

# Uniroyal, Inc. Records, 1917 -1990

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**Summary Information Title:** Uniroyal, Inc. Records

**Inclusive Dates:** 1917-1990

**Creator:** Uniroyal, Inc. (Eau Claire, Wis.)

**Call Number:** Eau Claire Mss CB

**Quantity:** 33.2 c.f. (80 archives boxes and 3 flat boxes)

**Repository:**

Housed at the Area Research Center, William D. McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire; owned by the Wisconsin Historical Society, Library-Archives Division

**Archival Locations:** UW-Eau Claire McIntyre Library / Eau Claire Area Research Ctr.

**Abstract:**

Records of a rubber tire manufacturing plant in Eau Claire, Wis. documenting the plant's general operations and expansion from its founding in 1917 as the Gillette Safety Tire Company, to its reincarnation as an ammunition factory during World War II, to the plant closing in 1991. The bulk of the records consist of labor contract negotiation and grievance case files, minutes, memoranda, correspondence, reports, photographs, blueprints, and films. The collection documents collective bargaining and labor relations with Local 19 of the United Rubber Workers of America, tire production, reconversion of the plant from ordnance to synthetic rubber production, and modernization after World War II. Additional newsletters, notices, membership lists, by-laws, correspondence, and photographs from 1948 to 1990 document the fundraising, social, and charitable activities of the Royaleers Club, an organization for female salaried employees. Certain basic documentation of the Eau Claire plant's operation is missing; there are no annual reports, personnel files, advertising, or sales department records in the collection.

**Language:** English

## Biography/History

The forerunner of Uniroyal, Inc.'s Eau Claire Plant was the Gillette Safety Tire Company, founded in Eau Claire in 1916 by Raymond B. Gillette of Michigan, an inventor of a safety shoe for tires. S.P. Woodard of the Car Spring Rubber Company served as the company's first president; Gillette, first vice president and general manager. The plant engineer was R.W. Hutchens. Approximately 250 people were employed at the plant which produced 200 rubber tires and 200 inner tubes per day.

On May 23, 1917, the company produced its first experimental tire. After one year the plant was expanded to a capacity of 500 tires and 500 tubes per day, and its name was changed to Gillette Tire Company. Gillette then purchased the Chippewa Valley Rubber Company, a manufacturer of rubber fabric, raincoats, and hospital sheeting also located in Eau Claire. The addition of a machine shop permitted the company to add to its line the manufacture of rubber manufacturing equipment, such as tire molds and tire building machines, other mechanical goods, and consumer items such as rubber heels, raincoats, horse collars, and picnic coolers. It quickly became the largest employer in the Eau Claire area.

During the early 1920s, the Gillette Tire Company experienced a period of financial difficulty and went into receivership. This led to its reorganization in 1925 as a Wisconsin company under new management. (Gillette was originally incorporated in the state of Delaware.) F.C. Herman of Springfield, Missouri became the new president and R.W. Hutchens, former plant engineer, became vice president and factory manager. Howard O.

Hutchins, brother of R.W. Hutchens and a foreman in the Calendar Department, was placed in charge of bicycle tire manufacture. Edward Hutchens, their father, had been a member of the company's board of directors since 1918. Under this new management, production concentrated on automobile, truck, and bicycle tires, inner tubes, and rubber-making machinery. The manufacture of waterproof fabrics and mechanical goods was discontinued. In 1926, R.W. Hutchens succeeded Herman as president and general manager, and H.O. Hutchens acquired his brother's position as factory manager. Under Hutchen's leadership the Gillette company became one of the largest producers of bicycle tires in the country.

During the late 1920s, Gillette continued to increase its output, which peaked at 19,000 tires and 14,000 inner tubes daily, with 1,600 workers. The company also experimented with new manufacturing methods, such as water cure processing for inner tubes, and products, such as pneumatic tractor tires. Gillette made significant contributions to the rubber industry in these and other technical areas.

In 1931, United States Rubber Company purchased a substantial interest in Gillette as part of an effort to obtain a greater share of the automobile tire market. U.S. Rubber, formed in 1892 by Charles R. Flint, ranked third among the nation's "Big Four" rubber manufacturers. In 1930 U.S. Rubber had signed a contract to supply 90 percent of the tires sold by Montgomery Ward under its own brand name and the Gillette factory was strategically placed to service Ward's needs in the Midwest. U.S. Rubber was also a major supplier of tires to automobile manufacturers. After 1931, it was said to be the world's largest supplier of original equipment tires by virtue of its contracts with the General Motors Corporation.

U.S. Rubber did not acquire controlling interest in Gillette until 1940. Even then, the plant retained the Gillette name and the "bear for wear trademark" for another decade, and continued to turn out Gillette brand products along with Ward, Atlas, and U.S. Rubber's brand, U.S. Royal. After the formal takeover, U.S. Rubber implemented a program to expand and modernize the Eau Claire factory. Employment was increased to 2,600 workers and tire production capacity restored to pre-depression levels of 9,000 to 11,000 units per day. Expansion was also motivated in part by the U.S. military's increasing demand for airplane and truck tires.

Workers at the Eau Claire Plant organized their first labor union in 1919, Rubber Workers Union #16454, with 285 members. However, the union failed to survive its first confrontation with management over the issues of wages and ten to fourteen-hour shifts then the norm for the industry. It was not until New Deal legislation gave workers the right to organize and bargain collectively that Gillette employees attempted to form another union. In 1933, they organized Federal Labor Union #18684 and two years later, when the United Rubber Workers of America (CIO) was formed, the Eau Claire union became Local #19. (Following a change in organizational name at the national level, Local #19 was known after 1945 as the United Rubber, Cork, Linoleum and Plastic Workers of America.) Formal recognition of Local 19 as the collective bargaining agent for wage employees was achieved in 1937 and workers obtained their first written contract in 1938. At this point, Gillette was the largest industrial employer in the Eau Claire area and among the top five in the state of Wisconsin. Employees included approximately 275 women, primarily as builders of bicycle tires. The Eau Claire Plant was subject to numerous job actions, including strikes in 1950, 1951, 1955, 1959 and 1967. In 1959 the company sought an injunction against mass picketers; and in 1967, office employees and production workers, numbering 2,275, joined 50,000 workers in a nationwide strike against the rubber industry over wages and benefits. Lasting 97 days, it was the longest strike in the industry at that time.

During World War II, when crude rubber supplies dwindled and civilian uses of rubber restricted, tire and tube manufacturing at the Eau Claire plant was sharply curtailed. With America's official entry into the war, the government enacted a freeze on the sale of all rubber goods for civilian purposes. At this point, the U.S. Rubber company sold the entire Gillette plant to the United States Government. Since at that time the military's demand for ammunition was greater than its demand for tires or rubber goods, the facility was converted into an ordnance plant for the manufacture of smallcaliber munitions. U.S. Rubber continued to operate it (and four

other ordnance plants) on behalf of the government. All machinery for making tires was dismantled and replaced with ordnance equipment, and additional buildings were constructed. Much of the tire equipment was shipped to other U.S. Rubber factories, some was placed in storage and the remainder was scrapped. Approximately 2,100 workers were temporarily laid off while the change-over to ordnance took place, although some were employed on the new construction. Operation of the Eau Claire Ordnance Plant began on August 17, 1942. At the peak of production, 6,200 workers representing about 70 percent of the original workforce were employed in making small-caliber ammunition; women comprised approximately 61 percent of the total.

War production at the Eau Claire Plant was extremely demanding. Production schedules were subject to abrupt change, and changes in specifications required constant retooling. Because of the critical need for manpower, work days were lengthened and employee vacations were suspended. Nevertheless, workers managed to fulfill the targeted output, and six months after conversion took place, received the Army-Navy "E" Award for excellence in production.

Within one year of conversion, the military's need for small arms ammunition had been satisfied and a large surplus accumulated. It was decided that military tire production, especially heavy-service tires for airplanes and amphibious craft, and the further development of synthetic rubber were more pressing concerns. In August 1943, the Eau Claire Ordnance plant was released to reconvert to tire production. On December 31, 1943, U.S. Rubber re-purchased the property for 1,025,000 dollars. Eau Claire was the nation's first major industrial plant to reconvert from war production and in October 1944 production of synthetic rubber tires was resumed. At the same time U.S. Rubber initiated a program to modernize and expand the Eau Claire plant, a process which involved extensive new construction, refurbishment, and the installation of new tire and tube-making equipment. This building expansion program was completed in 1947. It doubled the size of the factory, increased employment beyond pre-war levels to approximately 4,400 workers, and increased production to over 20,000 tires per day. In order to accommodate Eau Claire's increased production and trim transportation and storage costs, U.S. Rubber began planning a new warehouse in 1946. By 1951, a new 77,000 square foot facility had been constructed across the street from the plant. When reconversion was completed, Eau Claire was the country's fifth largest tire factory, and according to company officials, the world's most modern.

In 1952, factory manager Howard Hutchens was appointed special management representative for U.S. Rubber's Tire Division. Although reporting to the company's New York headquarters, Hutchens' office remained in Eau Claire. He was replaced by Frank A. Cobb, formerly a time-study manager, supervisor of methods of standards, and superintendent of production. Cobb was followed by Robert Francis in 1958, and four years later C.W. Chatterson became factory manager.

Over the years, both employment and production levels at the Eau Claire Plant fluctuated with the demand for rubber goods and new developments in the industry. Production of tubeless tires began in 1954. Due to rapidly rising demand for this type of tire, production of tubes was discontinued and 250 tube division workers were laid off. Between 1948 and 1960, employment dropped from 4,000 to 3,200 while daily output increased from 20,000 to around 30,000 tires.

In 1965, U.S. Rubber once again expanded and improved the Eau Claire factory, adding jobs and new production facilities to manufacture giant off-road tires used on heavy construction, mining and earth-moving equipment. The largest of these tires weighed 5,600 pounds and stood over ten feet high. Eau Claire could produce 40 per day compared to a daily schedule of 30,000 passenger tires. By 1965, Eau Claire ranked third largest among tire plants in the U.S. In 1967, U.S. Rubber unified all its diverse trademarks and subsidiaries in 23 countries under the name Uniroyal, Inc.

Other developments in the industry which affected Eau Claire included the invention of the bias belted tire in 1968, steel-belted radials for passenger cars and Monoply truck tires in 1973, and the mini-spare tire which

began production in 1979. Such developments were accompanied by the installation of the latest tire-building equipment. Eau Claire was reported to have been the first to manufacture the Monoply truck tire which was built on a wire carcass with wire belts. During the 1980s, the factory stopped making farm, Monoply, truck, and Giant off-road tires while intensifying production of passenger radials. Competition from imports was cited as the rationale behind many of the production changes. By 1987, about 1,500 employees were turning out tires at the rate of 29,000 per day in as many as 300 different sizes and styles.

In 1986 Uniroyal and the B.F. Goodrich Company merged in a joint venture to become the Uniroyal Goodrich Tire Company. By then Uniroyal was the leading supplier of tires to General Motors and Goodrich was known for its high-performance replacement tires. However, the merger brought about difficulties as incompatible equipment and differences in cost-accounting procedures hampered production and efficiency.

In 1989-1990, Uniroyal Goodrich was purchased by Michelin et Cie, a French-based tire company. Michelin was the inventor of the radial and the acquisition of Uniroyal Goodrich made it the world's largest tire manufacturer. The purchase of Uniroyal Goodrich was intended to increase Michelin's share of the car-tire replacement market, and to strengthen its ties to General Motors by absorbing Uniroyal's 35 percent share of GM purchases. Approximately one year after the buyout, the Eau Claire plant was closed down.

## Scope and Content Note

Records of the Eau Claire Plant of Uniroyal Inc. consist of nine series: CENTRAL FILES, LABOR RELATIONS, HISTORICAL MATERIALS, MEETINGS, REPORTS, ROYALEERS CLUB, BLUEPRINTS, PHOTOGRAPHS, and FILMS. Among the most thoroughly documented subjects in the collection are labor relations, including the history of collective bargaining from 1940 to 1960, and grievance settlements from 1937 to 1976. Scientific management, technical aspects of tire production, and plant expansion and modernization from 1943 to 1950 are also extensively documented. Subjects such as cost and quality control, worker safety, and shipping and materials handling systems are well represented in the collection. Evidence of the activities of a social club for female salaried employees, the Royaleers Club, while not exhaustive, is present from the date of the Club's founding in 1948 until the factory closed in 1990. Photographs and film loops provide an especially rich visual record of the Eau Claire factory's construction and layout, and tire building technology before and after World War II. The collection primarily documents the Eau Claire plant as a manufacturing facility. Some of the records not included here are personnel files, sales records, advertising materials, and annual reports.

CENTRAL FILES were originally those of Howard O. Hutchens, resident factory manager from 1926 to 1952. Only files concerning the later half of his career, the eight-year period dating from conversion of the plant to ordnance in 1942 through 1950, are present. The series consists of correspondence, memoranda, and reports sent to and received from departments within the Eau Claire plant and from other divisions of the U.S. Rubber Co. including other tire plants and the company's New York headquarters. Also included are incoming letters from persons and organizations outside of the U.S. Rubber Co. and the Eau Claire Plant. The CENTRAL FILES provide evidence of the major functions and activities of the Eau Claire plant such as the compounding and processing of synthetic rubber stock; tire and tube production, inspection, testing, and quality control; shipping and receiving; industrial relations; public relations; and accounting. The files are arranged alphabetically by sending department, or in a few cases, by subject. For the most part, internal company communications were filed by department and thereunder by individual members of that department. Where possible, individuals have been identified by title in the box list. Incoming non-company or noninterdepartmental communications tended to be filed alphabetically under the general letter of the alphabet by name of sending individual or organization. These files frequently include copies of outgoing responses.

Within the CENTRAL FILES are memoranda and correspondence of the Central Engineering Department.

These files concern reconversion of the physical plant in 1943-1945 from ordnance to tire production and detail the construction of new buildings, additions and alterations to existing buildings, and the installation and relocation of equipment and utilities. Included are floor plans illustrating the changes in layout and the placement of machinery. For 1945 there are also graphic progress schedules of the military tire program which track the new construction, machine installation and services required to manufacture war products.

Eau Claire's factory accounting and budgeting systems are documented in the files of the Control Division. In addition to routine correspondence and memoranda, the records include operating budgets and cost reports detailing projected and actual expenditures for materials, supplies, equipment, labor, and overhead, losses due to seconds, and costs per pound of production. Complete plant operating budgets are only present for the years 1945 and 1948.

The identification of technical problems in the tire manufacturing process, and the search for improved methods are reflected in the files of the Eau Claire Plant's Development Department. However, materials documenting this subject appear throughout the CENTRAL FILES. For instance, relevant reports and other communications can be found in both the Industrial Engineering and Product Control Department files. The majority of the exchanges with Development concern defective tire molds.

The acquisition, functioning, and maintenance of tire-building machines and equipment, and the supervision of Machine Shop, Mold Shop, and Maintenance Department personnel are topics documented in the Engineering Department correspondence, memoranda, and reports. Also known as Works Engineering, the files include weekly mold and equipment inspection and repair reports, weekly cost reports citing direct labor costs by tire size and brand, and communications concerning defects in tire mold and other equipment. Also included are inventories of equipment on hand, on order, scrapped, or defective; and requests to discard obsolete tools and equipment. Minutes of Power Conservation Committee meetings are filed here as well. T.A. Gustafson's 1942 file concerns military orders and dispersal of Eau Claire's tire-building equipment to other U.S. Rubber Company plants.

Industrial Engineering Department files reflect the functioning of the wage incentive system including such aspects as work measurement and job evaluation, the establishment of labor standards for each operation in the tire production process; and local wage payment policies. The bulk of the files consist of various statistical reports on plant capacity, actual versus projected rates of production, percentage of production schedule met, and percentages of efficiency achieved on a plant-wide and departmentwide basis. Many of the tire production reports compare Eau Claire's output to that of other U.S. Rubber Company tire plants such as Chicopee Falls and Detroit. Also included here is a set of weekly progress reports evaluating the activities, total production, and efficiencies of individuals employed in the plant's Mold Shop. Certain responsibilities or functions of the Industrial Engineering Department appear to have overlapped with those of the Industrial Relations Department, as files of the former also include interplant comparisons of wage rates and earnings, and summaries of union wage inequity demands.

The Industrial Relations department was responsible for labor relations at the Eau Claire plant, and materials filed here overlap with the contract negotiation files in the LABOR RELATIONS series. Other activities of the department reflected in the CENTRAL FILES include employee training, public relations, and employee relations matters such as leave policies, and the administration of retirement and insurance programs. Many of the communications in the General files concern safety in the plant, and include accident/injury reports, Wisconsin Industrial Commission hearing decisions concerning Eau Claire plant employees, safety inspection reports, maintenance orders, notices, and agendas of plant safety meetings.

Shipping and receiving, warehouse storage, and inventory control of raw materials, stock, and finished goods at warehouses in Minneapolis, Milwaukee, and Eau Claire are documented in the Materials Handling Department

files. Memoranda and reports from 1949 reflect the plant's efforts to reduce warehouse and transportation costs and to increase the overall efficiency of materials handling operations. The reports consist of monthly statistics on the quantities of raw materials handled.

The Planning Department appears to have been responsible for scheduling the production of the specific brands and sizes of tires, tubes and casings. Materials documenting this Department are fragmentary but the subject of production scheduling is also reflected in the files of the Sales Production Coordination Department.

Plant Expansion Program files for 1943 detail the company's plans to convert the Eau Claire facility from war to tire production. Included are reports analyzing the material, equipment, and labor requirements, drawings showing proposed new buildings, and appropriation requests related to the project. Similar materials on the subject of plant conversion and expansion are also found in the Central Engineering files.

Development of improved production methods, establishment of specifications, inspection of stock and finished goods, analysis of defects, are among the functions documented in the files of the Product Control Department. Included are detailed and highly technical descriptions of experimental procedures, reports on trips to observe production at the Detroit plant, tire quality reports for the years 1947 and 1949, weekly data on number and types of defects, and a 1947 proposal for a plant-wide quality control program. The tire quality reports total the numbers and percentages of defective, repaired and discarded tires and tubes per month by type of defect; average number of cures per curing bag attained; and number of defective batches of mixed stock.

The Sales Production Coordination division established production schedules and processed orders for rubber and tread stocks shipped to other U.S. Rubber Company plants, orders for finished goods shipped to dealers, and unassembled tire parts such as casings, tubes, and flaps. The files, while not complete, reflect the scheduling of production and shipment to match sales of company and special brand tires, the filling of orders for tires and stock, and handling customer complaints about deliveries and

tire quality. Included are reports on the status of orders, forecasts of sales by sales outlet, performance reports comparing scheduled to actual production, and monthly reports on mixed stock production and shipping.

Files of the Safety Director consist mainly of detailed reports on occupational health and safety hazards in the Eau Claire plant, inspection reports on potential hazards issued by the New York headquarters Industrial Relations department, detailed descriptions and analysis of specific lost time accidents, monthly accident summaries, and monthly compensation summaries. Some reports identify injured employees by name, and contain information on age, health, and work history. Monthly accident summaries provide the following information: number of accidents total, cause, lost days, number of weeks of temporary disability, names of injured employees, and remarks. Compensation summaries total the number of cases subject to workman's compensation payments, amounts paid, medical and legal expenses, amount in the company reserve for unpaid claims, and the cost. Memoranda and reports concerning plant safety and employee accidents are also found in the Industrial Relations files.

Traffic Department reports and correspondence concern the transportation of materials and finished goods into and out of the Eau Claire factory, primarily by railroad. Included are monthly and yearly statistics on tonnage, loss and damage claims, and transportation costs.

U.S. Rubber files contain communications between the Eau Claire plant and the other factories in the company's Tire Division, as well as the New York headquarters. There are also carbon copies of communications between the other plants and New York. General files mainly concern the transfer of equipment and personnel between the different plants, joint meetings and management conferences, production problems, Gillette brand advertising, and public relations, particularly the arrangement of plant tours or visits.

The U.S. Rubber Company operated tire factories in Chicago, Illinois; Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts; Detroit, Michigan; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Los Angeles, California. The Chicago factory was the site of the Tire Division's District Sales Manager and among the subjects in the Chicago files are promotional advertising, efforts to secure a contract with the State of Wisconsin for tires, and a district sales conference held at Eau Claire in 1950.

The U.S. Rubber Company's factory in Detroit, Michigan was the site of the Tire Division's research and development department and Production Scheduling Unit and the Detroit files primarily reflect the interplant exchange of production data and advice on problems and developments. Included are interplant comparison reports on such issues as defective products, products damaged during shipment, inventory levels, allocations of raw materials, and supervisory earnings. When interplant committee meetings and other special conferences were held at Detroit, the minutes and progress reports were filed here as well. J.I. Martin files contain monthly interplant quality comparisons and memos to plant-level production supervisors about persistent tire quality problems and potential solutions. C.L. Moody was Detroit's factory manager and his files concern production levels throughout the Tire Division. They include regular forecasts of sales, costs and production, daily production totals which Eau Claire teletyped to Moody, and reports on production bottlenecks, failures to meet production schedules, and physical inventory. Also reflected are loans of workers from Eau Claire to other plants, and equipment appropriations, mainly during the reconversion and plant expansion period. Communications from Wanamaker, Tire Division Production Manager, concern some of the same subjects but also document industrial relations, changes in and expansion of production in the Tire Division as a whole and at specific plants, memos on changes in production methods, cost savings measures, and waste and scrap recovery, and lists of production priorities which were issued on a monthly basis. His files also include detailed reports of his visits to various plants.

New York general files contain correspondence, memoranda, reports, circulars and press releases emanating from U.S. Rubber's New York City headquarters and mostly concern matters of overall company policy. Included are reports and memos regarding company-wide safety and traffic consolidation programs, circulars on policy changes and suggested standard practices with regard to production, inventory, orders and distribution, safety, and personnel policies. There are also reports on the status of negotiations with the United Rubber Workers International, and correspondence regarding publicity activities such as plant visits and exhibits. In addition there are press releases, articles, and occasional company publications. Also filed here are approvals for Eau Claire plant appropriations requests and authorizations for equipment and other purchases.

Following the New York general files are communications with F.S. Carpenter and J.W. McGovern, general managers of the Tire Division in 1942 and 1944 respectively. These consist primarily of copies of appropriations requests submitted to the New York office by H.O. Hutchens, for expanding and modernizing the Eau Claire plant, and copies of Hutchens' outgoing correspondence on personnel, physical plant, and production matters. Cushing was U.S. Rubber's Director of Industrial Relations and documents filed here include monthly wage surveys of the Big 4 rubber manufacturers, memoranda regarding negotiations with the United Rubber Workers International, and circulars outlining changes in the administration of the company's benefits plans.

H.O. Hutchens' participation in a Wisconsin regional Labor-Management Committee of the War Manpower Commission is reflected, but not well documented, in the file of meeting summaries and circulars concerning war and post-war labor shortages and allocation problems.

Reflecting some of the contingencies faced by American manufacturers during World War II are materials related to the War Production Board. Included here are copies of mandatory reports submitted by Hutchens detailing the Eau Claire plant's capacity to manufacture ordnance material, copies of the board's orders restricting the rubber supplies, and printed bulletins issued to manufacturers of war products on such subjects as material shortages, the development of substitutes, and compliance with government contracts.

U.S. Rubber's four-year effort to build a new warehouse to store finished goods produced by the Eau Claire plant is extensively documented in the CENTRAL FILES. Included are correspondence, memoranda, and transcribed telephone conversations concerning prospective locations and existing properties, space requirements, and cost.

There are also various cost studies, lease proposals from area real estate firms, and building proposals from national contractors. The latter typically include building specifications, quotes, and site plans. The contract for building a new warehouse was awarded to the George Fuller Company. Following this selection are copies of construction progress reports, change bulletins documenting alterations in the project specifications, and summaries of meetings concerning details of the building project. Also filed here is a report issued in 1950, the year construction was completed, entitled "Economic Analysis of Tire Handling and Warehousing from Finishing Through Shipping at the Eau Claire Plant." Two plans of proposed warehouse buildings are located in the BLUEPRINTS SERIES.

The most complete series in the Uniroyal Collection is LABOR RELATIONS. Two subseries, contract negotiations and grievance case files, document twenty years of collective bargaining and nearly forty years of grievance settlement at the Eau Claire Plant. The company's set of grievance files document grievances to the third step from 1945 to 1976. Cases which proceeded to arbitration, also from 1945 to 1976, are documented in Eau Claire Mss AA, records of the United Rubber Workers Local #19 (after 1945 the United Rubber, Cork, Linoleum and Plastic Workers of America). Local #19's files also include the union's minutes of meetings with the company concerning contract negotiations and grievances from 1944 to 1986. The arbitration hearing files parallel and supplement the grievance case files found in the company records. The minutes form a continuation of the company's grievance committee minutes which end in 1976, and for the earlier years, provide a record of the same meetings from the union's point of view.

Records of Contract negotiations begin with 1940, one year after Local #19 of the United Rubber Workers won their first written contract. The files are arranged chronologically by year and then alphabetically by subject. After 1945, both companywide and local negotiations are documented. Company-wide contract meetings took place at U.S. Rubber headquarters in New York City and involved representatives from all tire manufacturing plants and facilities. Agreements reached at this level formed the basis for subsequent negotiations held in Eau Claire, between Local #19 and management of the Gillette plant. The local contract was often referred to as the local supplement or supplementary agreement. Contract negotiations files include minutes of meetings between company and union officials in New York and Eau Claire, correspondence and memoranda, notifications and requests for bargaining, draft agreements and proposals, and information on local office workers and wage employee strikes. Issues typically subject to negotiation included wage rates, hours, union security, and benefits such as health and hospital insurance, holiday pay, pension plans, and supplemental unemployment benefits. The files document an NLRB election to certify the office workers' unit in 1943, and after 1946 negotiations with Warehouse Employees Union Local #359 which represented workers at the Eau Claire Plant's Minneapolis Warehouse. Of interest in the 1943 office worker files are lists of noneligible employees not found elsewhere in the collection. After 1950, under wage data, are detailed interplant comparisons of wage rates and employee earnings prepared by management. A survey conducted by management in 1954 gathered data on employee lay-offs and on lost time due to plant shut-downs and reduced work weeks from 1948 to 1953. Summary reports filed in 1954 cite the date and reasons for layoffs, shutdowns and reductions, and list total numbers of employees involved by department, sex, and seniority; and total days lost. Statistics for years after 1954 are filed under "employment stabilization."

Grievances brought by members of Local #19 against Eau Claire Plant management from 1945 to 1976 are thoroughly documented in Grievance Case files. Grievances prior to 1945 are documented in minutes of meetings between management representatives and members of the union executive committee. Case files are arranged numerically by case number, which corresponds to the date the grievance was submitted to Eau



Claire's Industrial Relations Department. Each file contains a copy of Local #19's official grievance reporting form, minutes of meetings held between management representatives and members of the union's executive and departmental grievance committees, and related correspondence, memoranda, and notes. The grievance form includes the worker's complaint, lists the department and occupation of the worker or workers involved, and summarizes management's disposition of the matter. After 1950 or so, documentation of second and third step answers to grievances are seen more often, and the files include formal notices of Labor Standard changes. Since 1929, the Eau Claire Plant had operated under the Bedaux "wage incentive" plan which set standards for every worker's task and provided extra pay for individual output in excess of the standard. Worker grievances frequently involved protests of the standards established by the time-keeper or the set rates of pay. Other grievances involved safety measures and working conditions. Also represented were issues such as seniority and transfers, the classifications of jobs as male or female, and equal pay for equal work.

HISTORICAL MATERIALS consists largely of miscellaneous artifacts, printed items, and fragmentary portions of records dating from the Gillette Tire Company's earliest years. Most of the materials were gathered by a plant historical committee active in the 1960s. Artifacts with potential exhibit value include guest badges, probably from the 1930s, and tire serial number plates from the first tires completed after plant reconversion in 1944. Also of interest are formulas or recipes handwritten on small cards, for chemical compounds used in processing crude rubber or rubber fabric in 1919; and portions of what is apparently a production supervisor's or engineer's notebook dating from 1919 to 1930. These fragments offer glimpses of the factory's operation in the period before modernization and before the introduction of synthetic rubber during World War II. The latter includes data on tire serial numbers, specifications, diagrams, building instructions, and tire curing times. The earliest records in the collection are Gillette company financial volumes from 1917 to 1919. These are general ledgers listing debits and credits to both individual and controlling accounts such as real estate, machinery, chemicals, payroll, operating expenses, stocks, and taxes with a partial index to account numbers. Volumes from 1920 to 1925 are daily journals listing company financial transactions in chronological order. Also important for researchers are various official accounts of the history of the tire plant. Histories of the Eau Claire Ordnance Plant consist of a series of reports submitted to the U.S. Army detailing its transformation and operation as an ordnance factory. Included is information on capacity and output, personnel, wages, and diagrams of the manufacturing area and powder farm. A history of the reconversion of the plant from the manufacturing of small-caliber ammunition back to tires was compiled by the company's Industrial Relations Department. Also filed here are brief accounts of the Gillette, U.S. Rubber, and Uniroyal companies written at various times for public relations purposes. Related to this are a few files of printed materials consisting of scattered issues of company newsletters, examples of advertisements, and other public relations materials.

Labor efficiency reports from 1944 and 1970 are the most comprehensive and voluminous records in the REPORTS SERIES. These reports, prepared by the Labor Standards Department, on either a monthly or weekly basis, were statistical measures of the percentage of working hours each department of the factory worked "on standard," and as such reflect the use of the Bedaux wage incentive system at the Eau Claire Plant. Each report includes total hours worked, hours on standard, lost hours, percentage efficiency, and percentage on standard that month and the previous week for each department or division. For the year 1945 figures for individual workers are reported and the 1946 reports cite reasons for the increases or decreases in labor efficiency (percent on standard). After 1958 the reports include total numbers of tires scheduled to be produced, cured, and finished, and the number of persons working in each division. Reports from 1953 to 1954 are missing.

Although the remaining files of reports in the REPORTS SERIES are incomplete, they serve as examples of the types of management reports which were probably generated on a more regular basis. Factory managers' monthly reports are available only for part of 1942. These consist of interplant comparisons of tire production, labor productivity, costs, and losses due to defects. Tire Division cost control project files document a 1948 company-wide plan to reduce the cost of tire production through reductions in waste, seconds, and labor costs at various points in the manufacturing process. Included are comparisons of such costs at all tire manufacturing

plants from 1946 through 1948 and projections of costs through 1949.

Records of the ROYALEERS CLUB, a social organization for female salaried employees, reflect its activities from 1948 to 1990. Files of the secretary include correspondence, minutes, membership lists, financial statements, notices, and by-laws and are arranged chronologically. Files from 1967 to 1971 are missing. The series documents the membership and activities of the group such as fundraising through candy sales and the like and social events such as parties, picnics, trips, and fashion shows. Photographs depict members at club-sponsored events from 1948 to 1971. The majority are without identification.

The BLUEPRINTS SERIES consists of a small number of site plans, floor plans and elevations of the Eau Claire Plant and finished goods warehouse. Also included is a site plan for the plant's rubber cement and gasoline storage tanks and a diagram of the mechanical system used to paint tires. Of the plant drawings, the most complete are two floor plans showing the location of each department in 1942 prior to conversion and modernization.

The PHOTOGRAPH SERIES contains black and white prints and original nitrate and safety negatives depicting factory interiors, exteriors and aerial views, tire-building equipment, machines and instruments, male and female workers engaged in production, plant reconversion and new construction, company product lines, public relations activities, employee relations, management conferences, and the community and social activities of company employees. They provide excellent visual documentation of complex industrial processes, the evolution of the factory over a thirty year period, and the introduction and use of modern automated equipment into the workplace. The majority of the images date from the 1940s and 1950s, with particular emphasis on the period of new construction and modernization in 1944-1946.

The entire process is exhaustively detailed in a series of "plant progress" photographs. These prints are numbered, dated, and captioned and the numbering suggests that certain prints are missing. Also noteworthy are two comprehensive photographic surveys of the factory's machinery and instrumentation done in approximately 1945, and again in 1965. Photographs of rubber workers engaged in all facets of tire production are another strong point. Virtually all of the photographs in the collection were professionally shot, with dates and captions supplied. Some were most likely taken to accompany articles in the U.S. Rubber Company's in-house publication *US* magazine. A selection of the photographs and negatives are housed in the Visual Material Archive of the State Historical Society in Madison at call number PH 6055. (Additional photographs of the Gillette Tire Company are also located in the Visual Material Archive. PH 626 consists of 28 photoprints of the factory from 1917 to 1939, including aerial and exterior views of the Gillette and Chippewa rubber factories; interior views of the building, calendar, and curing departments; steps in processing; and images of the first experimental tire being built in 1917.)

The FILM SERIES is comprised of very short, eight-millimeter, black and white silent film loops originally produced as Bedaux system time or motion studies. They depict male and female Eau Claire factory employees performing various operations in the manufacture of automobile and bicycle tires from 1934 to 1939. The procedures filmed include mixing batches of rubber; cutting, splicing, and stitching rubber plies, treads and other parts of the tire; and building beads and tires on drums and by conveyor. Interior views of the factory, machinery and equipment are often discernible. For preservation, the 48 original film loops were placed in chronological order by date of filming, spliced together on larger reels, and transferred to ¾-inch and ½-inch videotape. The original films and ¾-inch master videotapes are housed in the Visual Material Archives of the State Historical Society.

## **Administrative/Restriction Information**

### Acquisition Information

Presented by Uniroyal, Inc. via David A. Horan, Eau Claire, Wis., 1993. Accession Number: M93-181

### Processing Information

Processed by Cindy Knight, 1995.

## Search Terms

### Subject Terms

- o United Rubber, Cork, Linoleum, and Plastic Workers of America. Local 19 (Eau Claire, Wis.)
- o United States Rubber Company
- o Collective bargaining—Rubber industry
- o Rubber industry and trade—United States
- o Tire industry—United States
- o Tire industry—Wisconsin—Eau Claire
- o Women rubber industry workers—Wisconsin
- o World War, 1939-1945—Equipment and supplies

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