

General Motors Overseas R-3-A plant in India photograph album

Ms. Coll. 1189

Finding aid prepared by Clémence Scouten.

Last updated on March 10, 2016.

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2016 February 26

Table of Contents

Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	3
Scope and Contents.....	4
Administrative Information.....	4
Controlled Access Headings.....	5
Collection Inventory.....	6

Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Title	General Motors Overseas R-3-A plant in India photograph album
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1189
Date [inclusive]	1944-1945
Extent	08 linear feet (1 volume)
Language	English
Abstract	This photograph album documents a General Motors plant in Calcutta from 1944 to 1945 and the activities of the creator while in India.

Biography/History

As early as 1928, General Motors had business ventures in India and, according to Encyclopedia Britannica, "by 1941 it was making 44 percent of all the cars in the United States and had become one of the largest industrial corporations in the world." During World War II, General Motors joined the war effort by producing trucks, guns, airplane engines, airplanes and parts, tanks, marine diesels, and shells. The corporation worked with both British and American war offices and in January 1942, General Raymond A. Wheeler suggested that a number of projects be undertaken in the Middle East, including "motor vehicle reconditioning, rebuilding, repairing, and servicing in Iran and India" (Mottet, page 143) and training of native Indians to work in the plants.

According to Staff Sargent Tom Flanagan who met two engineers from the General Motors plant in Calcutta during his own time in the war, the plant focused solely on reconditioning engines. The assignment of the engineers was to establish an engine rebuilding plant to overhaul engines from all types

of vehicles. The task of finding a location, hiring local staff, training unskilled workers despite a language barrier was accomplished in less than a year.

Works cited:

Flanagan, Tom. http://www.comcar.org/Troop_Carrier/322nd_tcs/t_flanagan_wizards.htm

Motter, T.H. Vail. The Persian Corridor and Aid to Russia. Accessed March 9, 2016.

Scope and Contents

This collection captures the General Motors R-3-A plant in Calcutta from 1944 to 1945 and the activities of the creator while in India. About half the photos document a very large General Motors plant with both external and internal shots. Researchers will find images of workers, machinery, assembly lines, piles of engines, boxes prepared for shipping, bulldozers, and group photos of the workers. Workers are mostly Indian and management appears to be Caucasian. It is possible that the plant was working on reconditioning engines. The only captions in the album are of the plant. The only named individuals are Sorgini, McComb, Baum, Wilder, Pfluecke, Murphy, Levski and Bentling. There appear to only be men at the plant and in the leisure photos.

The balance of the photos documents scenes of India including burning ghats, people in the street, Indian religious rituals, parades, and many photos of poverty-stricken individuals. The leisure activities memorialized include trips to the shore, bicycling, and relaxed shots of men in front of the house in which they presumably lived.

Administrative Information

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2016 February 26

Finding aid prepared by Clémence Scouten.

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

Copyright restrictions may exist. For most library holdings, the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania do not hold copyright. It is the responsibility of the requester to seek permission from the holder of the copyright to reproduce material from the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts.

Source of Acquisition

Purchased, 2007.

Controlled Access Headings

CORPORATE NAME(S)

- General motors corporation.

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Photograph albums
- Photographs

GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)

- India--History--British occupation, 1765-1947--Photographs
- India--Photographs
- India--Social life and customs

SUBJECT(S)

- Automobile industry and trade
- World War, 1939-1945--India

Collection Inventory

	Volume
Photograph album, 1944-1945.	1