



Elsey Carriage Company Photographs (SP0049)

Collection Number: SP0049

Collection Title: Elsey Carriage Company Photographs

Dates: 1908-1983

Creator: Elsey, Grant Ellis, 1873-1953

Abstract: The Elsey Carriage Company Photographs collection contains images of vehicles built by the company from 1905, when the company opened, to 1927 when the name of the company changed. Missouri and Arkansas businesses commissioned Elsey to build vehicles of various designs that were decorated to their specifications. A 1983 newspaper article gives the history of the company.

Collection Size: 0.5 cubic feet
(13 folders, 59 photographs)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Springfield](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at springfield@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Elsey Carriage Company Photographs* (SP0049); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Springfield [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Springfield].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Carrie Rippe on May 10, 2019 (Accession No. SPA0056).

Processed by: Processed by Erin Smither, May 14, 2019

Biographical Note:

Grant Ellis Elsey was born in Aurora, Missouri, on June 28, 1873, the fourth child born to Thomas B. Elsey and America Neece. Grant Elsey began his career as a blacksmith in Aurora, but he showed an aptitude for the manufacture of wagons. On March 14, 1900, he married Alta Shipman in Springfield, Missouri, and soon made the decision to move his business to the larger community of Springfield. In 1904, the couple purchased an empty blacksmith shop on Booneville St. and named it G.E. Elsey Carriage Company. Five years later, the shop moved to 414 Pearl St., which is present day Robberson Ave., where it remained until 1927. At the height of success, Elsey employed fifteen to twenty craftsmen who worked building conveyances of all types. This included covered vehicles, open delivery wagons, and eventually automobiles for use in a variety of businesses. Elsey produced numerous vehicles for the dairy industry, shipping them to St. Louis in the words of his son Paul, "by the carload."

Elsey also produced vehicles for public use, including the first wagon used by the Springfield Fire Department, as well as ambulances and hearses. Changing technology did not bother Elsey, who adapted quickly to the invention of the automobile. He built the first motor-powered milk wagon for Gurley Brother's Dairy in 1910. In 1915, the company produced its final wagon and by the following year was exclusively producing motor vehicles.

Grant Elsey had two sons, Paul and Herman, who in 1927 renamed the company the Elsey Auto Works and moved it to Cherry and Kimbrough St. Grant Elsey remained active in the business until his death in 1953, at the age of 80. The business continued until 1968, when it closed for good. Grant Elsey is buried in Greenlawn Memorial Gardens beside his wife, who passed away in 1960.

Arrangement:

The Elsey Carriage Company Photographs have been arranged into the following two series:

Photographs
Newspaper Clipping

Scope and Content Note:

Photographs

The Photographs series features 59 photographs commissioned by Elsey Carriage Company owner, Grant Ellis Elsey. He hired a professional photographer to document carriages he built for Missouri and Arkansas businesses. The photographs contain images of the carriages, some of which are parked in front of Elsey's business located on Pearl St. The backgrounds of many of the photographs feature images of Springfield streets and businesses. Of interest is a 1917 or 1918 carriage built for the Springfield Creamery, which the company directed Elsey to decorate patriotically in support of troops fighting in World War I. Blue stars symbolize employees of the company fighting in the war with the promise that their jobs will be waiting for them when they

return home. White paint was used on a number of images to blot out the background. Likely these photographs were prepared in this way for use in catalogues. Other prints have a cloth backing, and at one time may have been bound in a portfolio. The photographs have been sorted by business type and alphabetized. Images within each folder have been sorted by size. All but two of the 59 images are not dated.

Newspaper Clipping

The series contains a 1983 article printed in the *Springfield News Leader* which provides a nostalgic look at the history of the company. The series consists of one item in one folder.

Container List:

f. 1-12	Photographs
Box 001 f. 1	Grant and Paul Elsey, no date
f. 2	Automobile dealers vehicles, no date
f. 3	Bakery vehicles, no date
f. 4	Community vehicles, no date
f. 5	Dairy company vehicles, 1917-1918, no date
f. 6	Furniture company vehicles, no date
f. 7	Grocers, food and beverage vehicles, no date
f. 8	Hardware company vehicles, no date
f. 9	Laundry and dry cleaning vehicles, no date
f. 10	Livery vehicles, no date
f. 11	Musical instrument dealer vehicles, no date
f. 12	Unmarked vehicles, 1908, no date
f. 13	Newspaper Clipping
f. 13	<i>Springfield News Leader</i> article, 1983

Index:

Index Term	Folder	Image
Aushermann Grocery	7	Yes
Benton County Hardware Company (Bentonville, Ark.)	8	Yes
Best Foods (Springfield, Mo.)	7	Yes
Brackett Arnold Company	12	Yes
C.B. Shields Livery (Marshfield, Mo.)	10	Yes
C.M. Ritchey Motor Car Company	2	Yes
Doling and Simmons Dry Goods (Springfield, Mo.)	7	Yes
Domino's Bread (Springfield, Mo.)	3	Yes
Elsey, Grant Ellis, 1873-1953	1-13	Yes
Elsey, Herman, 1906-1970	13	
Elsey, Homer, 1879- 1967	12	Yes

Index Term	Folder	Image
Elsey, Paul, 1904-1990	1, 13	Yes
Frank B. Smith Laundry Company (Springfield, Mo.)	9	Yes
Greene County (Mo.)	1-13	Yes
Gurley Brothers Dairy (St. Louis, Mo.)	5	Yes
Hawkins Brothers Furniture (Springfield, Mo.)	6	Yes
Holland Farm Cream-Milk	5	Yes
J.A. Arnold and Brothers	7	Yes
Jack Wood Livery (Mammoth Springs, Ark)	10	Yes
Jared Brothers Furniture (Springfield, Mo.)	6	Yes
J.M. Wasson (Nixa, Mo.)	2	Yes
Kohlers Store (Springfield, Mo.)	7	Yes
Model Bakery (Springfield, Mo.)	3	Yes
Model Laundry (Springfield, Mo.)	9	Yes
Page and Elliott Market (Springfield, Mo.)	7	Yes
Peerless Cleaners and Dyers	9	Yes
Pevely Dairy Company (St. Louis, Mo.)	5	Yes
Queen City Dairy (Springfield, Mo.)	5	Yes
Reed and Rule Wholesale Produce	7	Yes
Rountree, Joel, 1892-1976	2	
Shamrock Butter (Rogersville, Mo.)	5	Yes
Smith Form-A-Truck Dealer	2	Yes
Smith-Messinger French Dry Cleaners (Springfield, Mo.)	9	Yes
Springfield (Mo.)	1-13	Yes
Springfield Creamery Company (Springfield, Mo.)	5	Yes
Union Milk Company (St. Louis, Mo.)	5	Yes
Wheeler Dairy (Springfield, Mo.)	5	Yes
Wm. R. Friedhofen Cleaner and Dyer (Springfield, Mo.)	9	Yes
W.T. Jacobs (Ark.)	12	Yes