

SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC HISTORY: THE RECORDS OF NORTH AMERICAN PRIVATE ENTERPRISES*

Warren Dean, University of Texas

THIS REPORT PRESENTS THE RESULTS OF A PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF NORTH American firms that operate in Latin America. Its purpose was to uncover sources for economic historians and economists in an area that is largely unknown and unused. Firms that have deposited their materials in public archives in the United States have not been included in the survey; they will be described in the forthcoming *Guide to Latin American Historical Materials in the United States*, which is being organized by Gunnar Mendoza.

A study by D. C. M. Platt of the records of British firms, which is shortly to be published as part of the *Guide to Sources in Britain for the History of Latin America and the West Indies*, served as a model for this survey. The results of Platt's study are extremely valuable. He has opened for historians more than fifty archives containing the records of several hundred companies, including railroads, mercantile houses, manufacturing firms, and utilities.†

It was not attempted, however, to employ Platt's technique, personal interview, which would have been much more expensive in the United States. Instead a questionnaire was devised to be sent by mail. It was addressed to the president of the firm and was accompanied by a letterhead of the Institute of Latin American Studies of the University of Texas explaining the purposes of the survey. In all, the questionnaire was sent to 681 firms, out of approximately 1,200 firms whose addresses were collected from various directories. An attempt was made to include all of the larger companies and no economic activity was excluded.

The initial questionnaire was quite brief, in order to minimize the loss of the company's time, and to reduce the possibility that it would not be answered. Four substantive questions were asked: (1) Did the company possess records relative to its operations in Latin America? (2) What was the nature of these operations? (3) What was the quantity of records kept on file? (4) Would

* The assistance of Susan Shattuck and Charles O'Neil in the preparation of this survey is gratefully acknowledged. Gunnar Mendoza has contributed valuable advice in the formulation of questionnaires.

† "Latin America, Business Archives in the United Kingdom," Mss., Department of History, Exeter University, undated.

the company be willing to grant access to qualified researchers? In addition it was asked if the company would be willing to transfer its records to a public collection, and if a history of the company's operations had appeared in print.

There was attached to the questionnaire a "Statement of Conditions of Access" to which, the respondents were assured, all researchers would adhere:

Access to the records of the firms and individuals listed below are subject to the following conditions:

- a) Receipt of a written request for access, indicating the purpose and scope of the research project
- b) A minimum of one week's advance notice
- c) The right to refuse individual requests for access
- d) The right to veto the use of any part of the firm's records intended for publication

In addition, the respondents were permitted to list further conditions, if they desired.

There were 152 replies, that is, 22 per cent. Of these 37, or nearly 6 per cent, responded affirmatively to the request for access to the firm's records. This would appear to be rather a disappointing return, but it is comparable to other surveys carried out by mail. The extent of the response is, of course, only a minimum indication of the willingness of United States firms to open their archives; a solicitation made in person would undoubtedly reveal many more.

It is likely, however, that even this more intensive labor would not prove as fruitful as Platt's survey in Britain. The negative responses suggest the reasons why. First of all, most of the North American companies have been operating only a relatively short time in Latin America. Platt was able to limit his concern to the period before 1914 and yet he found hundreds of cases. More recent operations yield fewer companies willing to reveal their archives and more that have rigorously applied standards of records control. The respondents frequently allege, therefore, a lack of records or a reluctance to open files that are too live. There is also the difficulty that many firms have stored records in such a fashion that it would cost them a considerable amount of time to make them available.

The companies that expressed a willingness to open their archives were sent a further request for information in order to gauge the quality and extent of their holdings. This information has been consolidated in the list below:

Name of Company

Address

1. Nature of its operations in Latin America
2. Countries operating in
3. Quantity of archives

SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF ECONOMIC HISTORY

4. Nature of the archival material, time periods
5. Name and position of person responding
6. Other remarks, if any

The first group of companies did not place any restrictions on access beyond those of the "statement":

American and Foreign Power Co.

100 Church Street, NY NY 10007

1. Owning and operating public utilities; operation of other types of industry
2. Argentina, Mexico, Chile and eight other countries
3. Quantity not known
4. Annual reports for last 35 years; other types of material
5. H. W. Balgooyen, Executive Vice Pres.

Brazilian Traction, Light and Power Company, Ltd.

25 King St. West, Toronto, Canada

1. Ownership and operation of public utilities in Brazil
2. Brazil
3. Extensive but unknown
4. Not indicated
5. Jeffrey Frost, Executive Assistant

Clark Brothers Co.

600 Lincoln Ave., Olean, NY

1. Sale of compressors, pumps, engines
2. Venezuela
3. Not available
4. Only copies of "users lists" would be available; time span not given
5. Paul M. Wenderlich, Employment Mgr.

Deere & Company

Moline, Ill. 61265

1. Manufacture and distribute farm and industrial machinery
2. Manufacturing in Mexico and Argentina, independent dealers in all other countries
3. Several file cabinets; scattered

4. All types of records for the establishment and maintenance of the business; entered Latin America ten years ago

5. Not indicated

6. Note: most of the records are in Mexico or Argentina

Diamond Alkali Co.

300 Union Commerce Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio

1. Chemicals and Plastics
2. Mexico, Colombia, Brazil
3. Five or six standard file cabinets
4. Financial statements and annual reports, 1955 to present
5. S. S. Savage, General Mgr., International division

Ensign Bickford Co.

Simsbury, Conn. 06070

1. Manufacturing fuses
2. Mexico (30 years), Brazil (2 years), Chile (1 year)
3. Five cubic feet
4. Correspondence, accounts, director's minutes, technical reports; dates of records same as above for operations in different countries
5. John E. Ellsworth, President

Gary International

5150 Northwest Highway, Chicago, Ill. 60630

1. Manufacture and distribution of school and office supplies
2. Mexico, Venezuela
3. Twenty-five feet
4. Correspondence, technical reports; 1964 to present

Latin American Research Review

5. P. S. Quillan, Exec. Asst. to the President

Hilton International Co.
301 Park Ave, NY NY 10022

1. Operation of hotels
2. Mexico, Panama, Chile
3. Not indicated
4. Primarily financial statements and records, 1957 to present
5. Sam F. Graham, Treasurer

International Harvester Co.
180 North Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.
60601

1. Manufacture of farm machinery, engines
2. Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, Peru
3. Quantity unknown
4. not indicated
5. F. Granger, Mgr. of Public Relations, Archives Division

Byron Jackson, Inc.
6506 Paramount Blvd., Long Beach, Calif. 90805

1. Oilfield equipment sales and services
2. Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico
3. Scattered—fairly extensive
4. Correspondence, sales figures; 1957–1967
5. W. F. Roberts, Mgr., International Operations

Joy Manufacturing Co.
757 Third Ave., NY NY 10017

1. Manufacturing, export of mining and oil drilling tools
2. Manufacturing subsidies in Mexico and Peru; export to all countries
3. Fairly extensive
4. All export correspondence, 1957 to date is in NY; files for manufacturing operations are in Mexico and Peru
5. Frank X. White, Vice Pres.

Keystone Helicopter Corp.
International Airport, Philadelphia, Pa.

1. Operation of helicopters in Latin America
2. Colombia, Guatemala
3. Two file drawers
4. Correspondence, technical reports, accounts; 1955–1961.
5. Peter Wright, Pres.

Koppers Company, Inc. International Division
Pittsburgh, Pa., 15219

1. Steel, Protective Easings, Plastics
2. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, Venezuela
3. Thirty file drawers
4. Correspondence, accounts, director's minutes, technical reports, other; years 1958–62 in storage, 1963–67 in office files
5. Thelma D. Minch, Librarian
6. Researchers may use the files with the understanding that the material is very technical and Koppers personnel cannot take time out to interpret it for the researcher.

Eli Lilly Intl. Corp.
P. O. Box 32, Indianapolis, Ind. 46206

1. Manufacturing and marketing of paper products
2. Manufacturing in Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Guatemala, and Mexico; distributing in all countries.
3. Holdings not extensive
4. Correspondence, some accounts; 1930 to present
5. Gretchen Erickson, Communications Assistant

Lucey Export Corp.
233 Broadway, NY NY 10007

1. Export of machinery and supplies for oil well production

SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF ECONOMIC HISTORY

2. Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Peru
3. Over 250 cubic feet
4. Correspondence, Accounts, Director's minutes, Technical reports; 1957 to date
5. Joseph W. Dye, Pres.

McGraw-Hill Publishing Co.
330 West 42 St., NY NY 10036

1. Publishing books and magazines
2. Offices in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Puerto Rico
3. Fifteen file drawers
4. Some records and bound copies of publications of McGraw-Hill for Latin America; 1919 to present
5. Isabelle Loughlin, Archivist

Piper Aircraft Corp.
820 E. Bald Eagle St., Lock Haven, Pa.

1. Sale and delivery of completed airplanes through a dealer/distributor organization
2. Not indicated
3. Very small
4. Sales records going back a maximum of seven years. Would include the name of the customer and model number
5. W. T. Piper, Jr., Executive Vice Pres.

Ritter Pfaudler
1100 Midtown Tower, Rochester, NY 14604

1. Marketing and manufacturing
2. Manufacturing in Mexico and Brazil; marketing in all other countries
3. Sixty cubic feet
4. Correspondence, director's minutes, technical reports and market surveys; 1957-1967 though not always complete
5. Miss Noreen Quinlan for Ramon Patuel, Area Manager, Latin America

6. Some files are also kept at area headquarters in Mexico City

Time-Life International
Time and Life Bldg., NY NY

1. Publishing *Time* and *Life En Espanol*; publishing magazines in several countries
2. All countries
3. Scattered, not extensive
4. Correspondence, market research, promotional work etc., bound volumes of Latin American editions of *Time* and *Life*
5. Lillian Owens, Office Service Records Dept.

United Fruit Co.
30 St. James Ave., Boston, Mass. 02116

1. Production of tropical products and their exports to the US; related manufacturing activities carried on within the countries
2. Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, and Cuba (Up to August 1, 1960)
3. Extensive, scattered
4. Correspondence, other; 1903 to date
5. George S. Howard, Esquire, Assistant General Council

W. M. Jackson, Inc.
375 Park Ave, NY NY 10022

1. Publishing, manufacturing and selling educational, encyclopedic and cultural books in Spanish and Portuguese
2. Operations in fifteen countries, in some since 1912, in some since 1964
3. The amount is "impossible to estimate"
4. General sales records, etc., since 1912; more complete records since 1956
5. Henry Chapin Jackson, President

Latin American Research Review

The following companies limited access to their records. Note item six in each case:

Automatic Sprinkler Corp. of America
P. O. Box 360, Youngstown, Ohio 44501

1. Subsidiary companies operating as fire protection engineers and contractors; some fabrication and manufacturing
2. Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil
3. Twelve cubic feet
4. 1946 to present; no other information
5. Charles B. Miller, General Mgr., International Operations
6. The archives would be difficult and expensive to comb. All three subsidiaries are now defunct and have been replaced by sales agency arrangements in Chile, Colombia and Peru

Frederic H. Hatch Co.
72 Wall St., NY NY 10005

1. Brokers
2. Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela
3. Extensive
4. Correspondence, technical reports, legal papers and notes; 1947 to present
5. Eric M. Held, Research Department
6. Some information will be withheld as confidential

Macmillan Co.
866 Third Ave, NY NY 10022

1. Publishing (via a partially owned Macmillan affiliate) of books for the Latin American university market; export of books and educational materials
2. All countries
3. A dozen active file drawers; about same amount in storage
4. Nature of files not given; the files go back only a few years

5. Marshall D. Mascott, Assistant Director, International Division
6. All files will be opened to qualified researchers except confidential ones and those relating purely to house-keeping matters

Sears Roebuck and Co.
2000 Spring Road, Oak Book, Ill.

1. Retailing
2. "Latin America"
3. Not available; the records are scattered and most are kept in Latin America
4. Records cover "all facets of retailing" No inclusive dates are given
5. Mr. I. M. Lande, International Operations
6. Certain information is readily available; information regarding profits and sales will be given only after the validity of such exposure is demonstrated

Sinclair and Valentine Co.
1212 Ave. of the Americas, NY NY 10036

1. Ink manufacture; wholly owned, joint ventures, licensees
2. Costa Rica, Colombia, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru
3. Fifteen file drawers
4. Financial statements are retained for ten years and commercial correspondence for three years
5. Fernando Perez Q., International Manager
6. Commercial correspondence is always available; financial statements depending on the circumstances

SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF ECONOMIC HISTORY

The following companies replied that they would limit themselves to considering specific projects or specific questions, note item six:

Bank of America

San Francisco, Calif. 94210

1. Banking
2. Argentina, Guatemala, Panama, Nicaragua
3. Not indicated
4. Not indicated
5. W. H. Bolin, Vice Pres.
6. While records are confidential the bank will inform the researcher if certain documents would be made available if a detailed description of the research project is submitted

General American Transportation Co.

135 LaSalle St., Chicago, Ill. 60602

1. Equipment and consumer products exports; erection of plants
2. "Latin America"
3. Files are scattered
4. Nature of archives and dates not given
5. Emerson J. Jones, Assistant to the President
6. Will be pleased to provide specific information if it is available

General Foods Corp.

250 North Street, White Plains, NY 10605

1. Purchasers of green coffee; food processors
2. Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela
3. Not indicated
4. Not indicated
5. W. C. Wahl, General Mgr., Latin America
6. Company prefers to be contacted on an individual basis; may open archives for a specific project

General Food de Mexico, S. A.

Mexico City, D. F.

1. Manufacture and sale of food

2. Mexico

3. Two file rooms; extensive files
4. Files contain a complete history of the company since its founding in 1960
5. A. L. Johnson, Controller
6. The researcher must be qualified and permission is contingent on the nature of the request

H. J. Heinz Co.

Pittsburgh, Pa. 15230

1. Food processing and marketing
2. Plants in Mexico and Venezuela
3. Archives in the United States are small; some records are also kept in Mexico and Venezuela. Company has been operating in Latin America only "the last few years"
4. Donald C. McVay, Senior Vice Pres.
5. Would consider answering a specific request to answer specific questions if the material were available in the U.S.

Insurance Company of North America

1600 Arch, Philadelphia, Pa. 19103

1. Professional reinsurer in many countries and direct insurer in Colombia, Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil
2. Active in almost all countries
3. Ten file cabinets
4. Administrative and contract files; statistical results; some records go back to 1930 but most are from last twenty years
5. Robert W. Daum, Jr., Secretary—Underwriting
6. Will grant unlimited access to the files if they "believe it will serve any worthwhile purpose"

IBM Corp.

Old Orchard Road, Armonk, NY 10504

1. Development, marketing and manu-

Latin American Research Review

facture of business machines

2. All countries
3. Ten cubic feet
4. Nature and time span not given; implies that there are more extensive records in the various countries
5. W. L. Rofes, Archivist
6. "Do not normally open archives but are willing to answer questions"

Kibon, S.A.—General Foods International
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

1. Food processing and marketing
2. Brazil
3. 1,500 cubic feet of records
4. Basic accounting records of operation since founding in 1941; other more complete records of the last six years
5. Eric Egan, Assistant General Manager
6. The researcher must be qualified and permission is contingent on the nature of his request

Mobil Latin America

150 E. 42 Street, NY NY 10017

1. Production and marketing of petroleum
2. Production in Venezuela, Colombia, Barbados; marketing in most countries
3. One large file room
4. Nature of archives not given; records are kept only so long as they have any importance for the business—usually not longer than one year
5. J. E. Gross, Vice Pres.

6. Will consider opening archives if they are convinced that their material was important to the project and that the project was also important, for such a search would be expensive for them

S. C. Johnson & Son, Inc.

Racine, Wisc.

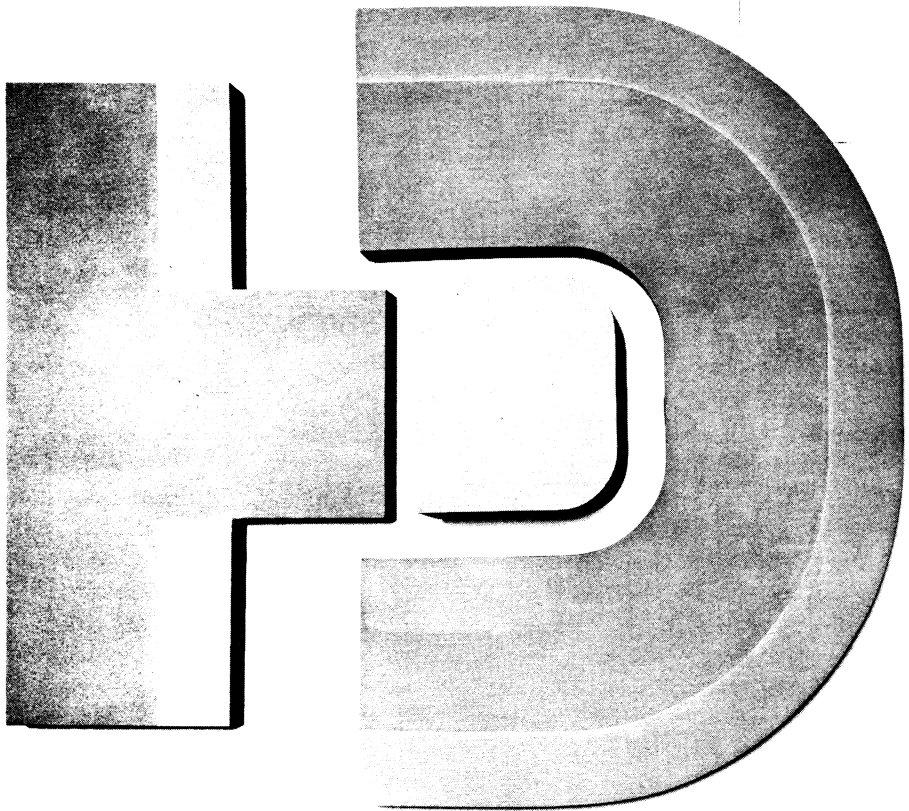
1. Manufacture and marketing of wax and other products
2. Manufacturing in Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela; licensing arrangements and/or direct imports from the U.S. in all countries
3. Not indicated
4. Not indicated
5. Richard O. Lang, International Administrator
6. Would consider opening the archives only if the project seemed to have sufficient interest to the company

Scott Paper Co.

Philadelphia, Pa. 19113

1. Manufacture and sale of paper products
2. Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Costa Rica
3. Not available; scattered
4. Not indicated
5. Karl Spaeth, Counsel for Foreign Operations
6. Will consider opening files partially to qualified researchers who submit a specific project; some material is confidential and will not be available

A file of all firms in the original sample and all negative responses has been maintained for interested researchers.



Shaping Nucleus BY CESAR PATERNOSTO

(Courtesy of the Center for Inter-American Relations, N.Y. and the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, Argentina. Photograph by Charles Uht.)