

**Title:** Ambrosia Chocolate Company Collection

**Reference Code:** Mss-1741

**Inclusive Dates:** 1894-1992 (bulk 1910s-1960s)

**Quantity:** 8.4 cu. ft.

**Location:** WC, Sh. 077-081  
OS SM "A" (1 item)

**Abstract:** The Ambrosia Chocolate Company was founded in Milwaukee in 1894 when Otto Schoenleber converted his furniture-making space on Fifth Street into a chocolate factory. From the 1890s to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ambrosia manufactured chocolate confectionary and penny candy, including candy that would be sold in the very first vending machines. By the 1910s they had expanded into baking chocolate and "breakfast cocoa," eventually winning a government contract to supply cocoa to the United States Navy shortly before the outbreak of World War I. By World War II, Ambrosia had established itself nationally as a leading manufacturer and supplier of bulk chocolate, confectionary coatings, Dutch processed cocoa, and ice cream coatings and inclusions. Ambrosia chocolate would eventually be found in products as ubiquitous as Eskimo Pies and Sally Fields cookies.

The Fifth Street factory expanded around the corner to West Highland Avenue in 1958 and included a food science and quality control laboratory as well as one of the Milwaukee area's first bulk sugar systems. In 1953, Amby, an anthropomorphic cocoa bean, was introduced as Ambrosia's mascot. In 1961, Ambrosia acquired controlling interest in Hooton Chocolate Company of Newark, NJ and in 1963 opened a southern division office in Charlotte, NC. In 1964, Ambrosia merged with multi-industrial W.R. Grace & Co. of New York. Ambrosia's downtown plant closed in 1992 and the company moved to a new facility on West Carmen Avenue. Minneapolis-based Cargill purchased the plant and the Ambrosia name in 2015.

**Scope and Content:** This collection consists of materials that provide a historical overview of the Ambrosia Chocolate Company's growth and change as a business, in addition to providing insight into chocolate, the candy industry, advertising, food and health trends, and labor issues in the early to mid-20th century. Materials include administrative and business records, trademark, patent, and other legal documents, price lists and customer mailings, employee relations materials such as newsletters, manuals, and wages and benefits information, company publications and marketing materials, advertisements, clippings from local and national newspapers, magazines, and trade journals, documents relating to the Schoenleber Clock Tower, and several hundred issues of *The Northwest Confectioner* (shortened to *The Confectioner* in 1940), a monthly candy industry trade journal published in Milwaukee.

**Access and Use:** No restrictions

**Language:** English, German, Greek and Polish

**Notes:** Collection processed by Taylor Kelley in 2019.

**Arrangement:**

Series 1: Business and Administration Records includes sales books and ledgers, financial reports and profit plans, expense reports, meeting minutes, records pertaining to a 1962 negligence lawsuit, trademark and patent records, employee relations materials including wages and benefits information, policies and company safety, materials relating to a 1952 trucking strike and efforts in the early 1970s to unionize Ambrosia factory workers, materials on government legislation including Medicare, Executive Order 11246, Equal Opportunity Employment, and retirement age, items relating to Christmas parties and contests, and records and photographs relating to expansion of the Fifth Street plant, its demolition, and the construction and opening of the plant on Carmen Avenue.

Series 2: Customer Relations includes price lists mailed to customers and sales representatives between 1926 and 1957, other customer mailings that include sales, credit, and promotional information, and other miscellaneous records relating to Ambrosia's customer base from the 1920s to the 1970s.

Series 3: Public Relations and Advertising includes company published brochures such as "Food of the Gods" and "The Story of Cacao," original advertisement mock ups and proofs, early 20<sup>th</sup> century advertisements from local Milwaukee newspapers including German, Polish and Greek newspapers, records on advertisement costs and publication, ads from trade journals, materials relating to trade show and convention appearances, newspaper, magazine and trade journal clippings related to Ambrosia and trends in the candy and chocolate industry, and materials related to the Amby mascot, including his development and introduction in 1953, and examples of his appearances in advertisements, customer mailings, and promotional materials including booklets and stickers.

Series 4: Miscellaneous includes Ambrosia products labels and packaging, signage and other retail merchandising materials, fundraising candy and food services information, materials related to competing chocolate companies including Nestle and Hershey, and memos, letters, and brochures related to the Schoenleber Memorial Clock Tower, built in 1969 and formally dedicated in 1970.

Series 5: The Northwestern Confectioner Trade Journals consists of an incomplete run of The Northwestern Confectioner (later known as simply The Confectioner) trade journal from 1916 to 1955. Issues reflect important national issues such as the New Deal and World War II.

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Scrapbook – labels and packaging 1950-1957	WC, Sh. 81	
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Scrapbook – custom scrapbook of advertisements, retail displays, labels, and packaging	WC, Sh.78	
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Accounting Ledger – 1894-1896	WC Sh. 80	
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<b>Oversize Items</b>		
Framed first sales receipt 1894	OS SM “A”	
<b>Photographs:</b> See: M-263		