



Austin Powder Company album 1973.231

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Description is written in: English.

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Audiovisual Collections

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URL: <http://www.hagley.org/library>

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Summary Information

Repository:	Audiovisual Collections
Creator:	Austin Powder Company
Title:	Austin Powder Company album
ID:	1973.231
Date:	circa 1900
Physical Description:	27 item(s)
Physical Description:	1 album containing 27 photographic prints : b&w ; 11 x 14 in. mounted on linen backings.
Physical Location:	GL Box 6.
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	The Austin Powder Company is a Cleveland-based manufacturer of industrial explosives and provider of blasting services around North America. The company began in 1833 at a site south of Cleveland, Ohio along the Cuyahoga River. The album contains photographic prints of the Austin Powder Company's plant near Solon, Ohio, circa 1900.

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Historical Note

The Austin Powder Company is a Cleveland, Ohio-based manufacturer of various industrial explosives and detonators, as well as a provider of blasting services around North America. It is the oldest manufacturing enterprise in the Cleveland area.

The Austin Powder Company was founded in 1833 along the banks of the Cuyahoga River by five brothers: Daniel Hudson Austin (1804-1878), Alvin Austin (1806-1872), Cyrus Austin (1809-1842), Lorenzo Buchard Austin (1812-1886), and Linus Austin (1817-1887). The group, originally from Wilmington, Vermont, had been searching for a suitable location to build a black powder mill for over a year before they eventually settled near Akron, Ohio in an area known as Old Forge. In the early years, the brothers operated the mill themselves, working long hours. By the end of the 1830s, Austin Powder Company was producing 72,500 pounds of black powder annually, aiding in the development of the steel, quarrying, and construction industries around Ohio.

On July 4, 1842, Cyrus Austin drowned while trying to siphon from the mill dam. He fell into the dam when the gate he was holding gave way, and he was quickly pulled underwater by the current. Cyrus Austin is considered to be the company's first casualty.

By the 1860s, the Austin Powder Company had grown considerably. The company purchased the Cleveland Powder Company plant at southern edge of Cleveland in 1865, and the remaining four Austin brothers chose to incorporate the business in 1867. Daniel Austin became the first president. When he passed in 1874, the youngest of the brothers, Linus, succeeded him. Eventually, the Old Forge plant was closed and all production was centered in Cleveland. This plant would continue to operate until 1907, when the glaze mill exploded, killing two employees.

In 1892, a new set of mills was constructed at Glenwillow, Cuyahoga County, on the southern end of Solon, Ohio. The company created an entire community around the mills, building homes for its employees, a town hall, a school, and a general store in the village.

By 1922, the Austin Powder Company was producing 480,000 kegs of blasting powder annually. However, mining needs in the 1920s required dynamite. To make the switch, the company developed a plant in 1931 in Vinton County, Ohio, named Red Diamond.

During World War II, the Glenwillow plant converted entirely to military explosives and the government was the sole customer. The workforce doubled to 200 employees at this time, and torpedoes, demolition charges, land mines, and flares were produced.

Following the war, the company began manufacturing detonating cords and mining charges at Glenwillow, where production remained until the line was moved to Red Diamond in 1972. The Glenwillow plant was closed in 1979 after eighty-seven years of continuous operation. The company has continued to expand operations until today, Austin Powder Company is a large explosives company with a marketing and manufacturing presence in all fifty states.

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Scope and Content

This collection consists of one photographic album. The first two photographs are copies of maps of the property of the Austin Powder Company near Solon, Ohio. One of them is dated 1891. The remaining photographs show exteriors of structures on the properties, including railroad tracks and cars as well as hand carts also on tracks. Only two of the photographs include people.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Revision Description

Ona Coughlan 2020

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Explosives industry
- Gunpowder industry
- Powder mills
- Chemical plants
- Photograph albums