

Waterfront Oral History Project records, 1926-2006

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Waterfront Oral History Project
Title	Waterfront Oral History Project records
Dates	1926-2006 (inclusive) 1926 2006 2006 (bulk) 2006 2006
Quantity	3 linear feet
Collection Number	XOE_CPNWS0283waterfront (collection)
Summary	This collection comprises oral history interviews, transcripts and related materials generated through the 2006 Waterfront Oral History Project in Bellingham, Washington. Students at Western Washington University interviewed eighteen current and former employees of the Georgia-Pacific Corporation's pulp mill on Bellingham's industrial waterfront. Interviewees discuss plant operations and topics including research into chemical byproducts and their uses in other industries, relations between the GP corporation, mill employees, and the community (including Western Washington University), as well as labor and union activity. The collection includes audio-visual footage recorded by David Albright, portions of which were incorporated into his 2006 documentary "Smells Like Money: The Story of Bellingham's Georgia-Pacific Plant".
Repository	Western Washington University, Center for Pacific Northwest Studies Goltz-Murray Archives Building 808 25th St. Bellingham, WA 98225 Telephone: 360-650-7534 cpnws@wwu.edu
Access Restrictions	Some access restrictions apply. Contact repository for details.
Languages	English.

Historical Note

The Waterfront Oral History Project was a collaborative effort between Western Washington University's History Department and the Center for Pacific Northwest Studies. In 2006, students in Professor Chris Friday's History 400 class generated oral histories from interviews with eighteen current and former employees of the Georgia-Pacific Corporation pulp mill in Bellingham, Washington.

In 1925, Washington state businessman and mill owner Ossian Anderson acquired the mill site on Bellingham's downtown waterfront from the Bellingham Bay Improvement Company. Pulp mill operation

began the following year. Originally part of the Puget Sound Pulp & Timber Company, the mill was acquired by GP in 1963.

At its peak the mill employed hundreds of Bellingham locals and produced hundreds of million of dollars in revenue. The mill was also at the forefront of pulp-making technology, and led the international pulping industry in research and innovation throughout most of the twentieth century.*

During the 1970s and 1980s, the mill faced significant local pressure to both upgrade its environmental safety standards and shut down environmentally harmful operations. A 1999 explosion at the steam plant raised new concerns about the safety of both employees at the mill and the surrounding community. Increasing pressure regarding environmental and industrial safety, combined with a major energy crisis in 2001 led GP to shut down its Bellingham operations. Most of the major pulp mill operations were phased out by 2001, while production at the tissue mill, the site's final active operation, was finally terminated in December 2007. At that time GP donated most of the waterfront property to the Port of Bellingham.

* Source: "Smells Like Money: The Story of Bellingham's Georgia Pacific Plant," documentary by David Albright in conjunction with Western Washington University and the Northwest Film School.

Content Description

The Waterfront Oral History Project records consist of interviews and related materials generated through the Waterfront Oral History Project at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington. Records date from 1926 up to the completion of the project in 2006. The oral histories describe plant operations and equipment, job descriptions, research projects, technological innovations within the pulping industry, as well as a wide variety of mill operations. The interviews also describe relations between GP management, its employees, and the union (Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers), as well as relations between the Bellingham mill, the surrounding community, and Western Washington University. Original copies of the interviews are available in either audio or audio-visual formats.

Interview files are from 2006 and contain paper transcripts, biographical information sheets, and summaries of interviews conducted between students and former employees of the Georgia-Pacific Corporation's Bellingham pulp mill. Student writings are comprised of primarily journals and essays generated by the students during and resulting from the 2006 interview process. Reference materials date from around 1926 to 2006. They include articles and other publications containing background information about the Bellingham pulp mill and its employees. Reference materials also contain a copy of Western Washington University student David Albright's award-winning documentary "Smells Like Money: The Story of Bellingham's Georgia-Pacific Plant."

This collection is relevant for anyone interested in learning more about Bellingham's history, especially regarding industry on the waterfront, environmental activism in Bellingham and at Western Washington University, and labor practices and union activity in the pulping industry during the second half of the twentieth century.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

Some use restrictions apply. Contact repository for details.

Preferred Citation

Waterfront Oral History Project records, Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, Heritage Resources, Western Washington University, Bellingham WA 98225-9123.

Administrative Information

Arrangement

The collection is organized in accordance with the following series arrangement:

- Series I. Interview Files, 2006
- Series II. Audio Recordings, 2006
- Series III. Audio-Visual Recordings, 2006
- Series IV. Student Writings, 2006
- Series V. Reference materials, circa 1926-2006

Custodial History

The Waterfront Oral History Project records were generated in 2006 from a collaborative project between the History Department and the Center for Pacific Northwest Studies at Western Washington University.

Acquisition Information

The records were acquired in 2007 from Western Washington University's History Department.

Processing Note

Rozlind Koester processed the collection in 2008. Transcriptions of interviews were created by students involved with Waterfront Oral History Project, as well as staff and volunteers at the Center for Pacific Northwest Studies. Major revisions to the transcripts were also made by CPNWS staff and volunteers. Audio recordings originally in DVF formats were converted to WAV (preservation) and mp3 (access) copies. Duplicate materials were removed from the collection.

Bibliography

Albright, David. *"Smells Like Money: The Story of Bellingham's Georgia Pacific Plant."* Bellingham, WA: Western Washington University, 2006.

Related Materials

The Georgia-Pacific Corporation records, the Association of Pulp and Paper Workers records and the Pulp Friction interviews contain material related to the Waterfront Oral History Project records. The collections are housed at the Center for Pacific Northwest Studies.

Detailed Description of the Collection

The following section contains a detailed listing of the materials in the collection.

Series I: Interview Files, 2006

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
1/1	<p>Andersen, John Interviewer: Tracy Dihle Transcript: Online and in-house [view] Description: Mr. Andersen briefly describes his personal background which led him to a career at GP's pulp mill in Bellingham, WA. He held various jobs at the mill like process engineer, production supervisor, environmental manager, tissue mill technical services manager, and manager of alcohol and lignin operations. Mr. Anderson briefly describes the busy face of Bellingham's waterfront when he first arrived in the city in 1977. He suggests that GP became increasingly concerned with environmental issues in the 1970s, and then discusses how the company addressed those issues. He describes the research into other uses for the chemical byproducts of the pulping process that took place at the mill. Mr. Andersen suggests that GP led the forest products industry in the area of mill safety. He talks about an energy crisis in 2001, which he believes led to the eventual closure of the pulp mill. He discusses the community's changing attitude toward the Bellingham mill and also speculates about the future of Bellingham's waterfront.</p>	2006 May 4
1/2	<p>Blackmore, Ken Interviewer: David Lewis Transcript: Online and in-house [view] Description: Mr. Blackmore talks about growing up in Coventry, England during World War II, and then moving to Bellingham, WA to work at the GP mill. He describes the pulping process, substances such as alpha cellulose, as well as chemical byproducts like thixotropic, Quebracho, and Multi KEMIN. Mr. Blackmore was involved in research and development, through which he and his colleagues discovered ways of using those byproducts in other industries like oil drilling, coal mining, cement production, and agriculture. While employed at GP, he was awarded a Shibley Award for outstanding contribution to science. He talks about safety issues associated with mill work, noting a personal experience involving a lab explosion. He talks briefly about strikes at the pulp mill, also describing the nature of relationships between mill employees and individuals throughout the community.</p>	2006 March 1

Container(s)	Description	Dates
	Mr. Blackmore concludes by speculating about the future of Bellingham's waterfront.	
1/3	<p>Brooks, Frank Interviewer: Allison Ampe Transcript: Online and in-house[view] Description: Mr. Brooks served in the Navy before becoming employed as a safety engineer at GP's Bellingham mill. He describes the Bellingham waterfront during the 1960s, and discusses a changing sense of community as the city grew and modernized. He talks about GP's taking over the Puget Sound Pulp and Timber Co. mill site, suggesting that there was a loss in closeness between individuals within the company at that time. Mr. Brooks describes the responsibilities associated with his position, as well as the various processes of the plant and the attitudes of the community regarding the pollution caused by those processes. Mr. Brooks suggests that GP gave a great deal back to the community throughout the mill's existence. He also talks briefly about how world events such as overseas trade freezes affected operations at the plant.</p>	2006 April 18
1/4	<p>Brown, Frank Interviewer: Allison Ampe Transcript: Online and in-house[view] Description: Mr. Brown briefly describes his family background and education prior to employment as an octave setter/torch welder at GP's Bellingham pulp mill. He describes growing up in Bellingham and the nature of the waterfront during the first half of the twentieth century. He discusses attitudes towards mill work during the early days of the plant, noting that GP employees held a strict loyalty for the company and closeness with their fellow mill workers. He describes a typical day for workers in various operations throughout the plant, pointing out the many dangers inherent in that work. Mr. Brown notes that many GP employees entered the service during World War II, suggesting that the importance of paper products to the war effort meant that many women had opportunities to fill those positions. He talks briefly about how environmental legislation affected his job, and also discusses his involvement with the union and its rising influence on factory work. Mr. Brown talks about the community's changing perception towards the plant, expressing his hopes for future generations' attitudes towards the plant. He concludes by describing what he would like to see happen to the waterfront in the future.</p>	2006 April 25
1/5	<p>Darby, Orman Interviewer: Allison Ampe Transcript: Online and in-house[view]</p>	2006 May 9

Container(s)	Description	Dates
	<p>Description: Mr. Darby briefly gives his background including religious upbringing, education, and work history prior to becoming the public relations manager at the GP mill. He describes the face of the Bellingham waterfront in the 1970s, noting the rapid expansion of the town in the following few decades, as well as the community's changing feelings towards the mill during that time. Mr. Darby talks about some of the most significant developments at the mill including the creation and dissolution of the various plants and the workers' strike of 1978-1979. He talks about the various uses for chemical byproducts of the pulping process, which revolutionized many industries around the world. Mr. Darby discusses the impact of World War II and the importance of the mill to the war effort. He also talks about how environmental legislation affected operations at the mill. He speculates about the cause and effect relationships that resulted in the creation and termination of industries throughout the Pacific Northwest. Mr. Darby concludes with his thoughts about the future of the waterfront.</p>	
1/6	<p>Harvey, Larry Interviewer: Scott Ranney, David Albright Transcript: Online and in-house[view] Description: Mr. Harvey talks about his place of birth, education, and family background, and also describes the Bellingham waterfront during the 1950s. He talks about a typical day of work as a slipman and pipefitter in the GP pulp mill. He also describes some of the byproducts created during the pulping process that were useful in other industries. He talks extensively about his involvement with the union and its influence on jobs at the mill. He also discusses positive aspects of working at the plant including the camaraderie shared among employees. Mr. Harvey talks about the presence of mercury in chlorine plant operations, pointing out the influence of environmentalist groups and the community's changing perception of the mill. He describes some of the most important events in the mill's history including the workers' strikes and the mill's being taken over by GP in the 1960s. He talks about what he would like future generations to remember about the Bellingham plant, and his thoughts regarding the future of the waterfront and the mill site.</p>	2006 May 9
1/7	<p>Irwin, Homer Interviewer: Kenneth McAllister Transcript: Available at repository.</p>	2006 March 13
1/8	<p>Locker, Hugh Interviewer: Sarah Schwartz Transcript: Online and in-house[view]</p>	2006 May 3

Container(s)	Description	Dates
	<p>Description: Mr. Locker talks about where and when he was born, his family life and religious upbringing, and his educational background through which he became a chemist. He describes the busy face of Bellingham's waterfront and the nature of the city during the 1960s. He talks about purchasing a house in Whatcom County in the 1960s, and describes what life was like for him and his wife as they tried to raise a family in the area. Throughout the interview, Mr. Locker provides a great amount of detail regarding his work in research and as a shift foreman. He also describes the pulping process itself, and the various byproducts of the pulping process and their uses in other industries. He notes that the standards for cleanliness and safety at the mill became more stringent, suggesting that GP remained at the forefront of environmental consciousness despite attitudes to the contrary from many within the community. He describes the changing nature of relationships among mill employees that resulted from the creation of the union, while also sharing his fondest memories from working at the pulp mill.</p>	
1/9	<p>Loney, Jarve and Bob Elsner Interviewer: Kenneth McAllister Transcript: Online and in-house [view] Description: Mr. Loney begins the interview and Mr. Elsner joins him shortly thereafter. Mr. Loney briefly discusses growing up in Ferndale, his early education, and the various jobs he held before starting work at the GP pulp mill. At the plant, Mr. Loney initially worked in the paperboard mill and Mr. Elsner in the bleach plant. The two men describe the creation of the chlorine plant where they both ended up working. They talk about plant equipment including the hydropulper and mercury trap/sump pump, and also the various substances produced during the pulping process such as phosphoric and sulfuric acids. The two men talk about the union and worker strikes that occurred during the 1970s, also listing what was negotiated into the contracts as a result of those strikes. Mr. Loney and Mr. Elsner discuss the dynamics between individuals in different roles at the mill. They also discuss the hazards associated with mill work, noting that the working environment became safer over time as regulations tightened and certain activities were terminated.</p>	2006 May 17
1/10	<p>Magnusson, Norval Interviewer: Samantha Cross Transcript: Online and in-house [view] Description: Mr. Magnusson describes his background including his birthplace, education, experiences during World War II, and the circumstances that brought him to Bellingham.</p>	2006 February 20

Container(s)	Description	Dates
	<p>He describes his first position as process engineer at GP, which culminated in his becoming mill manager. He describes the nature of pulp production and the development of the bleach plant. He talks about technological innovations and research such as pneumatic instrumentation that improved efficiency and/or product quality. He also describes plant equipment such as spray dryers and Centra cleaners. Mr. Magnusson describes the leadership of Erik Ekholm and Ossian Anderson, both of whom were important figures at the plant. He discusses worker attitudes and labor disputes such as the argument over the saw filer/knife grinder position. He also gives his personal perspective on environmental issues like mercury emissions. Mr. Magnusson describes the relationship of the pulp plant with Western Washington University and the media, including coverage by <i>60 Minutes</i>. He talks about the plant's changing role in the community, concluding with his opinion about the future of the waterfront and the economic base of the county.</p>	
1/11	<p>McCandless, Jim Interviewer: Kimberly Jacobsen Transcript: In-house Description: Mr. McCandless describes growing up in Ireland, his military career with the Irish Army and British Navy, and the process of immigrating to Bellingham. He explains the paper-making process, and the differences between pulp mill workers and paper mill workers. He describes the health problems, safety issues and pollution associated with substances that were present at the plant such as sodium bichromate and DDT. Mr. McCandless discusses GP's acquisition of the Puget Sound Pulp and Timber Co. and the changing dynamics of the company resulting from that merger. At one point during his career, Mr. McCandless was president of the Association of Western Pulp & Paper Workers. He talks about traveling up and down the west coast teaching employees, including groups of African-American and Latino individuals, about the benefits of the union. He also talks the pulp mill strikes of the 1970s, and the subsequent emergence of insurance policies and health benefits for employees, as well as equal rights for female workers in industrial jobs. Mr. McCandless discusses the different groups of immigrants that came to Bellingham at the time, also mentioning the discrimination he encountered as an Irish immigrant. He concludes with his thoughts about the future of the waterfront.</p>	2006 May 8
1/12	<p>Neal, John Alexander Interviewer: Julie Jaballas Transcript: Online and in-house [view]</p>	2006 May 10

Container(s)	Description	Dates
	<p>Description: Mr. Neal discusses his experience working for American Viscose in Pennsylvania before becoming employed with the Georgia-Pacific Corporation. He talks about attending college at Eastern Washington State College, and his later experiences doing lab work for the army. Mr. Neal then worked as byproducts research chemist and then product development director at GP's Bellingham pulp mill. He describes many of the substances like lingo-sulfonates that were produced during the pulping process. Many of them were then converted into useful byproducts such as micronutrient fertilizers, Q-broxin, and dye dispersants. Mr. Neal discusses the ways that Bellingham has changed since the 1970s. He discusses how World War II triggered a boom in chemical research, noting that Puget Sound Pulp and Timber played a critical role in that effort. Mr. Neal discusses environmental and pollution issues, specifically mercury emissions and the mill's treatment lagoon.</p>	
1/13	<p>Oehler, Don Interviewer: Kelsey Dosen Transcript: Online and in-house[view] Description: Mr. Oehler describes his background growing up in Portland, Oregon, and Grand Forks, North Dakota. At the Bellingham mill, he worked as a project engineer for the technical group, start-up engineer for the chlorine plant, and then paperboard operation manager. He talks in detail about the pulping process, explaining how byproducts like multi-tracin could be used in other industries. He also points out the company's great financial contribution to Bellingham, but suggests that the community's attitude toward the mill changed over time as a result of industrial pollution and new environmental legislation. Mr. Oehler describes union activity, labor negotiations, and strikes at the mill. He talks about the global market today, pointing out how technology changed all industry throughout the world. He expresses his feelings regarding the mill's closure, his thoughts about the potential for young people to find meaningful employment in this area, and his hopes for the future of Bellingham's waterfront.</p>	2006 May 4
1/14	<p>Parker, Archie Interviewer: David Albright Transcript: Online and in-house[view] Description: Mr. Parker talks about the various positions he held at GP's Bellingham pulp mill, including that of floor boy, converter, supervisor, and then working in maintenance and the auto shop. He discusses the workers' strike, describing what he did to occupy his time while not working. He talks about an explosion in the steam plant and a power crisis, both of which lead to increased safety and environmental regulations. He</p>	2006

Container(s)	Description	Dates
	<p>speculates about fluctuations in the worldwide pulp market that, combined with other economic factors, he believes led to the eventual closure of the mill. He talks about the changing attitudes of the community towards the mill, and concludes by praising GP for giving him a good life in Bellingham.</p>	
1/15	<p>Perry, Richard Interviewer: Samantha Cross, Karlene Kolesnikov, David Lewis, Kenneth McAllister Transcript: Online and in-house[view] Description: This interview took place at the Georgia-Pacific mill site on Bellingham's waterfront. Mr. Perry gave the interviewers a tour of the mill as it was being dismantled, pointing out and describing the buildings, equipment and machinery. He begins the interview by talking about his background, noting that he is a life-long Bellingham resident. He discusses the history of the mill and describes the milling and papermaking processes in great detail, from logging the trees to producing rolls of toilet paper. Mr. Perry talks about the lignin research that was done at the mill through which a number of byproducts were created and used in other industries throughout the world. He discusses economic issues associated with both the pulping and byproducts side of the mill's operations, as well as the international pulping industry as a whole. He talks about the changing relationship between the mill, Western Washington University, and the community of Bellingham as a result of growing environmental concerns in the 1970s, describing in detail some of the specific issues that were addressed during those times.</p>	2006 February 9
2/1	<p>Runestrand, Art Interviewer: David Albright Transcript: Online and in-house[view] Description: Mr. Runestrand began working at the pulp mill as a training director and then moved to assistant industrial management director where his major concern was with the health and safety of mill employees. He points out that, early on, relationships among employees at the mill were very good. He then discusses the labor strike of the 1970s, explaining how the mill continued to operate by using salaried staff and supervisors to cover empty shifts. He talks about some the repercussions of being one of the employees who stayed on, including having tacks and nails strewn across his driveway, finding his house covered in graffiti, and even receiving a death threat. He also mentions that there were attempts to sabotage operations at the mill but they were always thwarted by security. Mr. Runestrand talks about creating an alcoholism recovery program at the mill that provided support to employees. He</p>	2006

Container(s)	Description	Dates
	also describes an educational program that helped employees complete their high school diplomas. He speculates about causes for the mill's closure while also commenting on the community's changing attitudes towards the company. He concludes with optimistic remarks regarding the future of Bellingham's waterfront.	
2/2	Zangari, Don; Zangardi, Don and Jim Thompson Interviewer: Sharon Stultz Transcript: Restricted - please see repository for details.	2006 May 9

Series II: Audio Recordings, 2006

Access format: mp3 on CD unless otherwise noted.

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
2/3	Andersen, John	2006 May 4
2/4	Blackmore, Ken	2006 March 1
2/5	Brooks, Frank	2006 April 18
2/6	Brown, Frank	2006 April 25
2/7	Darby, Orman	2006 March 1
2/8	Harvey, Larry	2006 May 9
2/9	Irwin, Homer	2006 September 28
2/10	Locker, Hugh	2006 May 3
2/11	Loney, Jarve and Bob Elsner	2006 September 28
2/12	Magnusson, Norval	2006 February 20
2/13	McCandless, Jim	2006 May 8

Container(s)	Description	Dates
2/14	Neal, John Alexander	2006 May 10
2/15	Parker, Archie	2006
3/1	Perry, Richard	2006 February 9
3/2	Runestrand, Art	2006
3/3	Zangari, Don; Zangari, Don and Jim Thompson Restricted - please see repository for details.	2006 June 14

Series III: Audio-Visual Recordings, 2006

Access format: MiniDV unless otherwise noted.

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
3/4	Darby, Orman	undated
3/5	Harvey, Larry	2006 May 9
3/6	Magnusson, Norval	2006 February 20
3/7	Parker, Archie Access format: DVD	2006
4/1	Perry, Richard	2006 February 9
4/2	Runestrand, Art Access format: DVD	2006

Series IV: Student Writings, 2006

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
4/3	Petruzzi, Thomas - essay: "Ossian Anderson and the Founding of Puget Sound Pulp & Timber in Bellingham, Washington"	2006 June 7

Container(s)	Description	Dates
4/4-4/5	Student journals	2006

Series V: Reference Materials, 1926-2000

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
4/6	Articles and clippings	circa 1930-2000
4/7	Articles and clippings	circa 1926-1991
Oversize Folder		
OV 1	Articles and clippings	circa 1930s
Box/Folder		
4/8	Albright, David - documentary: "Smells Like Money: The Story of Bellingham's Georgia Pacific Plant" (44 minutes)	2006

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Bleaching--Washington (State)--Bellingham--By-products--History--Sources.
 Community and college--Washington (State)--Bellingham--History--Sources.
 Environmentalism--Washington (State)--Bellingham--History--Sources.
 Industrial relations--Washington (State)--Bellingham--History--Sources.
 Labor disputes--Washington (State)--Bellingham--History--Sources.
 Labor unions--Washington (State)--Bellingham--History--Sources.
 Lumber trade--Washington (State)--Bellingham--History--Sources.
 Paper industry workers--Washington (State)--Bellingham--History--Sources.
 Paper industry--Washington (State)--Bellingham--Technological innovations--History--Sources.
 Paper mills--Washington (State)--Bellingham--History--Sources.
 Pulp mills--Washington (State)--Bellingham--By-products--History--Sources.
 Pulp mills--Washington (State)--Bellingham--Strikes and lockouts--History--Sources.
 Waterfronts--Washington (State)--Bellingham Bay--History--Sources.
 Wood-pulp industry--Washington (State)--Bellingham--Environmental aspects--History--Sources.

Corporate Names :

Georgia-Pacific Corporation--Bellingham Division.
 Western Washington University--Dept. of History.

Geographical Names :

Bellingham (Wash.)--Industries--History--Sources.

Titles within the Collection :

Albright, David. "Smells Like Money: The Story of Bellingham's Georgia Pacific Plant." Bellingham, WA: Western Washington University, 2006.

Rozlind Koester
2008