

Guide to the Francis W. Carpenter Papers, 1860-1934

Summary Information

Title: Francis W. Carpenter papers

Creator: Carpenter, Francis W.

ID: 109.15291

Date: 1860-1934, bulk 1880-1897

Extent: 3.0 linear feet (5 boxes)

Language: English

Abstract: This collection consists of the papers of Francis W. Carpenter, a cast-iron toy inventor and manufacturer during the late 19th century. The materials are dated from 1860 to 1934, with the bulk of the materials dated from 1880 to 1897. The papers are comprised of correspondence, photographs, financial ledgers, receipts, patents, and more.

Repository:

Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong
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Administrative Information

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Controlled Access Terms

Personal Names

- Carpenter, Francis W.
- Carpenter family

Subjects

- Toy industry—United States—Nineteenth Century
- Metal toys

Biographical Note

Toy inventor and manufacturer Francis W. Carpenter was born in New York City of Quaker parents in 1844, and died in 1925 in Greenwich, New York. His mother was a direct descendant of Stephen Hopkins, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. He married Hannah L. Field and they had five daughters and three sons.

Carpenter set up shop in Rye, New York, and was one of the first two manufacturers to apply for a patent on a cast iron toy locomotive, filing an application on October 1, 1879—the same date as rival Jerome Secor. In private correspondence, Secor proposed that Carpenter withdraw his application and admit that “I am the first inventor of the cast locomotive...as though you had not applied for a patent.” Then Secor would license Carpenter “to make the cast iron locomotive you described to me, viz. cast in halves and without a mechanical movement.” His intent was that “you and I would have the field.” Carpenter agreed, and the date June 8, 1880, is found on toys of both men. Carpenter’s patent applications, dated May 4 and May 25 of that year, depict a simple train set which was apparently never produced.

Carpenter’s toy company had two predominant lines: horse-drawn toys (carts, wagons, carriages, and fire engines) and trains, made of malleable iron. The toys were cast at the Connecticut foundry of Bridgeport Malleable Iron. Company records show that the first train made was the Rapid Freight Train produced in 1879.

Carpenter moved his operations to Harrison, New York, in 1882. He enjoyed his peak production years there from 1884 through 1888, when he moved to Port Chester, New York. In 1890 the business was turned over to Pratt & Letchworth (P&L) of Buffalo, which manufactured Buffalo brand toys. P & L produced Carpenter trains at least through 1896; some and possibly all were sold under the XL brand name. While Carpenter began making toys once again in 1892, none were trains. Carpenter and his wife filed for bankruptcy in 1904.

In his lifetime Carpenter was granted some 267 patents, only some of which were for toys. He was interested in farming, and one of his patents, granted late in life, was for a feed hopper for chickens. He was also involved in real estate, both in New York City and the Port Chester area.

Carpenter’s toy patents are:

- 227216 – Toy Railway Train, May 4, 1880
- 227956 – Toy Railway Train, May 25, 188
- 234534 – Toy Horses and Wagons, November 16, 1880
- 241188 – Toy Horse, March 28, 188
- 244433 – Toy Horse and Wagon, July 19, 1881
- 245702 – Toy Locomotive and Cars, August 16, 1881
- 251093 – Toy Horses and Cart, December 20, 1881
- 251763 – Toy Building Blocks, January 3, 1882
- 267773 – Toy Sleigh, November 21, 1882
- 287095 – Toy Horse and Cart, October 23, 1883
- 298446 – Toy [Horse and Cart], May 13, 1884
- 389364 – Toy [Locomotive], September 11, 1888
- 432693 – Toy Figure [Fireman on Hose Cart], July 22, 1890

467332 – Toy Fire Escape, January 19, 1892
475486 – Toy [Fire Escape], May 24, 1892
809092 – Toy [Fire Escape], January 2, 1906
981977 – Toy [Firehouse with Horse-Drawn Fire Engine], January 17, 1911

Carpenter's toys are considered highly collectible. In 2005, Carpenter's Tally Ho toy (consisting of a carriage, four horses, driver, and six passengers) sold at auction for \$92,000. At the same auction, his intricate Burning Building toy sold for \$54,625.

Collection Scope and Content Note

The Francis W. Carpenter papers document the life and work of an American cast-iron toy inventor and manufacturer during the late 19th-century. Comprised of both business records and personal papers, the Carpenter papers present a thorough picture of the day-to-day operation of Carpenter's business during the 1880s and 1890s through correspondence, business records, advertising materials, and a handful of patent-related materials. The personal papers span a period from 1860 through 1934 and include family papers (correspondence, bills, property maps, and family photographs), documents relating to Francis W. and Hannah Carpenter's personal bankruptcy filing in 1904, and biographical and genealogical materials.

The Francis W. Carpenter papers have been arranged into five series, with one series further divided into two subseries. The physical materials are housed in five boxes. Additional scope and content information can be found in the "Collection Inventory" section of the finding aid.

System of Arrangement

Series I: Business records, 1876-1925
 Subseries A: Financial records, 1884-1897
 Subseries B: Correspondence, 1876-1925
Series II: Trade sheets and catalogs, undated
Series III: Patents, 1878-1883
Series IV: Family papers, 1860-1934
Series V: Miscellaneous, undated

Contents List

Series I: Business records, 1876-1925

Series Scope and Content Note: This series has been divided into two subseries – correspondence and financial records. Subseries B, correspondence, includes incoming and outgoing materials. Outgoing correspondence from 1889 to 1892 is contained in Carpenter’s letterpress book. Financial records include sales journals, ledgers, and wage receipts.

Subseries A: Financial records, 1884-1897

Subseries Scope and Content Note: This subseries embraces the period from 1884 through 1897. Much of the material represents standard double entry bookkeeping practices in the late 19th century. Included in the collection are four “toy sales journals” (1884 – 1897) in which the daily business of Carpenters shop was recorded, and one ledger (1889 – 1890) in which the accounts of individuals and other companies with Carpenter were reconciled on a regular basis. Carpenter retained a separate file of receipts for wages paid to his employees – only two years 1880 and 1888 are represented in the collection.

See external document "Francis W. Carpenter papers inventory" for detailed item level description.

Box 1

- Object 1 Sales journal, October-December 1884
- Object 2 Toy sales journal, 1885-1887
- Object 3 Toy sales journal, 1888
- Object 4 Toy sales journal, 1889-1897
- Object 5 Sales ledger, 1889-1890
- Folder 1 Employee wage receipts, 1880, 1888-1889

Subseries B: Correspondence, 1876-1925

Subseries Scope and Content Note: The correspondence subseries is divided into incoming and outgoing materials. Materials sent to Carpenter between 1876 and 1892 include letters, invoices, receipts, and envelopes arranged by correspondent.

Outgoing correspondence from 1889 to 1892 is contained in Carpenter’s letterpress book in chronological order and includes carbon copies of check vouchers and some correspondence regarding family matters, real estate, and work on Carpenter's property. These materials generally concern accounts payable, purchases, patent royalty requests to Pratt & Letchworth, and a smattering of family correspondence and accounts.

Box 1

- Object 6 Outgoing copy book, 1889-1892

Box 2

Folder 1	A. A. Hoffman, 1884–1885
Folder 2	A. D. Matthews & Sons, 1888
Folder 3	A. Guenther, 1889
Folder 4	A. M. Howard, 1884, 1887–1889
Folder 5	Adolph Forster & Co., 1888
Folder 6	Alexander & Mason, 1876–1878
Folder 7	American Photo-Engraving Co., 1884–1894
Folder 8	American Tack Co., 1884
Folder 9	Babcock, H. H., 1879–1880
Folder 10	Barlow Foundry Co., 1910
Folder 11	Bergmann, Hoffmann & Co., 1885
Folder 12	Bloomington Bros., 1885
Folder 13	Brandau & Schott, 1888
Folder 14	Bridgeport Malleable Iron Co., 1882
Folder 15	Bridgeport Malleable Iron Co., 1883
Folder 16	Bridgeport Malleable Iron Co., 1884
Folder 17	Bridgeport Malleable Iron Co., 1885
Folder 18	Bridgeport Malleable Iron Co., 1888
Folder 19	Bridgeport Malleable Iron Co., 1889
Folder 20	Bridgeport Malleable Iron Co., 1890
Folder 21	Bridgeport Malleable Iron Co., 1892
Folder 22	Bridgeport Malleable Iron Co., 1896

Box 3

Folder 1	Burke, FitzSimons, Hone & Co., 1888
Folder 2	C. B. Hewitt & Bros., 1893
Folder 3	C. J. Smith & Co., 1882
Folder 4	C. P. Kalkenbrenner, 1880
Folder 5	Carpenter, Howard F., 1898
Folder 6	Carpenter, J. W., 1884, 1888
Folder 7	Chas. E. Griffith, 1889
Folder 8	Charles H. Howell & Co., 1889
Folder 9	Charles Mayer & Co., 1885
Folder 10	Crook, Charles [Crook & Herring], 1885, 1887–1888
Folder 11	Delorme & Quentin, 1888
Folder 12	E./Edward Ridley & Sons, 1879–1880, 1884
Folder 13	E. I. Horsman, 1885, 1888
Folder 14	Edwin F. Smith, 1884–1885
Folder 15	Emmons Smith & Co., 1885
Folder 16	Excelsior Trunk Factory, 1888
Folder 17	F.A.O. Schwarz, 1885, 1888, 1904
Folder 18	F. Decker, 1888
Folder 19	F. W. Anthes, 1884
Folder 20	F. W. Gesswein, 1889

Folder 21	F. W. Wardwell, 1888
Folder 22	Francis L. Hughes, 1886
Folder 23	G. Cronemeyer, 1888
Folder 24	Geo. Borgfeldt & Co., 1884
Folder 25	Geo. E. Sciple, 1888
Folder 26	Gill, Mrs., 1884
Folder 27	Gilmore, Smith & Co., 1878
Folder 28	Green Joyce & Co., 1884
Folder 29	H. Hardy & Co., 1888
Folder 30	H. J. McMahon, 1884
Folder 31	H. Mace & Co., n.d.
Folder 32	H. T. Patterson & Co./Patterson, Jordan & Gottfried/Patterson, Gottfried & Hunter, 1888–1889, 1892–1893
Folder 33	Hausle & Kraus, 1888
Folder 34	Henry Van Kuyck & Son, 1885
Folder 35	Horace Partridge & Co., 1888–1889
Folder 36	Houghton & Dutton, 1885
Folder 37	J. C. Althaus, 1888
Folder 38	J. C. Brokaw, 1888
Folder 39	J. D. Williams & Bro., 1889
Folder 40	J. T. O'Brien & Sons, 1888
Folder 41	J. W. McKeever, 1888
Folder 42	James Gallagher Brass Foundry, 1884
Folder 43	Jas. Jardine, 1885, 1888
Folder 44	James McCarthy, 1884–1885
Folder 45	John C. Sullivan, 1888
Folder 46	John Henry & Sons, 1884
Folder 47	John Luck, 1888
Folder 48	John W. McCarty, 1894
Folder 49	Johnson Bros., 1888
Folder 50	Julius M. Jagel, 1884–1885
Folder 51	Levy & Davis, 1888–1889
Folder 52	Levy & Stearn, 1888
Folder 53	Lord & Taylor, 1888
Folder 54	Lyman & Curtiss, 1880, 1884
Folder 55	Mabley & Company, 1886
Folder 56	Manhattan Railway News Co., 1885
Folder 57	Meinecke & Co., 1884
Folder 58	Morse, George, 1892
Folder 59	New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad Company, 1889
Folder 60	New York Nickel Plating & Manufacturing Co., 1889
Folder 61	Parker Brothers, 1886
Folder 62	Peabody & Whitney, 1888
Folder 63	Peck & Snyder, 1888
Folder 64	Phillips, H., 1888
Folder 65	Port Chester <i>Enterprise</i> , 1885

Folder 66	Port Chester Paper Box Co., 1923
Folder 67	R. A. Stowell & Co., 1888
Folder 68	R. H. Macy & Co., 1888
Folder 69	R. H. Staveley, 1888
Folder 70	Richard Schwarz, 1884–1885, 1888–1889
Folder 71	Rogge & Koch, 1888–1889
Folder 72	S. O. Barnum, 1888
Folder 73	S. Tyroler, 1885
Folder 74	Scharles Bros., 1889
Folder 75	Schlingheyde & Merrill, 1888
Folder 76	Schott & Co., 1888
Folder 77	Secor, Jerome B., 1880 [photocopies]
Folder 78	Serrell, Lemuel W./Serrell & Son, 1881, 1884, 1888, 1896, 1910, 1919, 1925
Folder 79	Sloop <i>John G. Perry</i> , 1878
Folder 80	Spooner Manufacturing Co., 1887–1889
Folder 81	Stirn & Lyon, 1884–1885, 1888–1889
Folder 82	Strobel & Wilken, 1885, 1888–1889
Folder 83	Tower Manufacturing Co., 1888
Folder 84	W. L. Sommer, 1885, 1889, n.d.
Folder 85	W. O. Sweet, 1888
Folder 86	Wahl & Snaith, 1888
Folder 87	Williard & McKee/H. F. Williard, 1884–1888
Folder 88	Unknown correspondents

Series II: Trade sheets and catalogs, undated

Series Scope and Content Note: This series contains 12 examples of F.W. Carpenter's advertising sheets and promotional materials. These materials depict cast-iron toys as well as other products including patented dustpans and a chicken feeder.

Box 1 – Folder 3

Object 1	Trade sheet – dump carts, galloping horses, and small horse and cart, undated
Object 2	<i>Carpenter's Durable Iron Toys for Children, Made of Malleable Iron</i> trade sheet, undated
Object 3-6	<i>F.W. Carpenter's Patented New Iron Toys</i> catalog [4 copies], undated
Object 7	<i>F.W. Carpenter's New Iron Toys</i> sheet, undated
Object 8-9	<i>F.W. Carpenter's Patented Durable Iron Toys</i> catalog [2 copies], undated
Object 10-12	<i>Carpenter's Adjustable Elevated or Surface Railroad</i> trade sheet [3 copies], undated
Object 13	<i>Carpenter's Iron Trains</i> trade sheet, undated
Object 14	<i>Carpenter's Patented Self-Supporting Dust-Pans with Long Upright Handle</i> trade sheet, undated
Object 15	<i>No More Stooping, Carpenter's Star Dust Pan</i> trade sheet, undated
Object 16-23	<i>F.W. Carpenter's Improved Poultry Feeder</i> trade sheet [8 copies], undated
Object 24	<i>Carpenter's Durable Iron Toys for Children, Made of Malleable Iron</i> trade sheet, undated

Object 25 *Carpenter's Iron Freight Train with Puffing Locomotive, no. 100* trade sheet, undated

Series III: Patents, 1878-1883

Series Scope and Content Note: This series contains seven items related to Carpenter's patents for toys and dustpans. The first two items are issued patents for a toy horse, and a toy horse and wagon combination. The remainder of the folder contains material related to Carpenter's efforts to patent his own dustpan designs including correspondence with his attorney and examples of prior art with which his own invention was competing.

Box 1 – Folder 2

Object 1 Power of Attorney document, February 21, 1878
Object 2 Patent 241,188 – Toy horse diagram and claim, undated
Object 3 Patent 244,433 – Toy horse and wagon diagrams and specification, July 19, 1881
Object 4 Patent office search – Patent 216,529 Samuel M. Perry dust pans, June 4, 1883
Object 5 Patent 228,562 – J.B. Secor toy locomotive diagrams and specifications, June 8, 1880
Object 6 Patent 216,529 – S.M. Perry dust-pan diagrams and specification, June 17, 1879
Object 7 Patent 237,115 – B. Macardle dustpan diagrams and specification, February 1, 1881

Series IV: Family papers, 1860-1934

Series Scope and Content Note: This series contains biographical and genealogical material related to the Carpenter family, a small amount of family correspondence (including household accounts), family photographs, and a file relating to Carpenter's personal bankruptcy filing in 1904.

Box 4

Folder 1 Bankruptcy papers, 1904
Folder 2 Biographical information, 1925, undated
Folder 3 Business papers (non-toy or patent related), 1873-1934, undated
Folder 4 Correspondence, 1860-1930, undated
Folder 5 Genealogies, undated
Folder 6 "Map of lots on the property of Francis W. Carpenter in the village of Port Chester, N.Y.," undated
Folder 7 Photographs, undated

Series V: Miscellaneous, undated

Series Scope and Content Note: This series contains a set of handwritten index cards, primarily an index of Carpenter correspondents, a notice of three lectures by Rev. Geo. Macardle, blank invoice stationary for F.W. Carpenter, Manufacturer of Toys, Novelties, Etc. and a recipe card for Cottolene shortening.

This series also consists of three-dimensional objects such as a brass key with an attached disk inscribed "F.W. Carpenter, three lumps of coal, and two zinc printing plates mounted on wood blocks, depicting the "Burning Building" toy.

Box 4

Folder 8 Research notes [index cards], undated
Folder 9 Miscellaneous papers, undated

Box 5

Object 1 Brass key, undated
Object 2-4 Coal, undated
Object 5-6 Zinc printing plates – “Burning Building” toy, undated