

Information Sheet

R Ashcroft, Joseph, 1874-1961.
281 Papers, 1897-1947.
One folder, photocopies.

This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri. If you would like more information, please contact us at shsresearch@umsystem.edu.

These are papers of a manufacturer of wooden spokes for wheels at Poplar Bluff, Butler County, Missouri. Included are a letter from the Studebaker Brothers Manufacturing Company concerning the spoke business, 1909; letters from R. M. Good of the School of the Ozarks, Point Lookout, Missouri, 1947; and an address delivered to a trade association meeting in Memphis, Tennessee, 1942.

Joseph Ashcroft was born in Pittstown, New Jersey, in 1874, the son of William and Mary Ashcroft. He was educated at rural schools and attended the Stewart Business College in Trenton, New Jersey, 1891-1892. Ashcroft managed the office of the Lambertville (N.J.) Spoke Company for five years, and then became a partner in the Bimel Manufacturing Company of Portland, Indiana, also engaged in the spoke business. In 1902 Ashcroft organized the Bimel Ashcroft Company, continuing his association with Fred Bimel. Located at Poplar Bluff in Butler County, Missouri, the firm was in good position to utilize the ash and hickory hardwoods coming from the Bootheel. The Bimel Ashcroft Company produced millions of spokes at Poplar Bluff, with a substantial number going to the armies during World War I. As steel wheels replaced wooden products following the war, the company expanded its foreign exporting and marketing and continued to thrive. As its peak, the Bimel Ashcroft Company operated eighteen factories in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Alabama, Arkansas, and Missouri. Ashcroft remained active in the company until his retirement in 1942. He lived in Poplar Bluff until his death on 30 November 1961.

This small collection of Ashcroft's papers includes eight pieces of incoming correspondence and an address delivered upon his retirement in 1942. Several of the letters concern the wood-working industry. Two letters from Thomas J. Stewart of the Stewart Business College, 1897-1898, refer to the rivalry between the Bimel Manufacturing Company and the Lambertville Spoke Company. The demand for spokes which existed before World War I is evident in a letter to Ashcroft from the Studebaker Brothers Manufacturing Company of South Bend, Indiana, 1909. The Studebakers offered to advance the money for a new, larger factory at Poplar Bluff in exchange for a constant supply of spokes at South Bend. Ashcroft's brief reminiscences on the industry may be found in a retirement address delivered to a trade association at Memphis in 1942. He noted advancements in the industry and his role in establishing standard grading and pricing practices.

The remainder of the collection consists of letters to Ashcroft by President R. M. Good of the School of The Ozarks, 1947. A benefactor of the school, Ashcroft intended to visit the institution at Point Lookout, Missouri. The letters concern arrangements for his visit.

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10 September 1986

Bob Manns

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Shelf List

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Item</u>
11 November 1897	Thomas J. Stewart, Stewart Business College, Trenton, New Jersey., to Joseph Ashcroft, Portland, Indiana.
13 April 1898	Thomas J. Stewart, Stewart Business College, Trenton, New Jersey, to Joseph Ashcroft, Portland, Indiana.
31 July 1909	E. Miller, Studebaker Brothers Manufacturing Company, South Bend, Indiana, to Joseph Ashcroft, Poplar Bluff, Missouri.
19 November 1942	An address delivered by Joseph Ashcroft to the C. W. & J. Woodstock Association, Memphis, Tennessee.
28 February 1947	President R. M. Good, School of the Ozarks, Point Lookout, Missouri, to Joseph Ashcroft, Poplar Bluff, Missouri.
8 March 1947	[Same as previous item.]
17 March 1947	[Same as previous item.]
27 March 1947	[Same as previous item.]
31 March 1947	[Same as previous item.]
29 April 1947	[Same as previous item.]

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Index Cards

Ashcroft, Joseph, 1874-1961.
 Bimel Ashcroft Manufacturing Company.
 Bimel Company.
 Butler County (Mo.).
 C. W. and J. Woodstock Association.
 Carriage and wagon making—Missouri—Butler County.
 Good, R. M.
 Lambertville Spoke Manufacturing Company.
 Poplar Bluff (Mo.).
 School of the Ozarks.
 Stewart, Thomas J.
 Stewart Business College (Trenton, N.J.).
 Studebaker Brothers Manufacturing Co.
 Trade and professional associations.
 Woodworking industries—Missouri.