



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman  
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**[Map Letterhead] Office of the Ohio Falls Car Company. Jeffersonville, Ind. . . .**

**Stock#:** 59325

**Map Maker:**

**Date:** 1873

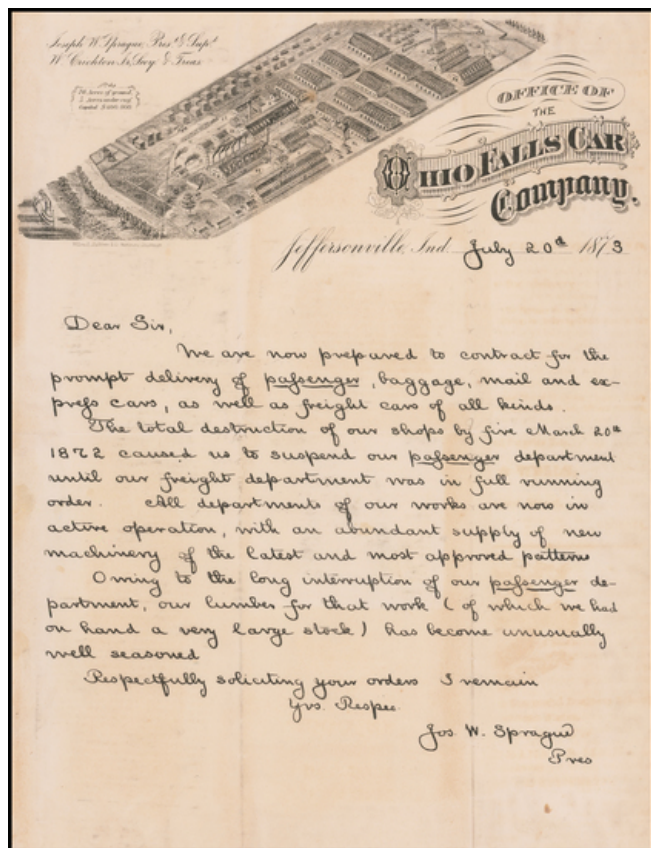
**Place:** Jeffersonville, Indiana

**Color:** Uncolored

**Condition:** VG+

**Size:**

**Price:** \$125.00



**Description:**

Business letter on written on stationary with a marvelous birdseye view masthead for the Ohio Falls Company of Jeffersonville, Indiana.

The Ohio Falls Car & Locomotive Company was founded at Jeffersonville, Indiana, June 1, 1864. It was likely started because during this last full year of the Civil War inflation was rampant and the price of a boxcar that before the war had sold for \$450 - 500 was up to \$1,000 - 1,200. Further, Jeffersonville was the location of an important Quartermaster supply depot and an important gateway to the south.

After an early bankruptcy in 1866, 35 year old Joseph White Sprague (1831-1900) was asked by the stockholders to take over management. He had been Engineer on the enlargement of the Erie Canal from 1854 to 1858, Second Assistant Engineer on the New York canals from 1858 to 1862, and then Civil Engineer on the Ohio & Mississippi Railroad.



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Sprague believed in standardization at a time when railroads were going in 76 different directions with their own ideas of how cars should be built. His firm was soon offering standard box cars, flat cars and hopper cars. According to White,(64) Ohio Falls' advertisement in the 1868 Ashcroft Railway Directory stated they had cars on hand ready for immediate delivery. They maintained 10 of each type of car ready for lettering and delivery in 24 hours. They maintained another 120 cars framed up, and could deliver these completed at a rate of from 12 to 20 per week. They had a stock of streetcars ready for lettering, and passenger car bodies ready for trucks and interior trimmings of the buyer's choice. They guaranteed high quality and fast delivery.

The company's shops burned to the ground in 1872, and Sprague built a new series of shops. But before the company could get going again, the financial panic of 1873 severely reduced the railroads' buying of new cars. The shops were closed for more than two years, and the firm apparently went through a second bankruptcy.

In 1876 the company was reorganized as the Ohio Falls Car Manufacturing Company. It built most types of railroad cars, including electric street cars, and passenger cars for the up-and-coming narrow gauge railroads.

We don't know whether there was another reorganization between 1876 and 1887, but the name Ohio Falls Car Co. is listed under "Car Builders" in 1877 edition, Poor's Directory of Railway Officials.

When Joseph Sprague retired in 1888, Ohio Falls was one of the largest and most profitable of the car builders. By 1892 it employed more than 2,300, and its sales soon reached \$3 million worth of cars annually.

**Detailed Condition:**