Notes on Sources

This study relies primarily on source material from the archives of Eagle-Picher Industries located at the company’s central offices in Cincinnati, Ohio. During the course of my research I attempted to organize what was an informal collection of loose files in tattered boxes into something that more closely resembles an archive. What remains are several core collections containing records classified around the various corporate incarnations of Eagle-Picher through the years, including records collected from divisional offices and acquired businesses. The archive at this writing remains closed to the public.

Records of the corporate secretary’s office provided the most useful sources for this work. Included among the materials that date from the 1860s are board of directors minutes, shareholder correspondence, incorporation records, consultants’ reports, patent information, financial disclosures and supporting materials, brokers’ reports, and important miscellaneous correspondence. Another large and useful resource was the Mining Collection, which contains information regarding the location of mines, mills, and smelters (often with brief historical sketches), production data, labor relations materials, scrapbooks, technical papers by company engineers, feasibility studies, and detailed maps.

Although fragmentary, the correspondence files of a number of significant figures such as John Swift, George Potter, Joel Bowlby, and T. Spencer Shore offered important clues to their personalities and motivations. The similarly fragmented Research Collection reveals few details regarding the internal dynamics of the company’s research efforts but nevertheless contains a number of key documents concerning the development and production of rare metals for the electronics and defense industries. Overall, the archive is particularly weak in records of finance and marketing during the first half of the twentieth century, a victim, no doubt, of several central office relocations.
Board minutes and correspondence files from acquired companies and selected plants proved helpful in discerning organizational and operational patterns among divisions. I also relied on a number of oral interviews with key central office and divisional personnel that yielded valuable insights into the relationship between the central office and the divisions during the 1960s and 1970s. Assessments of potential acquisitions by consulting firms such as Stone and Webster and Coverdale and Colpitts, included among divisional records in the archive, also provided useful information.

Owing to Eagle-Picher’s involvement in asbestos litigation and the ongoing legal discovery process, I have not had access to any documents or records reflecting the company’s involvement in the production, distribution, or marketing of asbestos-containing products.

Of the materials located outside the company archive, the Picher Lead Collection at the University of Missouri’s Western Historical Manuscript Collections in Rolla, Missouri, proved particularly useful, providing insight into the workings of the Picher Lead Company during its formative years and illuminating tensions within the lead- and zinc-processing industry during the late nineteenth century. Two other manuscript collections, the A. P. Thompson Papers and the Dolph Shaner Papers, located in the archives of Southern Missouri State College in Joplin, Missouri, supplied important general information about the political and social character of the Tri-State region. Scrapbooks and vertical files at the Joplin Public Library also contained useful sources on the development of the Tri-State mining industry. Similarly, the mining exhibits and photograph collections at the Picher Mining Museum in Picher, Oklahoma, and the Dobson Museum in Miami, Oklahoma, aided my understanding and appreciation of the lives of miners and smelterworkers in the Tri-State.

The Kettering Library and the History of the Health Sciences Library and Museum at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center were sources of a number of valuable references on industrial health, especially concerning the development of occupational safety and health studies and programs in the lead-mining and -processing industries. Finally, the Rare Book Room at the Hamilton County Public Library and the Cincinnati Historical Society provided numerous resources regarding the development of Cincinnati industry including scrapbooks, genealogical indexes, and incorporation records.

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