

Ranck Family Tobacco Papers, 1902-1967

Call Number: MG0582

1 box 5 folders, 1 scrapbook 1 cubic foot

Repository: LancasterHistory (Organization); PV7

Shelving Location: Archives South, Side 12

Scope and Content Note: This collection contains a history of the tobacco industry in Lancaster County during the first half of the twentieth century, as compiled by Milton H. Ranck, based on his experience and that of his father, Jacob L. Ranck.

Creator: Ranck, Milton Herr, 1877-1968.

Conditions for Access: No restrictions.

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Language: English

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Accruals: No further accruals are expected.

Preferred Citation: Ranck Family Tobacco Papers (MG0582), Folder #,
LancasterHistory, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

People:

Cooper, Charles J.

Hess, Mark S.

Hitchcock, Harry

Lestz, Gerald S.

Ranck, Jacob L.

Ranck, Milton Herr

Subject Headings:

Tobacco industry (LHo-LOC sh 85135735)

Scrapbooks (LHo-LOC sh 85118923)

Clippings (Books, newspapers, etc.)

Letters

Search Terms:

Clippings (Books, newspapers, etc.)

Cooper Tobacco Company

Correspondence

Lancaster Leaf Tobacco Company

Letters

Newspaper clippings

Scrapbooks

Tobacco industry

Finding aids

Manuscript groups

Processing History: Processed by RW, 2011 and finding aid prepared by KK, June 2014. This collection has been documented, preserved and managed according to professional museum and archives standards. The collection was cataloged using DACS conventions.

Folder 1 List of Cigar Manufacturers of Lancaster County, 1902
See Strasburg second section for M. H. Ranck.

Folder 2 History of Tobacco Culture and Usage, by Milton H. Ranck, 1965
“Some of the High Spots I remember of my Father,” by Milton H. Ranck about Jacob L. Ranck. Also discusses sixty-seven years in the tobacco industry, methods of handling and curing Pennsylvania 41 (a type of tobacco) up to 1554, and marketing.

Folder 3 Short histories of Milton and Jacob Ranck’s participation in the tobacco industry. 24 August – 25 September 1967.
A letter to Milton from Lancaster Leaf Tobacco Company from President Harry Hitchcock. 24 August 1967.
Letter to Mr. Ranck from Charles J. Cooper of Cooper Tobacco Company discussing the history and growth of the cigar industry. 15 September 1967.
A letter to Milton Ranck regarding price supports from Mark S. Hess of Country Best. 25 September 1967.

Folder 4 Names local board members and dates of their membership, 1967. Milton H. Ranck headed the Lancaster Leaf Tobacco Board of Trade from 1921-1924.

Folder 5 Letter from John Milton Ranck to Gerald L. Lestz with a list of materials compiled by Milton Ranck on the history of the tobacco industry in Lancaster County. 5 December 1968.

Scrapbook

This scrapbook records tobacco growth in Lancaster County including problems of growth and production and especially sales and prices. These newspaper articles feature the prominent grower and buyer, Milton H. Ranck, of Strasburg, PA during the years 1947-1959. A picture of Mr. Ranck near the end of the volume shows him after the 68th year of tobacco buying. An article also discusses his achievement at his 50th year anniversary. The articles begin with a report of the 1947 crop. Emphasis is given to supply and pricing. Notice of Ranck’s activities as a buyer is first dated 2 April 1948. The series of 1949 articles begins with an image of tobacco for sale in Mr. Ranck’s warehouse, the same year news of a good 5 cent cigar appeared.

The government had an early involvement in the industry’s trade practices; some considered the practices unfair. Farmers who sold their crops for 28 cents at times also received a tractor (4/17/48). In 1949, the government began offering crop insurance to all who wanted it. The Agricultural Department gave price support to the 1950 crop of Pennsylvania seed leaf filler type 41 most of which was grown in the county (2/6/50) and used as filler in cigar production. More filler was grown in 1948 than binders. (12/20/48) In 1951, many chose to participate in the government’s price support plan because they became dissatisfied with warehouses refusing their crops. (12/16/51) The government, however, instituted a grading program causing prices to drop because the

farmers mixed high and low grades (2/17/51) according to officials. Federal experts said that the Lancaster County farmers had a lot to learn.

This assessment of the Lancaster County farmer does agree sharply with that of Mr. Ranck (1/17/52). At the time the scrapbook was compiled, Lancaster County produced more cigar leaf tobacco than any other county in the United States and practically all of that was grown in Pennsylvania. "There is nothing like him anywhere else in the great United States and that means the world—the Lancaster County farmer."

The scrapbook preserves a very interesting article on the problems of storage of tobacco and several remedies are found in "Long Storage of Tobacco for Late Market Possible." Remedies are made quite explicit (3/27/48). Strains of disease-resistant tobacco are pictured with growers including Milton Ranck.

Two major tobacco buyers were the Bayork Cigar Company and General Buyers. A comment of the speed with which crops sometimes sold follows: "When the multi-million dollar Lancaster County tobacco starts 'to move' business knows no season. And in 1949 it moved into high gear on Christmas Eve. The major buyer of the fragrant weed hardly could be passed off as Santa Claus, but they were all right there Saturday, buying up everything they could at a reported price of 30 and 13 cents." (12/25/49 and 12/27/49)

A picture showing the hand-rolling of cigars is shown on 3/18/56—the picture of 244 workers dates from 1912. Inside the shop is a sign, "Positively no smoking".

Following the newspaper articles is a section of the sales and purchases of Mr. Ranck. His political and civic projects conclude the volume.