



Finding Aid for

WILLOUGHBY COMPANY RECORDS, 1900-1939

Accession 90.1.1749

Finding Aid Published: August 2020

Benson Ford Research Center
The Henry Ford
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OVERVIEW

REPOSITORY: Benson Ford Research Center
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ACCESSION NUMBER: 90.1.1749

CREATOR: Willoughby Company

TITLE: Willoughby Company Records

INCLUSIVE DATES: 1900-1939

BULK DATES: 1929-1939

QUANTITY: 11.8 cubic ft. (17 boxes, 2 rolls)

LANGUAGE: The materials are in English.

ABSTRACT: The Willoughby Company, a custom design automobile body firm, originated in Rome, New York in the late nineteenth century, and later relocated to Utica, New York. One of Willoughby's largest clients was Ford Motor Company, for whom they built many custom Lincoln body styles. The collection consists of business records documenting sales, vehicle specifications, material purchases, and employee wages, and also includes over 600 design drawings for Lincoln, Packard, and Cadillac bodies, among others.

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:** Donated to The Henry Ford by Henry Austin Clark, Jr., 1990. A subsequent donation, accession 91.1.1749, was made in 1991, with that material incorporated into the collection.
- RELATED MATERIAL:** Related material held by The Henry Ford:
- Photographs of Willoughby-bodied Lincolns in Accession 64.167.833, Ford Motor Company General Photographs Series. Example online at: <https://www.thehenryford.org/collections-and-research/digital-collections/artifact/138663>. Accession finding aid available at: <https://findingaids.thehenryford.org/xtf/search?identifier=833>
Related collections beyond The Henry Ford:
- Hamilton College in Clinton, New York holds a small collection of college memorabilia relating to Francis Willoughby's graduating class of 1909.
- PREFERRED CITATION:** Item, folder, box, accession 90.1.1749, Willoughby Company Records, Benson Ford Research Center, The Henry Ford
- PROCESSING INFORMATION:** Collection processed by staff of the Benson Ford Research Center, circa 1992.
- DESCRIPTION INFORMATION:** Original collection inventory list prepared by staff of the Benson Ford Research Center, circa 1992.
Finding aid originally written by staff of the Benson Ford Research Center, circa 1992. Reformatted and republished by Brian Wilson, August 2020.
Finding aid prepared using Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS) and local guidelines.

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

The Willoughby Company, a custom design automobile body firm, originated in Rome, New York in the late nineteenth century. The first owner, R.M. Bingham, specialized in custom sleighs and carriages. When the Bingham factory was destroyed by fire in 1897, the company moved to Utica, New York where they took over the facilities of the Utica Carriage Company. Bingham's son-in-law, Edward Willoughby, served as president. With partner William H. Owen, Edward Willoughby formed Willoughby-Owen & Co. and received contracts from the Columbia Automobile Company to produce bodies for electric cars in 1899. From 1901-1902 they produced an electric car of their own, but subsequently evolved into a custom body design and production firm. In 1903, the company was incorporated as the Willoughby Company. When Edward Willoughby died in 1913, his son, Francis Willoughby, carried on the business as the Willoughby Body Works.

Francis Willoughby was born in Rome, New York on April 30, 1887 and graduated from Hamilton College in 1909. For 25 years he operated one of the leading American custom design firms, building bodies for many luxury automobiles. Willoughby coachwork enjoyed a reputation for high quality workmanship, advanced ideas in styling and engineering, the finest of materials and elegant detail. The Willoughby Company employed from 100 to 300 employees, with an average payroll around \$10,000 per week during peak production periods.

One of Willoughby's largest clients was Ford Motor Company, for whom they built many custom Lincoln body styles. The company also produced custom bodies for Packard, Pierce Arrow, Rolls Royce, Lozier, Reo, Marmon, Cadillac, LaSalle, and Duesenberg. Willoughby clientele included many prominent individuals such as New York mayor Jimmy Walker, boxing champion Joe Louis, Horace E. Dodge, and the Rockefeller family. Willoughby built two presidential cars for Calvin Coolidge and three for Herbert Hoover.

The Depression dramatically reduced the demand for limousines and luxury automobiles. In July 1938, Willoughby produced their last car and the company was liquidated after three generations of successful operation. The machinery and materials were auctioned off in February 1939 for a fraction of their value. A portion of the plant itself was then leased to a mushroom farmer.

With the dissolution of the company, Francis Willoughby joined the ranks of the unemployed. His job search is heavily documented in the collection and took him both in and out of his field. Despite his credentials and extensive business experience, he was unable to secure a position in the automobile industry. He eventually took a position with the Utica Mutual Insurance Company where he worked until his death on August 13, 1955.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Series I, **Correspondence**, contains business correspondence relating to sales orders for custom coachwork, materials, automobile body repair orders, and business transactions with individual clients and automobile companies. The records document, in particular, Willoughby's business relationship with Ford Motor Company, the liquidation of the company in 1938 and Francis Willoughby's subsequent job search.

Series II, **Miscellaneous**, contains automobile specifications, business associate lists, financial records, notes, advertisements, news clippings and photographs.

Series II, **Ledgers**, contains an invoice ledger of automobile body repair orders and purchase orders for materials and supplies, an inventory ledger of materials, and employee weekly time books detailing hours worked and wages earned.

Series III, **Design Drawings**, contains approximately 600 design drawings dating from 1900 to 1938. Executed in a variety of media that includes blueprints, pencil drawings, India ink drawings and some water color renderings, the drawings represent a wide variety of custom automobile makes. A small number of designs for horse drawn vehicles are also included.

The drawings are arranged alphabetically by make, date and then body style. However, due to the large number, the Lincoln automobiles are arranged according to make, body style and then by date. Drawings unidentified by make, which may be generic designs originally intended for no particular car company, are found at the end. The items are arranged by size, with flat drawings in size "C" (20.5x24.5x3 inch) or size "F" (24x36x2 inch) boxes, and large rolled drawings housed in tubes.

ARRANGEMENT

The collection is arranged by material format in three series:

- Series I: Correspondence
- Series II: Miscellaneous
- Series III: Ledgers
- Series IV: Design Drawings
 - Size "C" (20.5x24x3 inch box)
 - Size "F" (24x36x2 inch box)
 - Roll

SUBJECT TERMS

Names, Personal and Corporate

Willoughby, Edward

Willoughby, Francis

Willoughby Company

Willoughby Body Works

Subjects

Automobiles--Design and construction

Lincoln automobile

Cadillac automobile

Genre and Form

Advertisements

Clippings

Design drawings

Financial records

Photographs

CONTAINER LIST

Box no. **Description**

CORRESPONDENCE

Box 1

1911
1932
1933
1934
1935
1936
1936-1939, Unemployment Insurance
1937
 A
 B
 C-Con
 Coo-Cu
 D
 E
 F
 Ford Motor Company
 January
 February

Box 2

 March
 May
 July
 August
 September
 October
 November
 December

 G
 HA
 HE-I
 K-LA

Box 3

 LE-LU
 Lumber, February-September
 Lumber, November-December
 M-N
 R-T
 U
1938

A-B
C-D
F
Ford Motor Company
 January
 February
 March
 April

Box 4

 May-June
 July-August
 September-December
G
H
Income Tax
L
M
Machinery
Materials, June-September
Materials, October-December
N
P-Q

Box 5

R
S
T-U
W-Y
Willoughby, Francis
1939
 A-C
 Claims
 F-H
 Ford Motor Company
 January-April
 May-August, October
L-M
O-P, R
S

Box 6

T-U, W
Willoughby, Francis

MISCELLANEOUS

Box 6

Auto Specs, undated
Business Associate List, undated
Financial Records
Notes and Correspondence
Parts Lists

Box 7

Advertisements, undated
Clippings, undated
Photographs, undated

LEDGERS

Box 8

Invoice Ledger of Automobile Body Repair Orders and Purchase Orders for Materials and Supplies, 1930-1931

Box 9

Inventory Ledger of Materials, 1936-1937

Box 10

Time Books
28 May 1921 - 26 November 1921
3 December 1921 - 10 June 1922
17 June 1922 - 18 November 1922
25 November 1922 - 21 April 1923
8 September 1923 - 23 February 1924
1 March 1924 - 30 August 1924
6 September 1924 - 7 March 1925
14 March 1925 - 5 September 1925
12 September 1925 - 23 January 1926
30 January 1926 - 12 June 1926
19 June 1926 - 11 December 1926
11 February 1928 - 26 May 1928
5 January 1929 - 20 April 1929
26 July 1930 - 29 November 1930
19 March 1932 - 11 February 1933

DESIGN DRAWINGS

Box 11 (size "C")

American Motors Corporation, 1917 Two Door Sedan (5 items)
Anderson Carriage Co., circa 1903-1905 Convertible Coupe (3 items)
Auburn, undated Sedan (2 items)

Columbia, 1905 Town Car (1 item)
Chrysler, undated Town Car, undated Coupe, undated Sedan (5 items)
Commercial, undated Canopy Express Truck and Panel Delivery Truck (3 items)
Chandler Royal Eight, undated Coupe (1 item)
Darracq, 1906 Touring Car and 1907 Touring Car (9 items)
Dictograph Products Company, 1930 Wiring Diagram (1 item)
Dodge, 1915 Sedan (1 item)
Hotchkiss, undated Touring Car (3 items)
Locomobile, 1917 Interiors (3 items)
Lozier, 1906 Town Car and 1907 Town Car (8 items)
Lozier, 1907 Touring Car (10 items)
Lozier, 1908 Town Car and 1908 Touring Car (5 items)
Pope-Hartford, 1907 Limousine (2 items)

Box 12 (size "C")

Royal Motor, 1907 Limousine (1 item)
Simplex, circa 1912 Touring Car (1 item)
Stevens-Duryea, undated Limousine (2 items)
Welch, 1907 Town Car and 1905-1906 Touring Car (2 items)
Wills Sainte Claire, undated Sedan and Town Car (2 items)
Unidentified, 1900, 1902, and 1903 (4 items)
Unidentified, 1904, 1903-1905, and 1901-1906 (7 items)
Unidentified, 1905, 1906, and 1907 (12 items)
Unidentified, 1907-1908, 1908-1909, and 1906-1910 (9 items)
Unidentified, 1908 and 1909 (11 items)
Unidentified, 1910, 1911, 1908-1910, and 1910-1911 (7 items)
Unidentified, 1912, 1914, 1915, and 1917 (7 items)
Unidentified, 1918 and 1920 (14 items)
Unidentified, Rear Window for Coupe (2 items)

Box 13 (size "F")

Cadillac, undated Limousine (8 items)
Cadillac, undated Town Car and Phaeton (4 items)
Cadillac, undated Sedan and Sedan Landaulet (5 items)
Ford, 1933-1934 Town Car (1 item)
Franklin, 1903-1905 Coach, 1906 Sedan, and 1906-1907 Town Car (4 items)
Franklin, 1907 Touring Car, 1907 Town Car, and 1909 Town Car (4 items)
Franklin, 1910 Town Car, 1928 Sedan, and 1930 Sedan (6 items)
Franklin, 1930 Limousine, undated Coupe, 1928 Town Car, and undated Town Car (10 items)
Horse Drawn, undated (8 items)
Interiors, undated (8 items; folder 1 of 4)

Box 14 (size "F")

Interiors, undated (13 items; folder 2 of 4)
Interiors, undated (3 items; folder 3 of 4)

Interiors, undated (3 items; folder 4 of 4)
LaSalle, undated Speedster (1 item)
Lincoln, Convertible, 1932 Sedan, 1935 Cabriolet, and 1936 Coupe (8 items)
Lincoln, Coupe, 1927-1936 (14 items)

Box 15 (size "F")

Lincoln, Limousine, 1927-1930 (4 items)
Lincoln, Limousine, 1928 and 1929 (17 items)
Lincoln, Limousine, 1930 (14 items)
Lincoln, Limousine, 1931 (25 items)
Lincoln, Limousine, 1932 and 1933 (23 items)
Lincoln, Limousine, 1934 (13 items)
Lincoln, Limousine, 1935 (12 items)
Lincoln, Limousine, 1936, 1937-1938, and undated (7 items)
Lincoln, Phaeton, 1932, 1935, and circa 1937-1938 (7 items)
Lincoln, Sedan, 1926, 1927-1930, and 1928 (6 items)

Box 16 (size "F")

Lincoln, Sedan, 1929, 1930, and 1931 (14 items)
Lincoln, Sedan, 1932 (11 items)
Lincoln, Sedan, 1933 (11 items)
Lincoln, Sedan, 1934, 1935, and 1936 (12 items)
Lincoln, 2-Door Sedan, 1934, 1935, and circa 1937-1938 (4 items)
Lincoln, Town Car, 1926, 1927-1930, 1929, and 1929 Brunn (9 items)
Lincoln, Town Car, 1929-1930, and 1930 (9 items)
Lincoln, Town Car, 1932 (15 items)
Lincoln, Town Car, 1931 (11 items)
Lincoln, Town Car, 1934, and 1935 (17 items)
Lincoln, Town Car, 1935-1936, 1936, and 1937-1938 (7 items)
Marmon, 1929 Limousine, circa 1919 Sedan, undated Town Car , and undated Sedan
(5 items)

Box 17 (size "F")

Packard, 1914 Town Car, 1928 Town Car, and undated Town Car (7 items)
Packard, undated Coupe, 1915 Coupe, undated Phaeton, and 1929 Phaeton (5 items)
Packard, undated Limousine, 1917 Limousine, and undated Sedan (5 items)
Packard, undated Sedan, and 1919 Sedan (7 items)
Packard, undated Phaeton, 1919 Phaeton, and 1928 Phaeton (4 items)
Pierce Arrow, 1906 Town Car, 1907 Town Car, and 1907 Touring Car (4 items)
Pierce Arrow, 1929 Town Car, and undated Sedan (7 items)
Professional Cars, Ambulance, and Hearse (2 items)
Reo, undated Town Car (4 items)
Rolls Royce, 1929 Sedan (2 items)
Studebaker, 1918 Sedan, and 1918 Five Passenger Sedan (9 items)
Studebaker, 1915-1918 Miscellaneous Blueprints (41 items)
Unidentified, 1916, 1928, and 1938 (4 items)

Roll 1

Windshield Assembly, undated (5 items)

Roll 2

Body Drawing, undated (3 items)