



Pusey & Jones Corporation and Joseph Bancroft & Sons notebooks 1400

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Manuscripts and Archives

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Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Historical Note	3
Scope and Contents	6
Administrative Information	6
Related Materials	7
Controlled Access Headings	9

Summary Information

Repository:	Manuscripts and Archives
Creator:	Pusey & Jones Corporation
Creator:	Joseph Bancroft & Sons Co
Title:	Pusey & Jones Corporation and Joseph Bancroft & Sons notebooks
ID:	1400
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Abstract:	The Joseph Bancroft & Sons Company operated cotton textile mills in Wilmington, Delaware, where they manufactured, bleached, dyed, and finished a variety of cotton-made goods. The Pusey & Jones Corporation were shipbuilders, founders, and machinists of Wilmington, Delaware, which later expanded into papermaking machinery manufacturing. This collection consists of eleven small notebooks from the two companies regarding their work.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Historical Note

The Pusey & Jones Corporation were shipbuilders, founders, and machinists of Wilmington, Delaware, which later expanded into papermaking machinery manufacturing.

In 1848, Joshua L. Pusey (1820-1891) and John Jones (1818-1897) formed the partnership of Pusey & Jones, with machine shops and a factory for the building of engines. In 1851, they were joined by Edward Betts (1825-1917) and Joshua Seal (1820-1896), and the firm became Betts, Pusey, Jones & Seal. By 1857 Edward Betts and Seal had withdrawn, and Alfred Betts (1835-1918) became a partner, and the firm name changed to Pusey, Jones & Betts. Alfred Betts was succeeded in 1860 by William G. Gibbons (1833-1886), and the firm again changed its name to become Pusey, Jones & Co. In 1866, John Jones retired from the partnership and Thomas H. Savery (1837-1910) was admitted. The firm continued as the Pusey, Jones & Co. until 1879 when it was incorporated as the Pusey & Jones Co. In 1927, it became the Pusey & Jones Corporation, under the presidency of William G. Coxe (1869-1927), and continued as such until liquidation in 1959.

In its initial operations, the firm built general machinery and steam engines and did a variety of repair work. In 1853, it entered the field of shipbuilding, the first contract being for the *Mahlon Betts*, an iron side-wheeler, claimed to be the first iron sailing vessel built in the United States. Also in 1853, the company launched the *Flora McDonald* for use on the Cape Fear River in North Carolina. During the Civil War, the firm filled numerous government contracts, especially in fitting machinery and engines in hulls built elsewhere. Among these were the *Juniata* and the gunboats *Wyalusing* and *Mingo*, and certain smaller vessels including the *Pilgrim*, *Stanton*, *Foote*, and *Porter*.

After the war, the company returned to building of river steamers, many of which were for use in South America. About 110 steamers of various types were built for South America between 1865 and 1900. Others were built and outfitted for government agencies in the United States, including the Coast Survey, Lighthouse Service, and Quartermaster Department. During World War I government production increased, and fourteen cargo vessels and two mine sweepers were launched, besides much activity in outfitting others and in producing parts for tanks, guntractors, Pershing locomotives, and other war material. A second shipyard was added in Gloucester City, New Jersey, to help meet the demand, but closed after the war. Equal activity characterized the years of World War II.

The company was widely known in the area of pleasure craft and built the steel-hulled racing yacht *Volunteer* (designed by Edward Burgess (1848–1891) for General Charles J. Paine (1833-1916), which defeated the English *Thistle* for America's Cup in 1887. They built other noted yachts, including those of Pierre Lorillard (*Caiman*), H.E. Dodge (*Nokomis*), Richard M. Cadwalader Jr. (*Savorna*), Fred J. Fisher (*Nakhoda*), Walter O. Briggs (*Cambriona*), Alfred P. Sloan Jr. (*Rene*), R.R.M. Carpenter (*Galaxy*), Ogden Mills (*Avalon*), and Edsel Ford (*Onika*).

The firm was active in other fields of production. In its early years, it produced the iron work for the Crystal Palace at the Exhibit of the Industry of All Nations, opened in July 1853 at New York. In 1867, the firm expanded into the manufacture of papermaking machinery, the first commission being from the Jessup & Moore Paper Co. at Rockland, Delaware. This proved to be a profitable field, and by the 1890s the Pusey & Jones Corporation was one of the largest manufacturers of such machinery in the world. Aside from wide sale in the United States, their equipment went to England, Germany, Finland, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Russia, and Thailand.

After 111 years, the Pusey & Jones Corporation filed for Chapter 11 reorganization on November 7, 1959. President Joseph B. Ulicny (1916-1984) and John B. Jessup (1894-1970) were appointed receivers. Attempts to reorganize the company failed, it was judged bankrupt on January 27, 1960, and Jessup was appointed liquidating trustee. The firm's designs, drawings, and work on hand were sold to the John Inglis Company, Ltd. on February 26, 1960. The Wilmington Trust Company assumed the physical plant as mortgagee on March 15, 1960, and resold it to Philip L. Moskowitz & Associates, Cincinnati scrap dealers. All remaining claims were settled and the liquidation completed early in 1962.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Historical Note

Joseph Bancroft (1803-1874) began manufacturing cotton cloth at a small mill in Rockford, Delaware, just north of Wilmington, on March 25, 1831. The mill was built in order to take advantage of the Brandywine River's water power and Bancroft adopted the traditional British spinning and weaving technology for use in his operation. The firm expanded steadily during the 1830s and 1840s as it began to produce cotton for both the Philadelphia and New York markets. In the late 1840s, Joseph Bancroft brought his two sons, William Bancroft (1825-1928) and Samuel Bancroft (1840-1915), into the business assuring that the company would remain a family enterprise. During the Civil War, when the American market was largely closed to English imports, the Bancroft firm, like most other U.S. textile companies, prospered. After the war, the company developed a new bleaching process and began to concentrate on finishing cotton cloth. The firm was incorporated as the Joseph Bancroft & Sons Company on October 1, 1889.

The company purchased the Kentmere Mills adjoining their property on the east in 1895 and concentrated manufacturing there, while the old Rockford property was devoted to bleaching, dyeing and finishing. In 1910, the Bancrofts purchased a third plant at Reading, Pennsylvania, and incorporated the Joseph Bancroft & Sons Company of Pennsylvania on May 28, 1911.

Subsequently, all manufacture was concentrated at Reading, with the Wilmington facilities devoted to bleaching, dyeing and finishing. In the spring of 1925, the Bancrofts purchased a controlling interest in the Eddystone Manufacturing Company, another cotton manufacturer, and secured 100% control in 1929. The Eddystone Plant was converted entirely to the printing of cottons and linens, and a rayon finishing plant was installed there in 1930.

As new synthetic yarns came into use, Bancroft expanded into those fields. In 1936, it established its Research Department at Wilmington under Dr. Arnold L. Lippert (1910-2004). Its first success was trademarked as "Everglaze," originally the production of a durable finish on glazed chintz, but later used to create permanent-press fabrics. Bancroft began a program of licensing its patents and trademarks in 1938. In 1953, it purchased the rights to a process for crimping yarn from Alexander Smith, Inc. and successfully applied it to nylon to create "Ban-Lon," which became popular for outerwear, swimsuits, sweaters and hose. "Ban-Lon" and "Everglaze" were the mainstays of the company in its later years.

Around 1947, Bancroft acquired two additional companies, Wm. Simpson, Sons & Co., a converter, and Albert D. Smith & Company, Inc., which had been Bancroft's sales agent for book cloth, window shade cloth and industrial fabrics, and which they also manufactured on their own account. However, Bancroft remained primarily a finishing company, and as such, found it harder to compete with large, vertically-integrated textile companies. It liquidated its manufacturing operations at Reading in 1957.

By 1960, the Research Department, which handled both research and licensing of products and trademarks developed by Bancroft, was the only viable part of the business. The company considered changing the name of the parent firm to Joseph Bancroft & Sons Research Company and spinning off the manufacturing units to a new subsidiary for a tax loss. When this proved too risky, the entire business was sold, and Joseph Bancroft & Sons Company became a wholly-owned subsidiary of Indian Head Mills, Inc., of Massachusetts in September 1961. With continued erosion of the Northeastern textile

industry, the plant became increasingly unprofitable. Indian Head Mills, Inc., became a conglomerate called Indian Head Inc. in 1966, and the finishing plant was put up for sale in 1972. It was purchased by the Wilmington Finishing Company, composed mostly of Bancroft department heads, on June 4, 1973. Indian Head Inc. sold the Joseph Bancroft & Sons Company, which by now was reduced to the licensing operation, to Beaunit Corporation in February 1975. Finishing at the Rockford site ended in 1981, and the plant was redeveloped as a condominium complex.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Contents

Eleven small notebooks, four from Pusey and Jones Company and seven from Joseph Bancroft & Sons. The Pusey and Jones notebooks relate to work done, data on manufacturing, and Marine Charge Numbers. The Joseph Bancroft & Sons notebooks, from the Kentmere Mills, relate to dyeing, dye formulae, and daily production.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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Publication Statement

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Revision Description

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Access Restrictions

No restrictions on access; this collection is open for research.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Related Materials

Related Materials

Pusey & Jones Corporation correspondence (accession 0363), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Pusey & Jones Corporation miscellany (accession 0369), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Pusey & Jones Corporation and Parsons Engineering Company records (accession 0489), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Pusey & Jones Company shipbuilding records (accession 0551), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Pusey & Jones Company employee contracts (accession 0720-II), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Pusey & Jones Company plant land survey (accession 0780), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Pusey & Jones Company material (accession 1098), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Thomas H. Savery papers (accession 1364), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Pusey & Jones bankruptcy records (accession 2169), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Pusey & Jones Corporation miscellany (accession 2473), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Insurance surveys of Pusey & Jones Co. (accession 1970.064), Audiovisual and Digital Initiatives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Photographs of christening of "U.S. Ordnance" at Pusey & Jones (accession 1970.121), Audiovisual and Digital Initiatives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Pusey & Jones photographs (accession 1972.350), Audiovisual and Digital Initiatives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Motion pictures of Pusey & Jones Co. ship launchings and paper making machines (accession 2002.254), Audiovisual and Digital Initiatives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Photographs of groups of workers at the Pusey & Jones Corporation (accession 2006.236), Audiovisual and Digital Initiatives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Warren D. Walker collection of Pusey and Jones miscellany (accession 2010.273), Audiovisual and Digital Initiatives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Edward "Ned" A. Hodge collection of Pusey & Jones Corporation photographs (accession 2017.208), Audiovisual and Digital Initiatives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Pusey & Jones Corporation records (SpC MS 1778), Raymond H. Fogler Library Special Collections Department, University of Maine, Orono, Maine.

Thomas H. Savery collection - pictures relating to Pusey & Jones Co. (accession 1972.369), Audiovisual and Digital Initiatives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Joseph Bancroft & Sons Company records (Accession 736), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Bancroft Family papers (Accession 1115), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library

Joseph Bancroft & Sons Company licensing records (Accession 1359-II), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library

Joseph Bancroft & Sons Company miscellany (Accession 1440), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library

Bancroft Family miscellany (Accession 1672), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library

Joseph Bancroft letterbook (Accession 1708), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library

Bancroft Family Business papers (Accessions 1736 and 1745), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library

Bancroft Mills miscellany (Accession 2448), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library

Bancroft, Eddystone, Simpson miscellany (Accession 940), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Controlled Access Headings

- Notebooks
- Dyes and dyeing
- Ships
- Shipbuilding
- Cotton manufacture
- Textile industry
- Pusey and Jones Company