

McLean County Museum of History

**American Foundry and Furnace Company Collection
(Soper Foundry)**

Collection Information

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 box
COLLECTION DATES:	1910-1957
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives
NOTES:	Past perfect 2020.0005

Brief History

Soper Foundry (then known as Flagg Foundry) began in Bloomington in 1874, producing gray iron casting on a jobbing basis, cast iron bridge castings and selected plumbing fixtures. The company moved twice in Bloomington, finally settling at the corner of Washington and McClun Streets in 1885. That was the year in which they bought patents for heating and ventilating systems that used large cast iron furnaces. These furnaces were popular with large buildings such as schools and churches for use with both heating and ventilation.

The company's name changed to American Foundry & Furnace Company in 1896, when they were incorporated in the State of Illinois.

The 1885 foundry was expanded at least eleven times. Eventually, the firm added sheet metal work, especially air handling products. They sold through direct branches as well as through

distributors and manufacturers agents. At least three generations of the Soper family owned the company. Modine Manufacturing of Racine, WI, acquired the company in a stock trade in 1964.

Scope

The collection is primarily comprised of photos of their furnaces and includes a scrapbook of photos and letters of successful school building installations. A product brochure, a 1957 company history, and other sundry items round out the collection. Please note that many of the photos were professionally taken by United Photo.

Box and Folder Inventory

Folder 1: Company History

- 1.1 History, 1957 Sep 18. Writer unknown. 2 pp.

Folder 2: Photos A

- 2.1 Photos of furnaces and duct work, 7. Two dated 1935 or 36.

Folder 3: Photos B

- 3.1 Photos of steel furnaces and related, 43.

Folder 4: Photos C

- 4.1 Photos of furnaces for large buildings, 10.

Folder 5: Photos D

- 5.1 Photos of furnaces, some 600 series, 11.

Folder 6: Photos E

- 6.1 Photos of Superior blowers, 14.

Folder 7: Photos F

- 7.1 Photos of furnace parts, some 3900 series, 24.

Folder 8: Photos G

- 8.1 Photos of large oil-fired furnaces, 25.

Folder 9: Photos H

- 9.1 Photos of furnaces at Illinois Soldiers and Sailors Children's School (ISSCS), 6. One dated 1918; others 1954.

Folder 10: Photos I

- 10.1 Photos of hand-fired hot air furnaces, 27. Three labeled 1932; one 1934; one 1940.

Folder 11: Photos J

- 11.1 Photos of Balcan, WI, high school and other photos plus undated newspaper articles on Greentown School heating and venting system, 9 photos. One photo shows the “Colonial Photo Dramas” theatre in Richmond, VA, circa 1920.

Folder 12: Photos K

- 12.1 Two different photo postcard featuring direct fired unit heaters, undated.
- 12.2 Two other photos showing top view of furnace and filter, undated.
- 12.3 Photo of Labor Day Parade showing an American Foundry Furnace on a float of the Iron Moulders Union No. 157, undated.

Folder 13: Miscellaneous

- 14.1 Advert for Williams Oil-O-Matic, *National Geographic*, Nov 1925.
- 14.2 Product booklet: AFCO Ventilating Specialties, manufactured by American Foundry & Furnace Co., undated. 24 pp.
- 14.3 Catalog: Mid Lake Distributing Co catalog of parts for coal stokers, undated. 119 pp.

Scrapbook of School Building Work, 1910-1920. Smaller black book.

Photo Album of School Building Work, undated. Larger black book.