

Guide to the **BorgWarner/Morse Collection**

The History Center in Tompkins County

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Collection Number V-64-1-1

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

Tompkins County's largest manufacturing industry was founded by the Morse brothers in 1880 in Trumansburg as the Morse Equalizing Spring Company, makers of horse drawn carts and buggy springs. In 1892 their patented rocker joint was used to produce a successful bicycle chain, leading to incorporation as the Morse Chain Company in 1898. As in its earliest years, Morse has thrived on making new and improved products to serve rapidly changing U.S. industries. Development of a silent power chain in 1901 led to construction of an 80,000-square-foot plant on Ithaca's South Hill for manufacturing chain and other products for the automotive industry. In the teen years plant size was quadrupled and various products included adding machines, electric clocks and, most famously, airplanes for U.S. forces in World War I. In 1928 Morse Chain joined the BorgWarner Corporation, newly formed by several makers of auto parts and other products. The Morse operations, as leading suppliers for automotive and other industries, continued to grow and plants were added abroad. In 1983 BorgWarner sold the Morse Industrial Products Division and the Ithaca plant on Aurora Street to Emerson Electric Company and moved Morse Automotive and related operations to the large Warren Road complex, newly built in nearby Lansing.

CONTAINER LIST

<i>Box 1</i> General Records	Folder No.
Morse Chain/BorgWarner History	1
Promotional Materials	2
Management Policies and Personnel	3
Employee Records and Policies (see also Box 6)	4
Correspondence (miscellaneous)	5

Community Links	6
Magazine Articles	7
Newspaper Articles (1957-98)	8
Newsprint Clippings	9

Box 2 Morse Beginnings, Trumansburg Era (1880-1905)

Advertisement Scrapbook	(loose in box) 10
Early Morse Chain Brochures	11

Box 3 Thomas-Morse Aircraft (1914-1929)

History of Thomas-Morse Aircraft Corp.	12
Thomas-Morse Correspondence	13
Magazine Articles, Booklets	14
“Tommy” Scout Newspaper Clippings	15
Air Force Museum	16

Box 4 Product Catalogs and Promotion

Morse Automotive Catalogs, 1923-37	17
Morse Automotive Catalogs, 1946-65	18
Morse and BorgWarner Catalogs, 1968-83	19
Morse Automotive Handbook (ca. 1973)	20
Morse Chain & Gear Promotional Materials	21
Warner Gear Division Brochures, 1978	22
Chain and Gear Designs	23
Barr-Morse Typewriter	24
Poole Electric Clock	25
Morse Chain ads for “Automotive Industries” (1920s)	26

Box 5 Development Topics

Plant Expansions: Ithaca, Lansing (1945-80)	27
Machined Product Plant Tours (1975)	28
Detroit Plant Floor Plans (1947)	29
Letchworth, England Closing (1980), news articles	30
Letchworth Closing, newsprint clippings	31
European Brochures (Morse, European Community)	32
Nabari City, Japan (a Morse plant location)	33
Competing Firms’ Products	34

Automotive Management Workshop, 1987	35
<i>Box 6</i> Morse Chain Employee Files	
25-Year Club Annual Dinners, 1938-68	36
25-Year Dinner Programs, 1985-2001	37
25-Year Club Various Employee Records	38
“Morse Minutes,” in-house magazine 1975-82	39
“South Hill Echo” & “ReEcho,” employee publications 1924-46	40
Salaried Employee Policies	41
<i>Box 7</i> BorgWarner Annual Reports, 1954-2002	Loose in box
<i>Box 8</i> BorgWarner Financial and Corporate Information	
BorgWarner Financial Reports, 1982-91	42
BorgWarner Facts for Investors, 1965-85	43
BorgWarner Brochures on Corporate Goals	44
<i>Box 9</i> Morse Chain Patents	
Patent Folder, 1874-1914	45
Patent Filebook, 1917-59	(loose in box) 46
D.B. Perry’s Chain Patents (1928-47)	47
<i>Box 10</i> Technical Manuals	
Morse Chain Specifications, 1926-46	48
Morse Chain Specifications, 1955-65	49
Morse and Link-Belt General Manuals	50
Morse Instruction Manuals	51
Chain-Related Design Studies	52
Fighting Vehicle Design Studies	53
<i>Box 11</i> Morse and General Engineering Data Books and Gauges	Loose in box
<i>Box 12</i> Thomas-Morse Scout pamphlets (app. 97 copies)	Loose in box