

# Archives and Special Collections

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## **Ball Corporation Records 1954-1993 MSS 32**

Title: Ball Corporation records

Creator: Ball Corporation (Muncie, Ind.)

Inclusive Dates: 1954-1993

Extent: 1.3 cubic feet

Containers: 5 boxes

Language of Materials: Materials entirely in English.

Preferred Citation:

Ball Corporation Records, Archives and Special Collections, Ball State University Libraries

Administrative History:

Ball Corporation had its beginning in 1880 when two young brothers, Edmund and Frank Ball, seeking to find a successful business after several false starts in carpet cleaning, manufacturing fish kits, egg crates and other undertakings, borrowed \$200 from a preacher-uncle and set up a shop in a loft in Buffalo, New York. They began manufacturing wood-jacketed cans, for shipping paints, varnishes and oil. It was a small operation, consisting of the brothers, a tinsmith and two boys as part-time helpers. After a fire destroyed this first location, the brothers took the insurance settlement and moved to larger quarters. They were joined by three other brothers, Lucius, Will and George, so the name of the new firm was change from the Wood Jacket Can Company to Ball Brothers. The firm also added a new line to the products offered that of a glass container for filling kerosene lamps.

When a small group of Belgian glass blowers drifted into Buffalo, in 1885, the brothers were persuaded to build their own glass furnace. In 1885, realizing that John Mason's patent for a screw-type jar to be used in home canning had expired, the brothers decided to manufacture the Mason style jars themselves.

Again, fire destroyed their factory. This time the brothers took their small insurance settlement and began investigating other locations for their factory. Hearing that land was cheap and

plentiful in the Midwest, Frank Ball, the company's president, visited several sites, including Muncie, Indiana where the discovery of natural gas wells in a nearby community promised a seemingly inexhaustible supply of gas. He was not necessarily impressed with the town itself, but in his Memoirs, he stated that "the men were all courteous, kind, and businesslike." The local businessmen offered the Balls \$5000 and seven acres of land on which to build their factory and the offer was accepted.

Construction of the new plant began in 1887 and the first glass jars were produced 1888. The now famous Ball Mason jar soon became the plant's major product. The local business was the first to put their copyrighted name on a product.

In 1912, Ball Brothers purchased a zinc mill in LaHarpe, Kansas and after World War I began the manufacture of zinc battery cans for use in portable radios, flashlights, battery driven toys, and machinery and equipment using storage batteries for power.

In 1935, the company built a rubber plant in Muncie, and also purchased three paper mills and a corrugated box plant. The paper mills were eventually sold, but the corrugated box products were used for packing merchandize to be shipped elsewhere, until 1961, when plans were announced to close out the Muncie based glass container operation.

With roots in glass food packaging, Ball Brothers Company Incorporated, which became Ball Corporation in 1969, expanded its markets to include metal beverage containers in the late 1960s and high-barrier plastics food packages in the late 1970s.

After 92 years as a family-owned business, Ball went public on July 13, 1972, and its stock was traded over the counter. On December 17, 1973, the stock was admitted for trading on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol BLL and began trading at \$26 per share. On April 22, 1976, Ball Corporation dedicated its international corporate headquarters at 345 South High St., on the site of the old Muncie Central High School Building.

In February 1998 Ball Corporation announced that it would move its headquarters from Muncie to Broomfield, Colorado. Alltrista and Ball-Foster continued to produce the items traditionally made by Ball Corporation and remained in Muncie.

#### Scope and Contents:

This collection includes annual and quarterly reports (1973-1992), news releases (1980-1984), the *Ball Line* magazine (1978 to 1981), and other related publications (1957-1975) from the Ball Corporation in Muncie, Indiana.

#### Existence and Locations of Copies:

The Ball Corporation Archives are housed in the archives of the Minnetrista Cultural Center in Muncie, Indiana.

#### Conditions Governing Access:

This collection is open for research.

Copyright Notice:

Legal title, copyright, and literary rights reside with Archives and Special Collections, Ball State University Libraries, Muncie, IN. All requests to publish or quote from manuscripts must be submitted to Archives and Special Collections.

Custodial History:

This collection was received by Archives and Special Collections as a donation from the Ball Corporation on 1979/10/25, 1979/12/01, and 1980/03/25.

Accruals: No additions are expected.

Processing Information:

Collection processed 1982/01/15 by David Tambo.

Finding aid created 1982/01/15 by David Tambo.

Finding aid revised 2009/10/28 by Maren L. Read.

EAD finding aid completed 2009/10/28 by Maren L. Read.

Arrangement:

This collection is organized in the following series:

Series I: Reports and Records, 1973-1992

Series II: News Releases, 1980-1984

Series III: *Ball Line* magazine, 1975-1993

Series IV: Publications, 1957-1975

Controlled Access Headings:

Muncie (Ind.)

Stoeckel Archives of Local History

Ball Corporation (Muncie, Ind.)

Ball Brothers Company, Inc. (Muncie, Ind.)

Business

Business records

Documents

Periodicals

Reports

Collection Inventory:

Series I: Reports and Records, 1973-1992

Box Contents

- 1 Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1973-1974  
Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1975  
Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1976  
Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1977  
Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1978  
Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1979  
Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1980  
Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1981  
Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1982  
Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1983  
Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1984  
Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1985  
Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1986  
Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1987
- 2 Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1988  
Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1989  
Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1990  
Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1991  
Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1992  
Brochure, 1992  
Correspondence, Menzies stock purchase, 1954-1956  
Form 10-K, 1978

Series II: News Releases, 1980-1984

Box Contents

- 3 News Releases, 1980-1984

Series III: *Ball Line* magazine, 1975-1993

Box Contents

- 4 *Ball Line*, 1975, March/April  
*Ball Line*, 1978, nos. 1-6  
*Ball Line*, 1979, nos. 1-6  
*Ball Line*, 1980, nos. 1-6  
*Ball Line*, 1981, nos. 1-3, 5-6  
*Ball Line*, 1982, nos. 1-4  
*Ball Line*, 1983, nos. 1-4  
*Ball Line*, 1984, nos. 1-4  
*Ball Line*, 1985, nos. 1-4  
*Ball Line*, 1986, nos. 1-4

*Ball Line*, 1987, nos. 1-4  
*Ball Line*, 1988, nos. 1-4  
*Ball Line*, 1989, nos. 1-4  
*Ball Line*, 1990, nos. 1-4  
*Ball Line*, 1991, nos. 1-4  
*Ball Line*, 1992, nos. 1-4  
*Ball Line*, 1993, no. 3

Series IV: Publications, 1957-1975

Box Contents

- 5 President's Report to Stockholders: Ball Brothers Company, Incorporated, Annual Meeting, 1957/03/21  
Ball, Edmund F., "From Fruit Jars to Satellites: The Story of Ball Brothers Company Incorporated," 1960  
Brantley, William F., "A Collector's Guide to Ball Jars," 1975  
"The Buffalo Era: When Ball Was Small", undated  
Miscellaneous Product Literature, undated  
Indiana Society of Chicago: 57th Annual Dinner, undated