

Collection: Marilyn Grinwis Grey
Silk City Diner Collection

Accession: 2003.28, 2004.16, 2007.11

FINDING AID

Date Range: 1910- 1973

Bulk Date: 1960-1973

Creator: John Grinwis and Marilyn Grinwis Grey

Number and Type of Containers: One flip-top document box (legal)

Storage Location: Jasper Street- Unit A- Shelf 1

Aid Created By: Heather Garside, Curator

Biographical Information:

John Grinwis (1903-1974) was employed by the Paterson Vehicle Company in the Silk City Diner division for over forty-five years. He began working for them around 1920 and served as salesman, sales manager and finally Vice President. Following the liquidation of the company in 1965, he remained involved in the business, in the name of the Trustees. In this capacity he conducted appraisals for variety of purposes including insurance, refurbishment and resale.

Production of Silk City Diners was halted in 1964. Grinwis, along with fellow employee Otto Pehle (Shop Foreman) wanted to purchase the business and form the Silk City Diner Corporation. They planned to rent the factory from the Cooper family and continue to produce diners. However, the two would be partners were unable to secure the necessary financing and the plan fell through. The company's assets were fully liquidated by January 1966.

Grinwis was a Paterson native, who and moved to Wyckoff for the last fifteen years of his life. According to his obituary, he was also a banker, co-owner of Paterson Trust Co. He married Florence M. Abert and they had one daughter together, Marilyn F. Grinwis. He was a longtime member of Church of Messiar, Paterson and Ivanhoe Lodge 88, Free and Accepted Masons. John Grinwis passed away on October 27, 1974 at 71 years old. He was interred in Cedar Lawn Cemetery.

Historical Information:

The Paterson Vehicle Company was founded in 1906, following the bankruptcy of the Paterson Wagon Company in 1905. Founded by Everett Abbott Cooper (1860-1953), formerly of Suffern, N.Y., the Paterson Vehicle Company built car, bus and truck bodies, refurbished vehicles and painted auto bodies. Originally located on Market Street in Paterson, the company grew and expanded to also occupy a facility on East 27th Street.

Around 1926 they established the Silk City Diner division and began to produce prefabricated diner cars for customers around the Northeast. Silk City Diners came fully equipped, and were stocked with not only the necessary appliances, but also the dishes, utensils and cooking pots needed to run the restaurant. One of several manufacturers in the State of New Jersey to sell

these ready to go diners, Paterson Vehicle Company approached their marketing for the diners much as they did the marketing for their vehicle lines, encouraging budding entrepreneur to be their own boss. According to the papers in this collection, it seems that following liquidation, the Trustees of the Paterson Vehicle Company continued to conduct diner related business, including refurbishing, inspection and collecting debts related to financed diners.

Scope and Content:

This collection includes correspondence, marketing materials, blueprints, blank forms and one group photograph, all related to the Silk City Diner division of Paterson Vehicle Company. The majority of the correspondence relates to financing and appraising diners and often includes the serial number of the diner in question.

Some of the blank receipts indicate that they were printed in the 1910s, and a few documents are dated in the 1930s-1940s, however, the vast majority of this material is related to the Silk City Diner division towards the end of its life, and following the liquidation of the company.

Series:

This document collection is the result of three separate donations, 2003.28, 2004.16 and 2007.11, made by Ms. Marilyn Grinwis Grey. In all cases, documents were donated alongside 3-D objects. Most, but not all of the objects were related to the Paterson Vehicle Company.

The original order of the documents has been retained, as much as possible. Several folders reflect the contents of files/envelopes compiled by John Grinwis. In all such cases, this is noted on the box list and those items have remained grouped together. In some cases, when identical brochures and marketing materials were included in both donations, they have been grouped together here.

Some, but not all, of the documents were assigned with individual accession numbers. Those numbers are reflected on the box list, when present.

Related Collections:

2003.32 Malcolm Cooper Collection

2023.33 Malcolm Cooper Digital Collection