metal Broom Co., 1920	Box 3, Folder 27

SERIES 4: S.C. Lay Auto Correspondence, Inventories, Insurance, Employee Liability, Deeds

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Contract re: Saratoga factory 1920	Box 4, Folder 1
Insurance policy 1925; Deed 1853; Blueprints; Switchboard panel; Track siding at Saratoga, Ind.	OM 0324, Folder 3
S. C. Lay automobile correspondence--1919-- Jan. - Sept	Box 4, Folder 2
S. C. Lay automobile correspondence--1919-- Oct.- Dec.	Box 4, Folder 3
S. C. Lay automobile correspondence--1920-- Jan. - Mar.	Box 4, Folder 4
S. C. Lay automobile correspondence--1920-- Apr. - June	Box 4, Folder 5
S. C. Lay automobile correspondence--1920-- July - Sept.	Box 4, Folder 6
S. C. Lay automobile correspondence--1920-- Oct. - Dec.	Box 4, Folder 7
Inventory-- real estate n.d.	Box 4, Folder 8
Inventory -- farm machinery n.d.	Box 4, Folder 9
Inventory -- machinery n.d.	Box 4, Folder 11-12

Inventory -- supplies and machinery n.d.	Box 4, Folder 13
Inventory -- supplies n.d.	Box 4, Folder 14
Fire insurance 1895-1905	Box 4, Folder 15
Insurance 1895-1920	Box 4, Folder 16
Employee accidents & insurance-- 1906, 1910	Box 4, Folder 17
Employee accidents & insurance -- 1912-1915	Box 4, Folder 18
Employee accidents & insurance -- 1917-1918	Box 4, Folder 19
Employee accidents & insurance -- 1920	Box 4, Folder 20
Employee accidents & insurance -- 1921-1925	Box 4, Folder 21
List of customer's n.d.	Box 4, Folder 22
Cards	Box 4, Folder 23
Numerical jottings n.d.	Box 4, Folder 24
Deeds-- 1864-1886	Box 4, Folder 25
Deeds -- 1891-1900	Box 4, Folder 26
Deeds -- 1901-1910	Box 4, Folder 27
Deeds -- 1912-1916, n.d.	Box 4, Folder 28

SERIES 5: Tax Assessment, Tax Receipts, Bankbooks

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Tax assessments-- 1903, 1905	Box 5, Folder 1
Tax assessments -- 1907	Box 5, Folder 2
Tax assessments -- 1911	Box 5, Folder 3
Tax assessments -- 1912	Box 5, Folder 4

Tax assessments -- 1913	Box 5, Folder 5
Tax assessments -- 1914	Box 5, Folder 6
Tax assessments -- 1919, 1924	Box 5, Folder 7
Tax receipts-- 1900-1903	Box 5, Folder 8
Tax receipts -- 1904-1906	Box 5, Folder 9
Tax receipts -- 1907, 1911	Box 5, Folder 10
Tax receipts -- 1914, 1920	Box 5, Folder 11
Bankbooks-- S. C. Lay	Box 5, Folder 12
Bankbooks -- Joseph Lay Co.	Box 5, Folder 13
Check stubs-- Joseph Lay Co. 1898-1903	Box 5, Folder 14-15