

Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant Records (2005.103)
Date Span: 1942-2003; bulk dates: 1966-1994

Plant manufactured Army ordnance during World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

The papers of the Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant document the plant's long production of Army ordnance and decades as a major employer in Johnson County and eastern Kansas. The papers were acquired as part of a much larger collection that included photographs, negatives, and video tapes. The largest portion of the collection that is not images are files of the plant newspaper. Small series of printed matter and scrapbooks are also represented.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Source: Johnson County Library

Size: 2 linear feet

Access: Open; Deed of Gift on file

Processed by: Russ Czaplewski; 2008

ADMINISTRATIVE SKETCH

- 1940 Portion of site selected by the Navy Bureau of Ordnance (Nov. 7)¹

- 1942 Corps of Engineers issued first order to proceed with construction (May 2)²
Maj. Charles Pruden named as first Commanding Officer and George Foulke Jr.
named as first Plant Manager (May)³
“Sunflower Ordnance Works”—operated by Hercules Powder Company (May)
Legal documents filed (“Declaration of Taking”) for 9,080 acres (August)

- 1943 Production of powder began (March 23)⁴

- 1943 Sunflower Village, a 350-unit housing project constructed⁵

- 1945 Peak employment of 12,067 (June)

- 1946 World War II powder production ended⁶

- 1951 Plant reactivated—operated by Hercules Powder Company (January)⁷

¹ Johnson County Museums *Album* Spring 2005

² “History Highlights” Sunflower Planet May 6, 1971

³ “Sunflower’s 50th Anniversary Celebration” Sunflower Planet June 12, 1992

⁴ “History Highlights”

⁵ Johnson County Museums *Album* Spring 2005

⁶ “History Highlights”

⁷ *Ibid.*

- 1953 Peak employment reached 5,271 (June)⁸
- 1960 All propellant production ended; standby contract granted to Hercules (May 25)⁹
- 1963 Plant redesignated as “Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant” (August 1)¹⁰
- 1965 Acid production marked the start of the Vietnam operation (November)¹¹
- 1966 Operating contractor’s name changed to “Hercules Incorporated” (May 1)
- 1967 Peak employment reached for Vietnam operation—4,065 (June)¹²
- 1971 Production ended for Vietnam operation (June 30)¹³
- 1975 Construction began on nitroguanidine facility (August) and was completed in 1979¹⁴
- 1984 Nitroguanidine facility activated (October 10) with work force of 720¹⁵
- 1992 Plant’s 50th anniversary celebrated (May 16)¹⁶
- 1992 Nitroguanidine production stopped (August 31)¹⁷
- 1997 Round of controlled burns to eliminate unused structures¹⁸
- 1998 Army designated the plant as federal surplus property
- 2005 U. S. Army transferred plant to private developer (August 3)¹⁹
- 2005 Groundbreaking ceremony for the plant’s redevelopment (October 13)²⁰

⁸ Johnson County Museums *Album* Spring 2005

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Sunflower Planet June 12, 1992

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Album*

¹⁸ “Sunflower ammunition plant ‘pilot burn’ slated for January” *Kansas City Star* December 25, 1996

¹⁹ “Army transfers former ammunition plant” *Kansas City Business Journal* August 5, 2005

²⁰ “Groundbreaking ceremony to mark new era for former ammunition site” *Lawrence Journal-World* October 12, 2005

COMMANDING OFFICERS

Maj. Charles Pruden	May 1942-May 1944
Lt. Col. Donald Hyde	June 1944-October 1945
Maj. Arthur Inman	October 1945-October 1946
Lt. Col. Robert Bacher	October 1946-August 1948
Maj. Alan Johnston	August 1948-April 1949
Lt. Col. Walter Rogers	May 1949-August 1951
Col. Don Hoffman	August 1951-July 1953
Maj. Donald Catherman	July 1953-March 1956
Maj. Richard Jones	March 1956-December 1957
Capt. Theron Driscoll	July 1958-May 1960
Maj. Richard R. Smith	September 1965-September 1966
Maj. Selden J. Carter, Jr.	September 1966-April 1968
Lt. Col. James P. Mooney	April 1968-January 1970
Lt. Col. Louis A. Mallia	January 1970-August 1972
Lt. Col. Michael M. Neer	September 1984-August 1987
Lt. Col. James L. Frye	August 1987-August 1989
Lt. Col. Richard M. Hart, Jr.	August 1989-September 1991
Lt. Col. Richard A. Jackson	September 1991-? ²¹

PLANT MANAGER

George Foulke, Jr.	May 1942-June 1943
H. V. Chase	June 1943-August 1945
F. L. Boddicker	September 1945-October 1945
E. F. Thoenges	November 1945-July 1948
George H. Ripley	January 1951-December 1955
Richard C. Tucker	January 1956-February 1957
John E. Greer	February 1957-October 1957
B. H. Sleight, Jr.	November 1957-September 1960
Lewis M. Roper	October 1960-October 1965
Joseph B. Talley	November 1965-January 1972
James O. Mack	January 1972-December 1973
Clement J. Koefel	January 1974-February 1976
R. H. Shepherdson	March 1976-May 1978
T. Frank Newsome	June 1978-July 1984
James F. Cross	August 1984-June 1985
R. H. Heller	July 1985-June 1991
James E. Woolwine	July 1991-? ²²

²¹ Sunflower Planet June 12, 1992

²² Ibid.

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

The papers of the Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant document a portion of the plant's long production of Army ordnance, and decades as a major employer in western Johnson County. The SAAP papers contain five series: Printed Matter, Plant Newspapers, Scrapbook, Photographs, and Objects. The photographs and negatives remain unprocessed.

Series 1: *Printed Matter* contains monographs (the most detailed dating from about 1967), newsletters, press releases, and a small quantity of inter-office e-mails regarding press coverage. The *Sunflower*, a newsletter for the plant's last years, succeeded the long-time *Sunflower Planet* newspaper that ended publication in 1994. A newsletter, *Redevelopment News*, reporting on the reuse of the plant after its closure, is represented by several issues. Assorted press releases, were found mixed in with chronological newspaper article files.

Series 2: *Printed matter: Plant newspapers* consists of files of single newspapers in three boxes (1966-1970; 1971, 1976-1984, and 1985-1994).

The *Sunflower Planet* carried articles of general interest to the staff, particularly production changes, safety issues, awards, changes of military or civilian staff. Printed during World War II (as the *Sunflower Sentinel*), this collection's earliest coverage is a bound 1956 volume. A successor, *Sunflower News*, began December 20, 1951. It was renamed *Sunflower Planet* on February 14, 1952.²³

Gaps that exist in these files (1957-1965; June 1971-September 1976) are partially covered by bound sets of the newspapers present in accession 2001.017.

The newspapers provide document many of the images in this collection as well as other accessions of plant photographs. Changes in the plant's publications reflect downsizing of the plant workforce, stand by periods, end of propellant production, and eventual designation as government surplus.

Many of the newspapers are also present in 2001.017 [2001.017.058-.067]. Duplicate bound volumes and single issues were removed from the collection for transfer to the De Soto Historical Society.

Series 3: *Scrapbook* consists of a single scrapbook, a three-ring binder, of safety awards documentation. Photographs have been cataloged and removed.

Series 4: *Photographs* consists of several boxes of prints, boxed as they were received in 2005. Some organization has been undertaken to arrange identified portraits. They are arranged alphabetically. Unidentified portraits are filed chronologically, 1943-1984, or undated. Another group of photographs are "Presentations: Individuals" and "Presentations: Groups." They are arranged chronologically, 1951-1990, if dated. Also present are "Firefighting/fire safety" photographs. If dated, they are arranged chronologically, 1952-1976.

²³ "Plant Newspaper Returns" *Sunflower Planet* March 17, 1966

A much larger component of the unprocessed photograph series is negatives. Boxed in chronological order, the first 38 boxes hold approximately 700 4" x 5" negatives each (for an estimated total of 26,600). There are six additional boxes of uncounted negatives. They primarily contain 35mm negatives.

Images are identified by a number, six or more digits. The first two digits are for the year, the second two digits for the month, and the third pair of two digits is for the day. Additional numbers are frequently found. At this time it is uncertain what the final numbers represent.

Series 5: *Objects* consists of seven video tapes, 1987-1995.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Box Nos.

- 1 **SERIES 1: PRINTED MATTER**
Monographs, newsletters, press releases.
- 2-4 **SERIES 2: PRINTED MATTER: NEWSPAPERS**
Loose issues of the Sunflower Planet, 1966-1971, 1976-1994; and an oversized bound 1956 volume stored separately.

SERIES 3: SCRAPBOOK
Single scrapbook relating to safety awards, 1972-1979, with photographs.

SERIES 4: PHOTOGRAPHS
Large collection of photographs and negatives, 1940s-1990s

SERIES 5: OBJECTS
Group of seven video tapes, 1987-1995.

FOLDER TITLE LIST

SERIES 1: PRINTED MATTER

Substantial files of newspaper clippings were pulled, duplicated and interfiled with existing research files.

Duplicate newspaper articles and plant newspapers were pulled from the collection.

Box 1:

Series 1: Printed matter

Folder 1: Monograph; Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant; ca. 1967

Folder 2: Monograph; plant history, ca. 1987

Folder 3: Monograph; Sunflower Ordnance Works; by Thomas D. Van Sant; 1988

Folder 4: Booklet; Historical Summary; October 18, 2000

Folder 5: Booklet; Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant; ca. 2000

Folder 6: Newsletter: Sunflower; 1996
Folder 7: Newsletter: Sunflower; 1997
Folder 8: Newsletter: Sunflower; 1998
Folder 9: Newsletter: Sunflower; 1999
Folder 10: Newsletter: Sunflower; 2000
Folder 11: Newsletter: Redevelopment News; 1998
Folder 12: Newsletter: Redevelopment News; 1999
Folder 13: Press releases: 1975
Folder 14: Press releases: 1990
Folder 15: Press releases: 1992
Folder 16: Press releases: 1992: Fifty Years of Partnership
Folder 17: Press releases: 1994
Folder 18: Press releases: 1998
Folder 19: E-mails; 2001-2003
Folder 20: Agenda: change of command visit; 1993

Box 2

Series 2: Printed matter: Plant newspapers: Sunflower Planet

Oversized: 1956 [2005.103.003]

Folder 1: 1966
Folder 2: 1967
Folder 3: 1968
Folder 4: 1969
Folder 5: 1970

Box 3

Series 2: Printed matter: Plant newspapers: Sunflower Planet

Folder 6: 1971
Folder 7: 1976
Folder 8: 1977
Folder 9: 1978
Folder 10: 1979
Folder 11: 1980
Folder 12: 1981
Folder 13: 1982
Folder 14: 1983
Folder 15: 1984

Box 4

Series 2: Printed matter: Plant newspapers: Sunflower Planet

Folder 16: 1985
Folder 17: 1986
Folder 18: 1987
Folder 19: 1988
Folder 20: 1989
Folder 21: 1990

Folder 22: 1991
Folder 23: 1992
Folder 24: 1993
Folder 25: 1994

Series 3: Scrapbook

Scrapbook [2005.103.004]

Series 2: Printed matter: Plant newspapers: Sunflower Planet

	Issue Count	Notes
Folder 1: 1966	21	
Folder 2: 1967	19	
Folder 3: 1968	23	gap between issue #13 and issue #14
Folder 4: 1969	26	
Folder 5: 1970	27	
Folder 6: 1971	11	ends June 3; smaller size starts this year
Folder 7: 1976	4	
Folder 8: 1977	10	
Folder 9: 1978	8	
Folder 10: 1979	9	
Folder 11: 1980	19	
Folder 12: 1981	22	
Folder 13: 1982	23	
Folder 14: 1983	23	
Folder 15: 1984	23	
Folder 16: 1985	2	incomplete
Folder 17: 1986	6	
Folder 18: 1987	18	
Folder 19: 1988	13	
Folder 20: 1989	6	
Folder 21: 1990	6	incomplete
Folder 22: 1991	12	
Folder 23: 1992	11	
Folder 24: 1993	4	incomplete
Folder 25: 1994	9	