

2008.042
2 Document Boxes, 2 cubic feet

The American Sugar Refining Company Records

1876-1951
(bulk 1907-1951)

Brooklyn Historical Society
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Abstract

The American Sugar Refining Company operated a refinery in Williamsburg, Brooklyn for nearly 150 years and employed, at its height, over 4,500 people at a time. Founded in 1807 as Wm. and F.C. Havemeyer, the company went through many name and ownership changes, eventually incorporating as American Sugar Refining Company in 1891, and is today known as Domino Foods, Inc. This collection includes annual reports describing the business operations of the firm and publications featuring photographs and stories about some of those workers.

Provenance

The collection has been assembled from materials found in the collection of The Brooklyn Historical Society. No donor information is known about the materials.

Administrative Note

The American Sugar Refining Company originated in the very early part of the nineteenth century. Within one hundred years, it was a major employer in Brooklyn, where it developed a number of innovations in sugar refining.

William Havemeyer, a German immigrant who arrived in the United States in 1799, founded the first incarnation of the company. He operated Mr. Seaman's refinery on Pine Street in Manhattan, where his brother Frederick joined him; together, they opened their own plant in 1807, Wm. and F.C. Havemeyer, on Vandam Street. By 1859, the firm was known as Havemeyer, Townsend & Co. Refinery, but it remained in the control of the Havemeyer family. They relocated to Kent Avenue in Williamsburg, Brooklyn that year in order to take advantage of available open space, a deep harbor, and an abundant labor pool. In 1861, the name of the firm changed again to Havemeyers & Elder. Other refineries joined them on the Brooklyn waterfront and, in 1887, Henry O. Havemeyer organized the Sugar Refineries Company, which successfully consolidated these nine local refineries as well as another eleven nationwide. The new company became known as the Sugar Trust and was responsible for refining 75% of the nation's sugar.

Because the Sugar Trust came under legal scrutiny, the Havemeyers dissolved the company and incorporated as the American Sugar Refining Company in 1891. The following year, that company purchased the E. C. Knight Company. As a result, by 1907 the American Sugar Refining Company controlled 98% of the national production of sugar. However, the company withstood challenge as a monopoly when the Supreme Court ruled that manufacturing—in this case, refining—was a local activity not subject to congressional regulation of interstate commerce.

Responding to popular and congressional pressure, the Company, which patented the name Domino Sugar in 1901, began to focus on the production of raw and cane sugar in Cuba. Consequently, its share of the refining business dropped steadily, to 72% in 1911 and to 24% in 1922. With the development of government controls to foster competition, its share of the refining market continued to shrink to 17% by the 1940s. The company remained a major employer along the Brooklyn waterfront throughout the 20th century.

In 1970, the company changed its name to Amstar Corporation, and it was purchased by the British concern Taft & Lyle in 1988. Following a lengthy strike, the company, now known as Domino Foods, Inc., shut down its Brooklyn operations by the end of 2004. In 2007, the New York City Landmarks

Preservation Commission designated the 1884 refinery—consisting of the filter house, the pan house and the finishing house—a landmark.

Scope and Content

The materials in this collection were produced by The American Sugar Refining Company. The collection is arranged thematically into three series: 1) Annual Reports and Stockholder Communications, 2) *The American Sugar Family* (periodical), and 3) Publications.

Series I: Annual Reports and Stockholder Communications make up the bulk of the collection. This series consists of reports released by the Board of Directors from 1907 through 1951; reports for the years 1924, 1942, and 1950 are not included. These accounts contain condensed general balance sheets, income and profit and loss statements, and data concerning sugar trade and consumption.

Series II: *The American Sugar Family* (periodical) was published by the company in 1920 and 1921. It featured articles on sugar production and refining as well as photographs of and stories about company employees in each of its five plants, including the one on the Brooklyn waterfront. This series does not represent the complete run of the publication. Photocopies of several articles are included.

Series III: Publications is comprised of pamphlets, articles and images by and about The American Sugar Refining Company, dating from 1918 through 1941. These include a commemoration of 100 years of sugar refining, a fifty-year retrospective of the company, a leaflet created in 1944 in honor of the master of the *S.S. Domino*, and outside images solicited by The Brooklyn Historical Society. Also included is an 1876 pamphlet entitled *The Sugar Refinery of Havemeyers & Elder*.

System of Arrangement

Resources within these series have been arranged chronologically.

Conditions of Access and Use

The collection is open for research use.

Brooklyn Historical Society archives and manuscripts must be examined on site. Appointments to examine archives and manuscript materials must be made in advance by contacting the Archivist through e-mail at archivist@brooklynhistory.org.

Please contact the Brooklyn Historical Society to learn of any additional conditions of access and use. Several of the Annual Reports have pages that have come loose from the binding.

Preferred Citation

The American Sugar Refining Company Records, 2008.042, Brooklyn Historical Society.

Language of Materials

All materials are in English.

Related Material

Related materials providing visual documentation of sugar refineries and personnel may be found in the Photography Collection.

There are several books in The Brooklyn Historical Society Library that document the Havemeyers and The American Sugar Refining Company, including (the following call numbers are specific to the BHS library):

Corporate and legal history of the American Sugar Refining Company
HD9101.8.B7 C67 1900zp Non-circulating

Durham, Carl J. *History of Havemeyer to Amstar*
HD9101.8.B7 D87 1995 Non-circulating

Catlin, Daniel. *Good work well done: the sugar business career of Horace Havemeyer, 1903-1956*
CT275.H384 C38 1988 Non-circulating

Havemeyer, Harry W. (Harry Waldron). *Frederick Christian Havemeyer Jr.: a biography, 1807-1891*
Brooklyn Historical Society Main Collection, Non-circulating

Havemeyer, Harry W. (Harry Waldron). *Merchants of Williamsburg: Frederick C. Havemeyer, Jr., William Dick, John Mollenhauer, Henry O. Havemeyer*
F129.B7 H39 1989 Non-circulating

Access Points

American Sugar Refining Company
Havemeyer, Frederick C., 1807-1891
Havemeyer, Henry Osborne, 1847-1907
Havemeyer, Horace, 1886-1956
Havemeyer family
Sugar trade
Food supply
Sugar
Sugar factories
Williamsburg (New York, N.Y.)

Container List

Series 1: Annual Reports and Stockholder Communications

| <u>Box</u> | <u>Folder Title</u> | <u>Dates</u> |
|------------|--|--------------|
| 1 | 1 Hardbound Annual Reports (incorrectly labeled 1907-17) | 1907-1916 |

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|---|----|--|------------------|
| | 2 | Annual Reports | 1917-1919 |
| | 3 | Annual Reports | 1920-1922 |
| | 4 | Annual Reports | 1923; 1925-1926 |
| | 5 | Annual Reports | 1927-1929 |
| | 6 | Annual Reports | 1930-1932 |
| | 7 | Annual Reports | 1932-1934 |
| 2 | 8 | Annual Reports | 1935-1937 |
| | 9 | Annual Reports | 1938-1941 |
| | 10 | Annual Reports | 1943-1946 |
| | 11 | Annual Reports | 1947-1949; 1951 |
| | 12 | Images photocopied from Annual Reports | circa 2000 |
| | 13 | Statement and Notices to Stockholders | 1924; 1944; 1947 |

Series 2: *The American Sugar Family* (Periodical)

| <u>Box</u> | <u>Folder Title</u> | <u>Dates</u> |
|-------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1 | Volume 1, numbers 1-7 | 1920 |
| 2 | Volume 1, numbers 8-10 and 12; Volume 2, numbers 1-5 | 1920-1921 |
| 3 | Photocopies of articles from <i>The American Sugar Family</i> | circa 2004 |

Series 3: Publications

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|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | Pamphlets, articles and images | 1876; 1918; 1941; 1944; 2000 |
|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------|