

Records of the Essex Company of Lawrence, Massachusetts
1845-1987

Lawrence History Center – Immigrant City Archives and Museum
6 Essex Street
Lawrence, Massachusetts
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1. IDENTITY STATEMENT

Title: Records of the Essex Company of Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1845-1987

Dates of Creation: 1845-1987 (inclusive), 1845-1965 (bulk)

Level of Description: Fonds

Extent: 552 linear feet (516 containers)

Repository: Lawrence History Center – Immigrant City Archives and Museum

Location Number: LHC A001

Preferred Citation: [Identification of item], Records of the Essex Company of Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1845-1987, Lawrence History Center – Immigrant City Archives and Museum, Lawrence, Mass.

2. CONTEXT

Creator: Essex Company (Lawrence, Mass.)

Administrative History:

The Essex Company was chartered in 1845 explicitly to build a dam and canals on the Merrimack River for the purpose of providing waterpower for textile mills. Implicitly, the directors planned create a city (Lawrence, Massachusetts) by selling land on either side of the river for mills, homes for workers and managers, stores, churches, schools and local government. It was also created to build mills and machinery on contract.

As early as the mid 1830s, a small manufacturer turned land speculator, Daniel Saunders, began buying thin strips of land on either side of the Merrimack River between Lowell and Andover/Methuen in order to be able to control water power rights. He worked with his son, Daniel Saunders, JR., his uncle, J. Abbot Gardiner, and John Nesmith. They established the Merrimack Water Power Association and then approached Samuel Lawrence, brother of Amos and Abbott Lawrence, both major manufacturers and part of the later named Boston Associates. Samuel Lawrence reported to his brothers and to other manufacturing leaders, most prominently Nathan Appleton and Patrick Tracy Jackson. A number of the Boston Associates bought out Daniel Saunders and the others and formed the Essex Company. They kept Daniel Saunders on for a period to continue as a land agent.

Lawrence was incorporated as a town in 1847 and as a city in 1853. The Essex Company built the industrial infrastructure and laid out streets, blocks of house lots and parks. It imposed restricted use deeds – many theoretically in force today - when selling lots or

donating land to the new town. Restrictions included number, use and location of structures on lots, height, and building materials. On lots surrounding the Common donated by the Essex Company, stately homes, the City Hall and Protestant churches were to be built. Irish laborers, needed for building the dam and canal, were accommodated in crowded shanties on land rented from the Essex Company on the other side of the river from the central town. The Essex Company, though its directors consisted of the interlocking Boston families that launched industrialization in New England, was led on the ground by Charles Storrow, the agent and chief engineer, as well as the City's first mayor. The records offer a glimpse of a man with a comprehensive vision and a determination to control its implementation. He established banks, directed the development of the schools, influenced the direction of cultural activities and dominated the local distribution of relief funds, whether for the Irish famine, the Free Kansas movement, or the Pemberton Mill disaster.

The activities of the Boston Associates in the manufacturing empire they built were precursors to the better-known "robber barons" who gained prominence in the later 19th century. Members active at the time Lawrence was built included Nathan Appleton, Amos, Abbott and Samuel Lawrence, Patrick Tracy Jackson, William Sturgis, Ignatius Sargent, members of the Cabot and Lowell families, among others. The contemporary concern about the environmental impacts of industry can find much in the Essex Company records to trace the sources of today's concerns, including diversion of rivers, Brownfields, and the impact of dams on fish (fishways were required in the initial charter, and the largely unsuccessful efforts, along with records of multiple lawsuits, are documented).

None of the other mill towns on the Merrimack, Connecticut, Nashua or Saco Rivers that were part of the later named Boston Associates' New England holdings were planned with nearly the level of detail of Lawrence. Control by the Essex Company in the creation of Lawrence meant not only state of the art mills, but also corporation boarding houses on a scale large enough to enable mill owners to have sufficient sway over the behavior of their workers and to demonstrate to the world that workers could be accommodated in good quality housing. It meant restricted deeds on lots to ensure that buildings were of sufficient quality. It meant micro managing the development of churches, schools and the local government. Perhaps most significantly, the Boston Associates, with the creation of Lawrence, felt that they could not take a chance with the supply of water, and therefore created a company jointly owned by the Essex Company and Lowell's Proprietors of Locks and Canals to purchase all necessary land and water rights for the Merrimack up to and including Lake Winnepesaukee and the other large lakes of New Hampshire.

Later, this led to the Essex Company taking the lead in efforts to purify water. Hiram Mills, chief engineer of the Essex Company, became director of the Committee on Water Supplies and Sewerage on the Massachusetts Board of Health, in which capacity he caused to be established in an Essex Company facility the Lawrence Experiment Station, destined for international renown, which conducted the nation's first sustained experiments on water and sewage. The first major project to come out of this was the development, in Lawrence, of the nation's first slow sand filter to combat Typhoid in

drinking water. Until its operations were moved to bigger quarters at another site in the 1950s, the original Lawrence Experiment Station was a magnet for world leaders in sanitary engineering.

Not surprisingly, the Essex Company exercised significant influence over Lawrence for many years. In addition to Charles Storrow, Daniel Saunders, Jr. and Robert Tewksbury, long time cashier of the Essex Company, served as mayors. Charles Storrow also directed the establishment of schools, and Robert Tewksbury served for some years as city treasurer. The latter was known as the city historian and was very active in civic affairs, including heading the committee to design the Soldiers and Sailors Monument and raise funds for it with a pledge drive throughout the mills.

The Essex Company established Lawrence at a critical juncture in American industrial, immigration and political history. In the late 1840s, water power was gradually being replaced by steam in America, the anticipated workers from New England farms were rapidly replaced by Irish immigrants, and the Whig Party was losing its influence through the dissolution of ties binding the Boston entrepreneurs. The records reveal the give and take and the tensions between the Essex Company and the City into the 1930s. In 1979, the Essex Company was absorbed by a hydroelectric company that wanted to make use of the dam.

Immediate Source of Transfer: The bulk of the Essex Company materials were acquired in September 1992 when the Essex Company offices (6 Essex Street, Lawrence, Mass.) and their contents were purchased by the Lawrence History Center (then Immigrant City Archives). The Essex Company also donated materials to Immigrant City Archives in 1989 (Accession Number 1989.008).

3. CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Scope and Content:

The materials in this collection document the Essex Company's principal activity from 1845-1987: to supply and manage the delivery of waterpower to the major manufacturers along the banks of the canals and rivers in Lawrence, Massachusetts. The collection also includes materials related to the development of the city of Lawrence, as the directors of the Essex Company were responsible for its early planning. The collection contains business, property, and engineering records.

The business records consist of correspondence files of the Cashier and Treasurer, tax records and returns, bookkeeping and payroll records, banking and insurance records, complete sets of annual vouchers, and records indicating transactions of water power

used. There are also annual reports to shareholders, and considerable records showing stock ownership and transfers.

The property records document the ownership and transfer of significant amounts of real estate in Lawrence, including the original purchases made by the Essex Company to develop the area. Contained in the collection are records, drawings, deeds (as early as 1724), deed books, and titles to land that the Essex Company bought and sold at various times in its history, including information about mortgages held by the company.

The engineering records consist of the Engineer's diaries and correspondence, drawings and plans of the dam and canals, the Merrimack, Spicket, and Shawsheen rivers, the streets and infrastructure of Lawrence, and some of the mill buildings. Included also are meteorological records from 1880 to 1987, during which time the Essex Company served as a climatological recording station for the federal government. Numerous copies of engineering-related publications authored by Essex Company engineers are also present, as are materials related to contractual hydropower work performed by the engineers in other regional locations.

Other parts of the collection include photographs owned by the Essex Company, maps and atlases (mostly of Lawrence but representing all of New England), engineer's reference materials, artifacts, and information on the 1880 Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Fund (including signed pledges by thousands of mill workers from mills throughout Lawrence), the White Fund, the Lawrence Paper Company, and the Pemberton Development Corporation.

Appraisal Information: All of the Essex Company materials acquired by the Lawrence History Center have been preserved.

Accruals: No further accruals are expected.

System of Arrangement: The original order has been maintained and arranged into the following series:

1. Business Office Correspondence
2. Bookkeeping Records
3. Vouchers
4. Banking Records
5. Tax Records
6. Cashier's Office Plans and Drawings
7. Payroll Records
8. Insurance Records
9. Legal Records
10. Stockholders' Records
11. Treasurer's Office Records
12. Water Power Records

13. Property Records
14. Mill Records
15. Pemberton Development Corporation Records
16. Engineering Records
17. Library
18. Images
19. Miscellaneous Records

4. CONDITIONS OF ACCESS AND USE

Conditions Governing Access: Unrestricted access

Conditions Governing Reproduction: Materials may be reproduced in accordance with the Lawrence History Center's policies.

Language of Material: English.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements: The collection includes some fragile and large-format materials that should be handled only with the assistance of Lawrence History Center staff.

Finding Aids: Series-level descriptions and container lists are provided below in parts 8 and 9 of this publication. Series and sub-series- level descriptions are available as individual database records in the Lawrence History Center's PastPerfect Archives catalog. Images (Series #18) are cataloged at the item level in the Lawrence History Center's PastPerfect Photos catalog.

5. ALLIED MATERIALS

Existence and Location of Originals: The collection is comprised entirely of original materials.

Existence and Location of Copies: Film negatives and copy prints of glass plate negatives were created as part of the processing. Photocopies of all the Essex Company images (Series #18) are available in binders in the Lawrence History Center's Research Room.

Related Units of Description: See also Lawrence City Records at Lawrence History Center and City of Lawrence Dept. of Public Works. See also the Essex Company records (Mss 69, 306, 319, & 490) at the American Textile History Museum in Lowell, Massachusetts.

Publication Note:

Hay, Duncan Erroll. *Building the "New City on the Merrimack": The Essex Company and Its Role in the Creation of Lawrence, Massachusetts*. Ph.D. Dissertation. 1983

Ford, Peter. "Father of the Whole Enterprise" Charles S. Storrow and the Making of Lawrence, Massachusetts 1845-1860. *Massachusetts Historical Review*. 2000.

Poirier, Clarisse. *Pemberton Mills 1852-1938: A Case Study of the Industrial and Labor History of Lawrence, Massachusetts*. Ph.D. Dissertation. 1979.

6. NOTES

Processing of the Records of the Essex Company was made possible by a 2001 grant from National Endowment for the Humanities and a 2002 grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

7. DESCRIPTION CONTROL

Archivist's Note: Records arranged and described by Michael Hearn, September 2002-November 2003. Research and additional descriptive text provided by A. Patricia Jaysane. Finding aid assembled by Catherine Reinhardt.

Rules or Conventions: Fonds and series level descriptions are based on *ISAD(G): General International Standards for Archival Description, Second Edition*. Ottawa, 2000.

8. SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Business Office Correspondence, 1845-1977

Series contains correspondence sent and received by the Essex Company's Cashier and Treasurer from 1845-1977. Arranged chronologically, with the exception of Charles Storrow's correspondence (1845-1882), which is arranged by subject.

Bookkeeping Records, 1845-1979

Series contains the bookkeeping records of the Essex Company from 1845 to 1979. Included are bound account books, trial balances, various account statements and summaries, and auditors' reports. Arranged chronologically.

Vouchers, 1845-1979

Series contains vouchers submitted to the Essex Company for payment during every fiscal year from the inception of the company (1845-1979). Each voucher is numbered sequentially. An index of vouchers is included for some years. In some cases, early vouchers are handwritten on slips of paper. Also included are vouchers on merchant or business stationery, providing evidence as to the commercial history of Greater Lawrence and Northeastern Massachusetts. The records typically contain the name of the individual or business, the item or service rendered, and the cost. Arranged chronologically.

Banking Records, 1845-1979

Series contains loose and bound records of the Essex Company's banking activity from 1845 to 1979. Included are checkbooks and stubs, cancelled checks and reconciliation statements, bankbooks or pass books, and deposit books and slips. Arranged chronologically.

Tax Records, 1909-1978

Series contains Essex Company tax returns and documentation from 1909-1978. Various types of federal, state, and municipal tax documents are present. Records include financial data about the assets and liabilities of the company, and some employee information as it relates to tax withholding. Arranged chronologically.

Cashier's Office Plans and Drawings, 1794-1983

Series contains maps and plans of land in and around Lawrence, Massachusetts. Most were produced or copied by the Essex Company. The bulk of this collection consists of the "Plan[s] of Land to Accompany Assessment Schedules," complete from 1909-1963. There are also maps of Lawrence for the years 1853, 1855, 1869, and 1873, as well as those depicting land that was originally part of Andover and Methuen. Of particular note is the "Plan of the Post Road from Newbury Bridge to Portsmouth Court House, 1800." Other plans depict Essex Company lands and some Lawrence mills. Information about the original Essex Company purchases, the canals, the Merrimack River, and the Flood of 1936 are also present. Many of these materials are reproductions of original maps and plans in Plans and Drawings, a sub-series of the Engineering Records. Arranged in original order as found in the Cashier's Office drawers.

Payroll Records, 1846-1979

Series contains Payroll Books, Time Books, and other recorded payroll information. The records contain names of employees, hours worked, and wages paid. Records after 1937 frequently contain employees' Social Security numbers. Also included are records of analyses and apportionment of payroll. Arranged chronologically.

Insurance Records, 1899-1979

Series includes Insurance Policies issued to the Essex Company between 1950 and 1979. Types of policies include health, motor vehicle, fire and life insurance. Most of the policies were issued by the American Mutual Liability Insurance Company. Also included is one folder of Blue Cross/Blue Shield Premium Reconciliation Reports from 1968-1973. Accident Reports are present from 1899 to 1977. These reports are mostly from job-related injuries to Essex Company employees, although reports about other incidents occurring on Essex Company property are also included. From 1912 to 1977 the accident reports are typically on American Mutual Liability Insurance Company forms. Accident Reports are arranged chronologically. Insurance policies are arranged chronologically by decade.

Legal Records, 1845-1941

Series contains documents related to litigation engaged in by the Essex Company, either as plaintiff or defendant. Included are transcripts, briefs, motions, opinions, and memoranda for various cases. Some of the parties with whom the Essex Company engaged in litigation include Aldophus Durant, E. P. Boardman, Benjamin, F. Edmands, C. E. Hall, James A. Abbott, Essex County Commissioners, Nathan Hazen, Aaron Sawyer, and the City of Lawrence. Arranged chronologically.

Stockholders' Records, 1845-1978

Series contains Treasurer's Reports to Stockholders (1845-1979), cancelled stock certificates and books (1846-1945), stock transfer books (1846-1947), dividend books (1854-1971), and materials listing company stockholders (c.1851-1978). Arranged chronologically.

Treasurer's Office Records, 1928-1978

Series contains records transferred from the Essex Company Treasurer's Office in Boston. Included are miscellaneous accounting records, treasurer's statements, water power records, legal papers, and Commonwealth of Massachusetts Certificates of Condition [tax records] for 1928-1973 (incomplete). Also included is a set of Essex Company estimates from 1948-1978. Arranged alphabetically by type of record.

Water Power Records, 1845-1987

Series consists of records of the Essex Company's water power management and delivery in Lawrence from 1845-1987, including Water Power Sheets, Gauge Books, Water Power Business Records, and Velocity, Quantity, and Height of Water Charts. Arranged alphabetically by customer name, then chronologically.

Property Records, 1724-1986

Series contains records related to property owned by the Essex Company. It includes records about Land Purchases, Sales, Valuations, Deeds, Land and Property Use, and Mortgages. Some materials pre-date the existence of the Essex Company. Arranged chronologically. Indexes are arranged alphabetically.

Mill Records, 1845-1950

Series contains construction records for the Atlantic, Pacific, Pemberton, and Duck Mills in Lawrence. It also includes title histories and copies of property conveyances for the mill sites owned by the Essex Company. Arranged alphabetically by mill name, then chronologically.

Pemberton Development Corporation Records, 1938-1954

Series includes records of the Pemberton Development Corporation, chartered in 1938 to purchase and develop the site of the Pemberton Mill. It was dissolved in 1955. Its treasurer, F. Morton Smith, described the Pemberton Development Corporation as "...a sub-division, although a separate corporation, of the Essex Company." Materials include a checkbook of the Bay State National Bank of Lawrence (1938-1955), a Bay State National Bank of Lawrence bank book (1938-1954), a Social Security Payroll Book (1938-1940), a Letters book (1938-1945), and a book containing the charter, the directors' minutes, and the directors' correspondence (1938-1955). Arranged by record type, then chronologically.

Engineering Records, 1845-1987

Series contains materials related to the engineering projects of the Essex Company, including the construction of the dam, canals, and mills, the development of Lawrence, and other projects relevant to its enterprises from 1845 to 1987. Sub-series include

Survey, Data, and Calculation Books, Engineer's Diaries; Meteorological Records; Engineer's Office Publications; Plans and Drawings of the Dam; Plans and Drawings of the Canals; Plans and Drawings of the Merrimack River and Other Waterways; Plans and Drawings of the Property of Lawrence and Surrounding Areas; Plans and Drawings of the Mills and Other Sites; Miscellaneous Plans and Drawings; Plans and Drawings of Bridges, Structures, and Machines; Engineer's Office Data and Business Files; Engineer's Correspondence; and Engineer's Publications.

Essex Company Library, 1854-1957

Series includes published reference materials used by Essex Company employees, including maps, atlases, US government documents, state and city government publications, court cases, waterpower titles, hydraulic tables, professional engineering journals, and product catalogs. Also included are 1850's publications about the Lawrence Machine Shop and works of local history by Robert H. Tewksbury, Essex Company Cashier from 1875-1910. Arranged by type of publication.

Images, 1880-1960

Series includes 920 photographs and 134 glass plate negatives documenting the construction of, and repairs or damage to structures built by the Essex Company for mill power infrastructure and general improvements in the City of Lawrence. There are also a significant number of views of the river and various parts of the city. The images were produced between the 1880s and the 1950s, although there is one photograph of the building of the Great Stone Dam circa 1846. The majority of the photographs were taken between approximately 1890 and 1910. A local photographer, James McEvoy, probably working under contract for the Essex Company, produced a number of the images from this period. Arranged by subject. Images are also accessible via the Lawrence History Center's PastPerfect Photos catalog.

Miscellaneous Records, 1845-1979

Series includes the following distinct groups of records, each of minor importance or tangentially related to the Essex Company's activities: Order Books (1901-1914), Forms and Stationery (1845-1979), Artifacts (1845-1979), Scrapbook and Newspaper Collection (1846-1969), Robert Tewksbury's Lawrence Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Fund Records, the Essex Company Treasurer's White Fund Records (1849-1969), Duncan McKillop's Masonic Records(1935-1979), James E. Bagley, Jr.'s Legal Files (1957-1960), and the Lawrence Paper Company Records (1845-1864).

9. CONTAINER LIST