



Glendale Library, Arts & Culture

Glendale Central Library

222 E. Harvard Street

Glendale, California 91205

Phone: (818) 548-3749

Email: libraryinfo@glendaleca.gov

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Finding Aid for the Packer Motor Company Records, 1916-2012

Collection Overview

Title: Packer Motor Company Records

Dates: 1916-2012

ID: PMC

Primary Creator: Donald H. Packer

Extent: 1.5 linear feet, 1 box

Arrangement: This collection is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Forms of Material: Paper Records, Photographic Materials

Language of Materials: English

Abstract

The Packer Motor Company records represent the activities of one of the first automobile dealerships in Glendale, California. Selling Studebaker cars and trucks, the dealership's main location was on Brand Boulevard in Glendale, expanding to other locations in Eagle Rock and Burbank. The company was founded by Stephen C. Packer and Harry E. White in 1917 as the Packer and White Auto Company. Packer became sole owner in 1921, changing the name to Packer Auto Company. The company's name changed to Packer Motor Company, Inc. when it was incorporated in 1924. Packer's son Donald managed the company from 1920 until it was sold in 1957. Members of the Packer family were prominent citizens of Glendale, supporting many community organizations and institutions.

Biographical/Administrative History

Company founder, Stephen C. Packer, was born in Bloomington, Illinois in 1866 to farmer Joseph D. Packer and Laura M. Drum in 1866. Stephen moved to Northern Michigan at the age of 17 to work in the logging industry where he remained for 22 years. In 1892, he married Etta E. Hardy, daughter of Richard L. Hardy and Mary A. Atwood, and they raised two children, Donald born in 1896, and Doris born in 1904. A daughter Edith, born in 1900, died in 1903.

After a move to Aberdeen, Washington and five more years in the logging industry, the family relocated to Glendale in 1910. Stephen became a contractor and ran for Supervisor of Glendale's 5th District in 1916. A year later, he and partner Harry E. White opened the

Packer and White Auto Company at 245 South Brand Boulevard selling Studebaker cars exclusively. Stephen helped form the Glendale Motor Car Dealers Association in 1920, the same year his son Donald joined him in the business. 1921, Stephen became the company's sole owner and changed its name to the Packer Auto Company. When the company incorporated in 1924, its name changed again to Packer Motor Co., Inc. Stephen Packer also helped establish the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks (BPOE) Glendale Lodge no. 1289, served as director of the Glendale Chamber of Commerce, and was on the Advisory Board of Pacific-Southwest Trust and Savings, Brand Boulevard Branch. He died in 1929.

Stephen's son Donald was a graduate of Glendale Union High School, and continued his education at the University of California, Berkeley. His college career was interrupted in 1917 when he enlisted to serve in WWI, eventually joining the 53rd R.R. Artillery, and later becoming commissioned as 2nd Lt. at Ft. Monroe. He mustered out in the summer of 1919 and returned to Berkeley, graduating in 1920. Donald was married to Glendale Union High School graduate Fern Cook in 1920, and their son, Jerry, was born in 1923. Jerry died two years after serving in World War II at the age of 25.

Donald was general manager of the Packer Motor Company until selling the business and retiring in 1957. In 1965, Donald married Helen E. Mosher, who passed away in 1971. In 1983, Donald married his high school classmate Dorothy Lee Weller, daughter of banker Ed M. Lee, and the widow of attorney and former California legislator Frank Weller. Dorothy was a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley and the University of Southern California's College of Music.

Donald H. Packer was an active member of many civic organizations serving as President of the Glendale Chamber of Commerce and Glendale Motor Car Dealers Association. He is also known for 25 years of commitment to the Glendale Community Foundation, where he was president for many years. Donald Packer died in 1987 at the age of 91. His wife Dorothy died at the age of 98 in 1993.

Stephen Packer's daughter Doris attended the University of California, Los Angeles drama program. She moved to New York in 1926 where she became an actress who toured internationally. In 1934, she married prominent stage director, Rowland G. Edwards in Manhattan, and in 1943 she enlisted in the Women's Army Corps and rose to the rank of sergeant. After the war, Doris continued her acting career, appearing in several Broadway shows and becoming a popular radio performer. She moved west after the death of her husband in 1953 in order to investigate the burgeoning television industry and a career in film. Doris appeared in many popular television series and is perhaps best known for her role as the school principal in the television series, *Leave It to Beaver*. She became a respected character actress, often playing wealthy society matrons. One of her last roles was a small part in the 1975 film, *Shampoo*, with Warren Beatty. Doris died in Glendale at the age of 74 in 1979.

Scope and Contents

The Packer Motor Company Records include clippings, brochures, notes, notices, and photographs documenting various activities of the company, including promotional events, anniversary celebrations, and recognition of service from the Studebaker Company. Many of the photographs appear to be from a disassembled scrapbook, and document activities

of members of the Packer family as well as the business. Some of these activities involve BPOE Lodge 1289 and the Glendale Motor Car Dealers Association. The disassembled scrapbook pages include a photographic portrait of Stephen Packer, photographs of the dealerships and showrooms, photographs of various Studebaker models, a price list, newspaper advertisements, and announcements.

Of special interest is the 1924 letter of incorporation, photographs of the Studebaker Economy Run and a showroom display of "70 Years of Transportation," which includes a stage coach next to a 1922 Studebaker. In addition to biographical information about the Packer business and family, the records also include newspaper clippings and a photograph of one of the company's employees, Robert Reeder, a B-17 pilot who was shot down in WWII and released by Russians from a German hospital. The records also include loose newspaper clippings about the Packer family which were collected by Glendale Public Library staff and have been incorporated into the records.

Subjects/Access Terms

Personal Names: Packer, Donald Hardy, 1896-1987
Packer, Dorothy Lee Weller, 1895-1993
Packer, Doris, 1904-1979
Packer, Stephen C., 1866-1929

Corporate Name: Packer Motor Company, Inc.

Topical Terms: Automobile dealers--California--Glendale
Studebaker automobile

Geographic Names: Glendale (Calif.)
Los Angeles County (Calif.)

Administrative Information

Processing Information: Jacqueline Zak, 2018
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Conditions Governing Access: The collection is open for research use.

Preferred Citation: Packer Motor Company Records. Glendale Central Library History Room. Glendale Library, Arts & Culture.

Acquisition: Jarrett Anderson, 2011

Collection Contents

Box 1

Folder 1: Scrapbook Cover

Folder 2: Loose Scrapbook Pages with Photographic Prints, Newspaper Clippings, and Announcements, 1917-1925

Folder 3: Anniversary Group Portraits, Photographic Prints, 1927-1937

Folder 4: Dealership and Showroom, Photographic Prints, 1922-1952

Folder 5: Dealership Employees Group Portraits, Photographic Prints, ca. 1930-ca. 1939

Folder 6: Glendale Chamber of Commerce, Photographic Print, Newspaper Clipping, and Notes, 1939, 1954, 2011

Folder 7: Glendale Community Foundation, Newspaper Clippings, 1970, 1993

Folder 8: Glendale Elks Lodge 1289 Group Portrait, Photographic Print, June 1932

Folder 9: Glendale Motor Car Dealers Association, Photographic Print, Program, Newspaper Clipping, and Notes, 1922, 1925, 1953

Folder 10: Packer, Donald H., Newspaper Clippings, Notes, and Photographic Print, ca. 1941, 1972-1987, 2011

Folder 11: Packer, Doris, Newspaper Clippings, 1926, 1928, 1940, 1979

Folder 12: Packer, Dorothy Lee Weller, Newspaper Clippings, 1993

Folder 13: Packer, Jerry D., Newspaper Clippings and Photographic Print, ca. 1941-1945

Folder 14: Packer, Stephen C., Clippings and Photographic Print, 1916-1928, 2012

Folder 15: Promotional Activities, Photographic Prints, 1917-1954

Folder 16: Promotional Brochures, Advertisements, and Announcements, 1925-1957

Folder 17: Reeder, Robert G., Newspaper Clippings and Photographic Print, ca. 1945, 2011

Folder 18: Salespeople and Auto Dealers Group Portraits, Photographic Prints, ca. 1940-1951

Folder 19: Studebaker and Packer Company, Newspaper Clippings, 1919-1966, 2011

Folder 20: Studebakers Bowling Team, Newspaper Clippings, 1927, 1929