



# **Guide to the Brooks Rupture Appliance Company Correspondence, 1909-1932**

---

This collection guide was produced in **July 2023**.

This PDF version was created on **May 8, 2026**.

David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

411 Chapel Drive

Duke University

Durham 27708

[askRL@duke.edu](mailto:askRL@duke.edu)

URL: <https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/>

---

## Table of Contents

---

<a href="#">Summary</a> .....	3
<a href="#">Background</a> .....	3
<a href="#">Arrangement</a> .....	4
<a href="#">Administrative Information</a> .....	5
<a href="#">Names and Subjects</a> .....	5
<a href="#">Collection Inventory</a> .....	6

## Summary

---

**Collection Title:**

Brooks Rupture Appliance Company correspondence, 1909-1932

**Creator:**

Brooks Rupture Appliance Company

**Source:**

Josiah Charles Trent History of Medicine Collections (Duke University)

**Abstract:**

Brooks Rupture Appliance Company manufactured cushioned belts that helped relieve pain from hernias. Collection consists of correspondence between Brooks Rupture Appliance Company and their customers, most of which are testimonials from customers who were happy with their purchases and felt that their hernias had been cured. Acquired as part of the History of Medicine Collection at Duke University.

**Extent:**

1.5 Linear Feet

**Language:**

Materials in English.

**Collection ID:**

RL.13015

**Permalink:**

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m1h155>

**Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item], Brooks Rupture Appliance Company correspondence, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Background

---

**Scope and Content**

Collection consists of correspondence between Brooks Rupture Appliance Company and their customers, documenting some communication strategies

and the success of the company's products. Most letters are testimonials from customers who were happy with their purchases and felt that their hernias had been cured. Some correspondents also referred relatives and friends to the company, while others wrote seeking advice for the maintenance or adjustment of their hernia belts. Envelopes are annotated, presumably by company staff, with information like order or customer numbers, if the letter references a "cure," if a child is the patient in question, or if a testimonial ("test") has been given. Beginning in 1927, letters from the company solicit permission to refer "cured" customers to government officials for interviews, allegedly to testify about the ability of the Brooks Rupture Appliances to cure hernias. Some correspondence includes carbon copies of the company's responses to their customers. Also scattered throughout the correspondence are items such as order forms, pieces of customer card files, and Brooks Rupture Appliance Company catalogs. One letter from 1926 contains a photograph of a child who had previously worn an appliance from the company.

### **Biographical/Historical**

Brooks Rupture Appliance Company was founded by Charles E. Brooks (1843-1913) in Marshall, Michigan, likely in the early 1900s. The company manufactured cushioned belts or trusses for people suffering from hernias, or "ruptures." Brooks' son, Harold C. Brooks (1885-1978), took over as general manager in 1912 and worked to expand the company's business through advertising and communication campaigns. Brooks' Rupture Appliances could be worn by men, women, and children for inguinal, scrotal, femoral, and navel (umbilical) hernias. The appliances had cushioned pads that helped hold hernias in place to provide pain relief.

Source: "Brooks," Marshall History, Choose Marshall [Marshall Area Economic Development website], accessed 2023 July 31.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

### **Arrangement**

---

Arranged chronologically by year.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Administrative Information

---

### Publication Statement

David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

411 Chapel Drive

Duke University

Durham 27708

[askRL@duke.edu](mailto:askRL@duke.edu)

URL: <https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/>

### Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

### Use Restrictions

The copyright interests in this collection have not been transferred to Duke University. For more information, consult the Rubenstein Library's Citations, Permissions, and Copyright guide.

### Acquisition Information

The Brooks Rupture Appliance Company correspondence was received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as a purchase from Kate Mitas, Bookseller in 2023.

### Processing Information

Processed by Leah Tams, July 2023.

Accessions described in this collection guide: 2023-0114.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Names and Subjects

---

- Medical instruments and apparatus -- United States -- History
- Business correspondence
- Surgical instruments and apparatus
- Hernia -- Treatment

- Femoral hernia
- Inguinal hernia
- Endorsements in advertising
- Trusses (Surgery)
- Medical instruments and apparatus industry
- Marshall (Mich.)
- Business enterprises -- Michigan -- Marshall
- Josiah Charles Trent History of Medicine Collections (Duke University)
- Brooks Rupture Appliance Company
- Brooks, Charles E., 1843-1913
- Brooks, Harold C., 1885-1978

---

## Collection Inventory

---

Correspondence, 1909, 1912	Box 1
Correspondence, 1923	Box 1
Correspondence, 1924	Box 1
Correspondence, 1925	Box 1
Correspondence, 1926	Box 1
<b>Physical Description:</b> 2 folders	
Correspondence, 1927	Box 1
<b>Physical Description:</b> 5 folders	
Correspondence, 1928	Box 1
<b>Physical Description:</b> 2 folders	
Correspondence, 1929	Box 1
Correspondence, 1931	Box 1
Correspondence, 1932	Box 1
<b>Physical Description:</b> 2 folders	