



Finding Aid for

SHIPS SALVAGE PROGRAM RECORDS SUBSERIES, 1925-1931

Accession 546

Finding Aid Published June 2012



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OVERVIEW

REPOSITORY: Benson Ford Research Center
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ACCESSION NUMBER: 546

CREATOR - Ford Motor Company. Purchasing Department.

TITLE: Ships Salvage Program records subseries

INCLUSIVE DATES: 1925-1931

QUANTITY: 2 cubic ft.

LANGUAGE: The materials are in English.

ABSTRACT: In August 1925, Ford Motor Company signed a contract with the United States Shipping Board to purchase and scrap ships originally ordered by the U. S. Shipping Board to meet war-time needs as the country entered World War I. These records document the purchase and the dismantling of the 199 ships acquired by Ford.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

ACCESS RESTRICTIONS: The collection is open for research

COPYRIGHT: Copyright has been transferred to The Henry Ford by the donor. Copyright for some items in the collection may still be held by their respective creator(s).

ACQUISITION: Ford Motor Company Archives donation, 1964

RELATED MATERIAL: Related material held by The Henry Ford:
- Part of the A. M. Wibel records series, which includes the A M. Wibel Office papers subseries, Accession 390

PREFERRED CITATION: Item, folder, box, accession 546, Ships Salvage Program records subseries, Benson Ford Research Center, The Henry Ford

PROCESSING INFORMATION: Collection processed by Benson Ford Research Center staff, date unknown

DESCRIPTION INFORMATION: Finding aid prepared by Elyssa Bisoski, June 2012, and published in June 2012.

Finding aid prepared using Describing Archives -A Content Standard (DACS) and local guidelines.

HISTORICAL NOTE

In August 1925, Ford Motor Company signed a contract with the United States Shipping Board to purchase cargo ships originally ordered by the U. S. Shipping Board to meet war-time needs as the country entered World War I. After the war, thousands of the ships were sold off until 1921, when a world-wide economic downturn scuttled shipping growth. Over the next three years, the remaining ships were docked in harbors, rivers, and bays from Texas to New York. In 1924, the U. S. Shipping Board authorized a scrap program for the ships and opened up bids to American companies. Ford's \$1.6 million bid netted the company 199 ships that ultimately would need to be brought from various locations to the Fordson Plant (which became the Ford Motor Company Rouge River Plant) outside Dearborn, Michigan. In addition to recycling the iron and steel hulls and superstructures, the company's scrap program would entail refurbishing and reconditioning steam engines and boilers, plumbing equipment and fixtures, generators, pumps, lumber, and even bathroom fixtures for use in Ford plants and offices around the world. Staff in Dearborn and company branches in Norfolk, Virginia; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Kearney, New Jersey coordinated the labor, tooling, machinery, supplies, and fuel purchases as well as coordinated with U. S. and Canadian government regulators and established schedules.

Ships too large to pass through Great Lakes canals were cut down and shipped as cargo on smaller boats that were towed along the Atlantic seaboard, through the St. Lawrence Seaway, and through a series of Canadian and American canals until finally reaching Ford's newly built dry-docks along the Rouge River. Once moored in a specially designed dry-dock, the ships were methodically stripped of machinery, engines, and building material to be stored for later use. The hulls and superstructure were surgically dissected by powerful hydraulic shears and cut by hand with acetylene torches. Ultimately, Ford was able to recover 4,000 board feet of high-quality construction and finished lumber and over 200,000 tons of iron and steel that supplemented the company's forging operations until 1929. In addition to providing scrap material, eighteen ships were retained and refurbished by Ford for barge towing and cargo shipping. One ship, the Lake Ormac, served as temporary offices and living quarters for Ford employees working on the company's newly established rubber plantation in Brazil. These ships formed the nucleus of what became the Ford shipping fleet. The salvage program ran from December 1926 with the arrival of the Lake Fondulac for test operations through February 1928.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Ships Salvage Program records subseries, 1925-1931 (2 cubic ft.), documents the purchase and the dismantling of the "199 Ships" purchased by Ford Motor Company from the U.S. Navy after World War I and the daily progress of the ships' scrapping operations. The records, arranged in rough chronological order, consist of daily correspondence of the staff in the Purchasing Department under Wibel overseeing the purchase, transport, and scrapping process of the ships. Included is correspondence between staffs of the Purchasing Department and Ships Salvage Operations staff, as well as a Power Certificate Distributions Ledger for the Rouge River Plant and the Highland Park Plant, 1929-1931.

SUBJECT TERMS

Names, Personal and Corporate

Wibel, A. M. (Albert M.), 1886-1965
Ford Motor Company. Purchasing Department.
Ford Motor Company--Purchasing
Ford Motor Company. Rouge River Plant.
United States. Shipping Board.

Subjects

Automobile industry and trade
Industrial procurement
Salvage (Waste, etc.)
Ships--Purchasing
Ships--Scrapping

Genre and Form

Blueprints (reprographic copies)
Ledgers

CONTAINER LIST

Box no. **Description**

Box 1

Daily scrapping logs
 Chester, Pennsylvania
 January 1926
 February 1926
 March 1926
 April 1926
 May 1926
 June 1926
 July 1926
 August 1926
 Kearney, New Jersey
 December 1925
 January 1926
 February 1926
 March 1926
 April 1926
 May 1926
 June 1926
 July 1926
 August 1926
 Newport News, Virginia
 January - February, 1926
 March 1926
 April 1926
 May 1926
 June 1926
 July 1926
 August 1926
Correspondence
 Raising the Brasher and Opaquan, 1926
 L. D. Royer, scrapping program

Box 2

General
 American Shipbreaking Corporation
 K. Westlye
 Boat cut-up release
 Jahrucke Dry Docks, Inc. - labor rates, 1926
 Southern Shipyard Corporation
 Sun Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company
 Federal bid quotations

Box 2 continued:

- Foreign jobs and outside offers
- U. S. Government
- Subject files
 - Floating dry dock
 - Photograph, 1926
 - Specifications and bids, 1925-1926
 - Proposed barges, 1925-1926
 - Recap of Ship Days at Mooring Places, 1926-1927
 - Plan for cutting up shipping board boats, December 1925
 - Salvaged equipment - overseas
 - Scrapping recaps
 - January - March, 1926
 - May 1926
 - June 1926
 - July 1926
 - August 1926
 - September 1926
 - October 1926
 - November 1926
 - U.S. Shipping Board summary of surplus ship locations
 - Invoice and cost detail
 - Cutting data, 1925-1926
 - Instructions for dismantling, February 1926
 - Oil removal, 1926
 - Shipbuilding yards, 1925-1926
 - Scrapping schedule, 1926-1927
- Boat files
 - East Indian
 - Purchase notices and questions, 1926
 - Sub Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, 1926 (2 folders)
 - Maintenance costs, 1926
 - Purchase notices, 1926
 - General, February - May, 1926
 - Benbow, 1926
 - Tow boats, 1926-1927
- Equipment
 - River Rouge Plant power cost and distribution, 1929-1931
 - Power cost and distribution (bound volume)