



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the DuPont Nylon Collection

NMAH.AC.0007

Robert S. Harding

1982

Archives Center, National Museum of American History

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Collection Overview

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|-------------------------|---|
| Repository: | Archives Center, National Museum of American History |
| Title: | DuPont Nylon Collection |
| Date: | 1939-1977 |
| Identifier: | NMAH.AC.0007 |
| Creator: | E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company |
| Extent: | 1 Cubic foot (4 boxes) |
| Language: | Collection text is in English. |
| Summary: | Promotional booklets and pamphlets, 1940-1963, regarding nylon; catalogues on the industrial use of nylon; 25th anniversary book on nylon; photographs, and a variety of other documents. Includes memo to DuPont employees concerning the company's wartime involvement in the development of the atomic bomb. |
| Digital Content: | Image(s): Single filament rewind |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Immediate source of acquisition unknown.

Provenance

Collection transferred to the Archives Center from the Division of Physical Sciences (now the Division of Medicine and Science) on April 5, 1983.

Processing Information

Processed by Robert S. Harding, archivist, 1982; revised by Robert Harding, March 2000.

Preferred Citation

DuPont Nylon Collection, 1939-1977, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning intellectual property rights. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Biographical / Historical

The E.I. DuPont De Nemours and Company was founded on July 19, 1802, by Eleuthere Irenee DuPont on Brandywine Creek for the purpose of manufacturing gunpowder. In 1804 the first DuPont powder went on public sale. In 1902 a new corporation was formed by three great grandsons of the founder, to more effectively compete with the changing technical field and the expanding scale and complexity of business.

During the twentieth century the corporation moved into the research and manufacture of thousands of products and processes, and consequently developed and expanded within many markets. Synthetic fibers is one of a family of products of the Dupont Corporation. In 1930, Dr. Wallace H. Carothers, working with Dr. J.W. Hill in DuPont's Fundamental Research Laboratory at Wilmington, produced the first synthetic fiber forming "superpolymer." This was the forerunner of nylon.

In 1938, the development of nylon was announced. It's first use was in brush bristles. Hosiery filaments were developed in 1939, and offered commercially in 1940. In 1941, nylon was applied to the molding industry. From 1942 to 1944, nylon production was allocated completely to war uses. The best known outgrowth of the company's resarch progress, nylon is one of the most important developments in Dupont's long history. It was the result of the chemical industry's first large scale fundamental research program. And it proved to be the first of a whole family of synthetics for consumer consumption. The product was bought into commercial production at a new plant in Seaford, Delaware.

No other major chemical development had the spontaneous reception accorded to nylon. It not only changed the hosiery market but was soon developed into a multiplicity of textile applications including: tooth brushes, hair brushes, household brushes, tennis racquet strings, catheters, surgical sutures, fishing leader material, musical strings, wire insulation, self lubricating bearings for machinery, umbrellas, undergarments, shower curtains, parachutes, and rope.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of promotional booklets and pamphlets, 1940-1963, regarding nylon; catalogues on the industrial use of nylon; a 25th anniversary book on nylon; World War II Christmas card of the Nylon Division of Dupont; pamphlets describing the wartime uses of nylon; technical reprints, a cartoon and a plant magazine about the Martinsville, Virginia nylon plant, 1941-1946; an employee handbook, Dupont Nylon Division, circa 1940; newsclippings and historical material for the Chattanooga plant, 1948; news clippings, initial production orders for nylon and typescript on uses and manufacture of nylon at Seaford plant, 1939-1947; publications concerning Delrin Acetal Resins; and photographs of machines for making nylon plastics of the Washington Works, 1947, with a letter from 1977 explaining this material.

Arrangement

Collection materials are divided into three series.

Series 1: Nylon Production, 1939-1948

Subseries 1.1: Seaford, Delaware Plant, 1939-1940

Subseries 1.2: Martinsville, Virginia, 1941-1946

Subseries 1.3: Chattanooga, Tennessee Plant, 1948

Subseries 1.4: Nylon in War, circa 1942-1945

Subseries 1.5: Photographs, 1940-1977

Series 2: Publications, 1940-1963

Subseries 2.1: Dupont Public Relations Department, 1940-1963

Subseries 2.2: Technical Reprints, News clippings and Magazine Articles About Nylon, 1940-1945

Series 3: "Delrin" Acetal Resin, 1957-1962

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Chemistry
- Electric insulators and insulation -- Nylon
- Gunpowder
- Nylon
- Textile fibers, Synthetic
- World War, 1939-1945 -- Economic & industrial aspects -- United States

Types of Materials:

- Bulletins
- Clippings -- 20th century
- Memorandums
- Photographs -- 20th century

Names:

- DuPont, Eleuthere Irene

Container Listing

Series 1: Nylon Production, 1939-1977 (bulk 1939-1948)

Subseries 1.1: Seaford, Delaware Plant, 1939 - 1940

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|-----------------|---|
| Box 1, Folder 1 | Supplement to The Star, Wilmington, Delaware, re: DuPont's new nylon plant at Seaford, 1939 December 10 |
| Box 1, Folder 2 | Front section of The Star, Wilmington, Delaware, "Nylon Production Starts at New Seaford Plant Friday.", 1939 December 10 |
| Box 1, Folder 3 | Typescript, "The Uses and Manufacture of Nylon", undated |
| Box 1, Folder 4 | Summary Sheet. Nylon Yarn Manufacturing Code No. 1001, 1939 December 27 |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | "Employees Handbook, Nylon Division", for DuPont's Seaford, Delaware plant, 1940 |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | "Production Order No. 1" for nylon yarn produced at Seaford, Delaware, 1939 December 6 |

Subseries 1.2: Martinsville, Virginia Plant, 1941 - 1946

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|------------------|---|
| Box 1, Folder 7 | Cartoon, "Our Boardinghouse," illustrates use of phrase "hotter'n a crate of hijacked nylons.", 1945 May 23 |
| Box 1, Folder 8 | Martinsville Daily Bulletin, DuPont's new nylon plant in Martinsville, Virginia, 1941 November 3 |
| Box 1, Folder 9 | Clipping from Martinsville Daily Bulletin, photo of 30,000 women lined up to buy nylons in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1946 June 15 |
| Box 1, Folder 10 | Front section of Martinsville Daily Bulletin, DuPont's plans to double size of Martinsville plant., 1944 February 29 |
| Box 1, Folder 11 | "The Blender," published by and for DuPont employees of Martinsville, Virginia plant. Anniversary issue, 1942 November |

Subseries 1.3: Chattanooga, Tennessee Plant, 1948 - 1948

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| Box 1, Folder 12 | Front section of Chattanooga Daily Times, opening of DuPont's third nylon plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1948 July 14 |
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| Box 1, Folder 13 | Front section of Chattanooga News Free Press opening of DuPont's new nylon plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1948 July 13 |
| Box 1, Folder 14 | Pamphlet, "DuPont in Tennessee 1916-1948" Short history of DuPont's two Tennessee plants, in Old Hickory and Chattanooga, 1948 - 1948 |
| Box 1, Folder 15 | Typescript, "Plant Visitation" talk used on tour of DuPont's Chattanooga, Tennessee nylon plant, 1948 November 11 |
| Box 1, Folder 16 | Typescript, "Outline of History and Organization, DuPont Company, Rayon Department, Nylon Division, Chattanooga Plant", 1948 March 22 to 1948 April 30 |

Subseries 1.4: Nylon in War, circa 1942-1945

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|------------------|---|
| Box 1, Folder 17 | Memo from Nylon Division of Martinsville, Va. plant, souvenir piece of nylon "flak" fabric, 1945 July 20 |
| Box 1, Folder 18 | Program for ceremony presenting Army-Navy production Award to DuPont's Martinsville, Virginia plant, 1942 December 3 |
| Box 1, Folder 19 | Memo to employees of Martinsville, Virginia, plant re: uses of current nylon production, 1945 January 1 |
| Box 1, Folder 20 | Memo from Nylon Division of Martinsville, Virginia plant, souvenir piece of nylon poncho fabric, 1945 April 9 |
| Box 1, Folder 21 | Plant War Effort Bulletin No. 96, Martinsville, Virginia, souvenir nylon shoe laces, 1944 July 18 |
| Box 1, Folder 22 | Memo from DuPont's Executive Offices to all employees, re: DuPont's connection with development of atomic bomb., 1945 August 24 |
| Box 1, Folder 23 | Typescript, "Nylon in the War" prepared to accompany display of nylon articles in factory Conference Room, 1944 July 10 |
| Box 1, Folder 24 | Reprint, re: military uses of nylon, published by War production Drive Committee, undated |
| Box 1, Folder 25 | Christmas card, printed by Nylon Division of DuPont, front illustration is a cartoon., circa 1940s |

Subseries 1.5: Photographs, 1940 - 1977

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| Box 1, Folder 26 | Photographs of nylon plastics machinery and DuPont's Washington Works, ca. 1940. Included is letter from donor, Frank Edlin, dated Feb. 3, 1977, explaining the photos. |
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Single filament rewind, May or June 1948

1 Item (8.4" x 10.5".)

Language: English.

Notes: AC0007-0000001.tif (AC Scan)

Silver gelatin on paper,

Photographs must be handled with gloves unless protected by sleeves. Unrestricted research use on site by appointment.

"Photograph taken at Parkersburg [West Virginia plant]. Level filament, mostly white sold to fishing industry. F.E." written on the back of photograph.

Names: E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company

Topic: Nylon

Synthetic fibers industry

Genre/Form: Photographs

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Series 2: Publications, 1940 - 1963

Subseries 2.1: Dupont Public Relations Department

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| Box 2, Folder 1 | "DuPont Nylon Molding Powder" published by DuPont's Polychemicals Department. Catalog of industrial uses for nylon molding powder., 1952 |
| Box 2, Folder 2 | DuPont Nylon Molding Powder" published by DuPont's Plastics Department. Catalog of industrial uses for nylon molding powder., 1948 |
| Box 2, Folder 3 | Booklet, "The Story of Nylon" written by Cooper, Wells & Co. through the cooperation of DuPont., 1941 |
| Box 2, Folder 4 | Booklet "Nylon Textile Fibers in Industry" published by Dupont, 1947 |
| Box 2, Folder 5 | Booklet, "Nylon - The First 25 Years" published by Dupont, 1963 |
| Box 2, Folder 6 | Booklet, "About DuPont Nylon", published by Nylon Division, Rayon Dept. of DuPont, 1946 |
| Box 2, Folder 7 | Booklet, "Basic nylon information for the people who tell the public," published by Nylon Division of Dupont, 1945 |
| Box 2, Folder 8 | "The DuPont Magazine", 140th anniversary issue, 1942 August to 1942 October |
| Box 2, Folder 9 | Booklet, "Nylon -- Versatile product of Dupont Chemistry," published by DuPont, 1941 |
| Box 2, Folder 10 | Typescript, questions and answers about nylon, 1940 January 17 |
| Box 2, Folder 11 | Booklet, "20,000 People Tell Us - Nylon Gives You Something Extra." Published by Nylon Division of DuPont, undated |
| Box 3, Folder 12 | Book, "25 Years of Nylon", published by Textile Fibers Department of DuPont, 1952 |
| Box 3, Folder 13 | Catalog, "Antron, a new kind of nylon from DuPont," published by Textile Fibers Department of DuPont, 1963 |

Subseries 2.2: Technical reprints, news clippings and magazine articles about nylon

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|------------------|---|
| Box 2, Folder 14 | Reprint from Industrial and Engineering Chemistry. "Development of Nylon" by E.K. Bolton., 1942 January |
| Box 2, Folder 15 | Clipping, from Greensboro, North Carolina newspaper, article about sale of nylon hose., circa 1945 |

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| Box 2, Folder 16 | Reprint from Textile World "Nylon -- a Triumph of Research" by Don Wharton., 1940 January |
| Box 2, Folder 17 | Typescript, excerpts from NBC News radio broadcast by Robert St. John, re: Wallace Carothers and a story about a WWII paratrooper., 1944 December 22 |
| Box 2, Folder 18 | Reprint, Chemical Engineering News "Synthetic Fibers", 1941 June 25 |
| Box 2, Folder 19 | Clipping, from unknown magazine, nylon scarcity during World War II, undated |
| Box 2, Folder 20 | Reprint from Industrial Engineering, Chemistry, "Nylon as a Textile Fiber" by G.P. Hoff., 1940 December |
| Box 3, Folder 21 | Front section of the Greensboro Record, July 8, 1944, article "Nylon Queen Has Time of Young Life." |
| Box 3, Folder 22 | Colliers, "Sheer Magic" about DuPont's Seaford, Delaware nylon plant., 1940 April 13 |
| Box 3, Folder 23 | Fortune, "Nylon and 50,000 Mad Women" and "Nylon -- It challenges silk's last stronghold and brews a textile revolution", 1940 July |

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Series 3: Delrin Acetal Resin, 1957 - 1962

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| Box 4, Folder 1 | Acetal Resins" by Russell B. Atkin, Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1962 |
| Box 4, Folder 2 | Design Digest Bearings of Delrin acetal resin" Published by the Polychemicals Department of DuPont Co., 1960 February |
| Box 4, Folder 3 | Delrin acetal resin published by the Polychemicals Department of DuPont Co., 1957 June |

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