

McLean County Museum of History

**Union Asbestos and Rubber Company (UNARCO)
Collection**

Processed by Museum intern
Kenny Tymick
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VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 Box
COLLECTION DATES:	1943-1997
RESTRICTIONS:	None
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ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives

Historical Sketch

In 1950, Chicago-based Union Asbestos & Rubber Company (UNARCO) established a manufacturing plant on Bloomington's west side, on the grounds of the former Chicago & Alton Railroad Shops. The plant initially employed some 200 workers, with about 2,000 local employees on the UNARCO payroll over the plant's years of operation (1950-1982). The Bloomington plant made asbestos blankets and coverings.

There were three UNARCO subsidiaries in Bloomington: ChemBest (later sold to Owens-Corning Fiberglass); the Stainless Steel Sink Division of the Federal Enameling and Stamping Company; and the Fibrous Products Division. Owens-Corning leased the Bloomington plant in 1970 and continued operations on the city's west side until 1982.

Beginning in 1979, numerous lawsuits were filed by former UNARCO employees over asbestos exposure (with Owens-Corning named in many of the suits). Bloomington attorney James Walker, who represented local asbestos workers in the 1970s and 1980s, recorded the names of more than 100 UNARCO employees who died of asbestosis.

Scope and Content

This collection consists primarily of local newspaper clippings, 1948-1997, and employee newsletters, 1950-1954. Also included are photographs of the Bloomington plant; product information; an asbestos study from 1953; and World War II production awards and programs.

Box and Folder Inventory

Folder 1: Newspaper Articles (*Pantagraph* unless noted)

- 1.1 "Workers Ready Old GM&O Shop For Ohio Firm," June 19, 1948.
- 1.2 "Asbestos Firm Leases Biggest GM&O Building," November 13, 1950.
- 1.3 "Firm Leases Part of Roundhouse," May 25, 1954.
- 1.4 "Oven Explosion Brings Firemen To Asbestos Co.," October 26, 1959.
- 1.5 "Union Asbestos Makes 5,000 Different Items," January 29, 1963. Industrial Program Edition.
- 1.6 "UNARCO Plant Strike In 2nd Day—Talks Start," January 21, 1969.
- 1.7 "Pickets Disrupt Work At Two Firms In City, January 22, 1969.
- 1.8 "UNARCO Plant Struck, February 1, 1970.
- 1.9 "No Progress At UNARCO," February 10, 1970.
- 1.10 "Strike Continues for 180 at UNARCO," February 18, 1970.
- 1.11 "UNARCO Workers End Strike," February 21, 1970.
- 1.12 "UNARCO Sink Division To Move," July 29, 1970.
- 1.13 "Asbestos suit denial of benefits upheld," April 24, 1982.
- 1.14 "British crew in area to do asbestosis film," June 12, 1982.
- 1.15 "Ruling goes against asbestos workers," July 1, 1982.
- 1.16 "Asbestos maker files for bankruptcy," August 27, 1982.
- 1.17 "Estates settle asbestos suits," November 22, 1985.
- 1.18 "\$385,000 settlement awarded to asbestos worker's estate," June 24, 1989.
- 1.19 "Asbestos victims get \$1.89 million award," December 22, 1989.
- 1.20 "\$3.8 million won by cancer victims," November 22, 1995.
- 1.21 "Clearing the dust," December 21, 1997.

Folder 2: Photos –Bloomington Plant

- 2.1 Seventeen (17) photographs relating to the Union Asbestos and Rubber plant in Bloomington.

Folder 3: Employee Information

- 3.1 UNARCO Industries Plant Managers as compiled by Museum volunteer Milan Jackson, 1953 to present
- 3.2 List of members of the UNARCO 25 Year Club, October 18, 1956 (photograph of the 25 Year Club dinner attached).

3.3 UNARCO Bowling League photograph, 1945-46.

Folder 4: WWII Awards (Cicero, IL plant)

- 4.1 The Army-Navy Production Award for Excellence in War Production certificate, awarded to George Novak, February 22, 1943.
- 4.2 Award Presentation program, February 22, 1943.
- 4.3 Award Presentation program August 23, 1944.
- 4.4 Two copies of the February 22, 1943 Award Presentation program enclosed in envelopes.

Folder 5: Asbestosis Incidence Study – 12/8/1953

- 5.1 An Asbestosis Incidence study report, December 8, 1953.

Folder 6: Asbestos Booklet – February 1955

- 6.1 “Asbestos” booklet from February 1955.

Folder 7: Asbestos Textile Institute Meeting, December 7-8, 1955

- 7.1 “Asbestos Textile Institute” general meeting booklet, December 7-8, 1955.

Folder 8: Air Hygiene Committee

- 8.1 Meeting minutes for the Air Hygiene Committee, undated.
- 8.2 Meeting information and letters for the Air Hygiene Committee, May-September 1955.

Folder 9: Dusts and Fumes in Industry Study

- 9.1 “Dusts and Fumes in Industry,” booklet published by Mine Safety Appliances Company, Braddock, Thomas and Meade Streets, Pittsburgh, PA.

Folder 10: UNARCO Product Information

- 10.1 Union Asbestos & Rubber Company informational booklet with information on facilities, services, and products.
- 10.2 Union Asbestos & Rubber Company Bulletin no. 753.
- 10.3 Union Asbestos & Rubber Company informational booklet concerning Unibestos.
- 10.4 Union Asbestos & Rubber Company informational booklet concerning Espro bran steel tubing, 1962.
- 10.5 Union Asbestos & Rubber Company informational booklet concerning heating and cooling products.
- 10.6 Envelope for Union Asbestos & Rubber Company, 1821 South 54th Avenue, Cicero Illinois.

Folder 11: UNARCO Facts – 1950

- 11.1 vol.1, no. 3, May 1950. Issue devoted exclusively to the opening of the McGregor, Texas Union Asbestos & Rubber Company plant.

Folder 12: UNARCO Facts – 1952

- 12.1 vol. 3, no. 1, January 1952.
12.2 March 1952 (ages 3-6 only)
12.3 vol. 3, no. 4, April 1952 (2 copies).
12.4 vol. 3, no. 6, June 1952.
12.5 vol. 3, no. 8, August 1952.
12.6 vol. 3, no. 8, August 1952 (photocopy).
12.7 vol. 3, no. 12, December 1952

Folder 13: UNARCO Facts – 1953

- 13.1 vol. 4, no. 1, January 1953.
13.2 vol. 4, no. 2, February 1953.
13.3 vol. 4, no. 3, March 1953. 35th Anniversary, 1918-1953
13.4 Undated “UNARCO Facts,” 1 page providing brief facility descriptions and pictures of departmental production.
13.5 vol. 4, no. 3, March 1953 (photocopy).
13.6 vol. 4, no. 4, April 1953.
13.7 vol. 4, no. 5, May 1953.
13.8 vol. 4, no. 6, June 1953.
13.9 vol. 4, no. 8, August 1953.
13.10 vol. 4, no. 9, September 1953.
13.11 vol. 4, no. 10, October 1953.
13.12 vol. 4, no. 11, November 1953 (2 copies).
13.13 vol. 4, no. 12, December 1953.

Folder 14: UNARCO Facts – 1954

- 14.1 vol. 5, no. 1, January 1954.
14.2 vol. 5, no. 1, February 1954.
14.3 vol. 5, no.3, March 1954.

Folder 15: Miscellaneous

- 15.1 City Directory Search for Union Asbestos and Unarco Industries as compiled by Museum library volunteer Milan Jackson, 1957-1985.
15.2 Form letter from Grunda Law Offices, LLP in Springfield about possible asbestos claims from anyone who worked in selected industries, October 14, 2019.