



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the J. Harry DuBois Collection on the History of Plastics

NMAH.AC.0008

Jeffrey Sturchio, Robert S. Harding, and Ann Seeger

1982 August

Archives Center, National Museum of American History
P.O. Box 37012
Suite 1100, MRC 601
Washington, D.C. 20013-7012
archivescenter@si.edu
<https://americanhistory.si.edu/archives>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Arrangement.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	4
Series 1: Bakelite Catalogs, 1910-1944.....	4
Series 2: Plastics Trade Catalogs, circa 1920-1953.....	6
Series 3: Boonton Rubber Co., 1911-1974.....	7
Series 4: Charles Burroughs Co., 1897-1929.....	8
Series 5: Sigfried Higgins & Bakelite Printing Plates, 1925-1959.....	9
Series 6: Plastic Publication & Miscellaneous Materials, circa 1890-1975.....	10

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	J. Harry DuBois Collection on the History of Plastics
Date:	circa 1900-circa 1975
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.0008
Source:	National Museum of American History (U.S.). Division of Physical Sciences
Creator:	DuBois, J. Harry, 1903-1986
Extent:	2.66 Cubic feet (8 boxes)
Language:	English .
Summary:	J. Harry DuBois (1903-1986) was an industrial consultant in the field of petrochemicals and plastics. In 1927 at General Electric his studies resulted in extending the use of laminated plastics.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated by J.H. Dubois in 1981.

Provenance

Transferred from the Division of Physical Sciences (now the Division of Medicine and Science), April 5, 1983.

Related Materials

Materials at Other Organizations

Syracuse University Libraries, Special Collections Research Center

J. Harry DuBois Papers, 1940-1943

Collection consists of the personal and professional papers of J. Harry DuBois, covering his long career in the plastics industry. It includes scrapbooks and photograph albums of his family and world-wide travel for business, photographs and slides, and audio and film reels.

Processing Information

Processed by Jeffrey Sturchio, Robert S. Harding and Ann Seeger, 1982. Revised by Robert S. Harding, 1994 and 2000.

Preferred Citation

J. Harry Dubois Collection of the History of Plastics, 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 copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Biographical / Historical

J. Harry DuBois (1903-1986) was an industrial consultant in the field of petrochemicals and plastics. DuBois began his career in the plastics industry at General Electric in 1927. His studies resulted in extending the use of laminated plastics. In GE's molding division he pioneered work on compression molded acetates, injection molding, radomes and low pressure laminates. In 1944 he became vice president of Shaw Insulator Company. He also worked at Plax Corporation, Mycalex Corporation of America and Tech Art Plastics. In 1972 he was president of Mybroy Ceramics Corporation. A member of the Society of the Plastics Industry and the Society of Plastics Engineers, DuBois collected much of this material while writing his book, Plastics History U.S.A., published in 1972 by Cahner Publishing Company of Boston.

Scope and Contents

This collection of trade catalogs, research reports, correspondence, photographs, and other historical material relating to the plastics industry was donated by J. Harry DuBois.

Included are trade catalogues of the General Bakelite Company, Bakelite Corporation, and competitors in the plastics industry in the 1920's and 1930's, including Dow Chemical and General Electric; material relating to the Boonton Rubber Company, including Richard W. Seabury's notebooks, 1911-1923; memoranda of 1916, 1918, 1923, and 1926 concerning the history of Boonton's early use of Bakelite for molded products; catalogues, photographs, and a blueprint of a 1897 hydraulic press from Charles Burroughs Company; research reports, 1925-1932, of Sigfried Higgins, on mechanical development research at the Bakelite Corporation; reports on sales development research, 1941-1946, at the Bakelite Corporation; experimental notes, correspondence on possible patents and other materials concerning the use of Bakelite and rubber for printing plates; reports, notes, and and miscellaneous photographs on the history of the plastics industry; Zylonite trade catalogues, pre-1900; and Recto trademark patent and patent drawing.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into six series.

Series 1: Bakelite Catalogs, 1910-1944

Series 2: Plastics Trade Catalogs, circa 1920-1953

Series 3: Boonton Rubber Co., 1911-1974

Series 4: Charles Burroughs Co., 1879-1929

Series 5: Sigfried Higgins and Bakelite Printing Plates, 1925-1959

Series 6: Plastic Publications and miscellaneous Materials, circa 1890-1975

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Chemistry
Petroleum chemicals
Plastics
Plastics -- Molding

Types of Materials:

Catalogs -- 1910-1960

Names:

Bakelite Corporation
Boonton Rubber Company.
Charles Burroughs Co.
Dow Chemical Company
General Electric Company
Mybroy Ceramics Corporation.
National Museum of American History (U.S.). Division of Physical Sciences
Shaw Insulator Company.

Container Listing

Series 1: Bakelite Catalogs, 1910-1944

Box 1

[Image\(s\)](#)

Scope and Contents: Includes Trade Catalogs and advertisements for the General Bakelite Company and The Bakelite Corporation, dating from 1910 to 1944. Product line catalogs include: Luxene; Bakelite Lacquer; Bakelite Varnish; Bakelite Laminated; Gifts to Treasure; Bakelite Synthetic Resins; Bakelite Molding. Also included is a pamphlet, "Bakelite Information Number One", published by General Bakelite Co. in November 1910.

Box 1, Folder 1 [Bakelite: The Material of a Thousand Uses \[catalog cover\], 1924](#)
1 Item (7.4" x 5.3".)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

Language: English.

Notes: AC0008-0000009.tif (AC Scan No.)

Ink on paper.

The catalog shows the different personal uses for Bakelite such as jewelry, cigarette holders, pipes, manicure sets, letter sets, etc.

Names: Bakelite Corporation

Topic: Plastics industry and trade

Box 1, Folder 4 [Printed from Bakelite Printing Plates on Miehle Cylinder Press \[page from catalog\], undated](#)

1 Item (11.9" x 7.8".)

Language: English.

Notes: AC0008-0000001.tif (AC Scan No.)

Ink on paper.

Topic: Bakelite

Plastics industry and trade

Box 1, Folder 4 [From 9 to 32 operations eliminated - cost reduced 40 per cent \[advertisement\], 1926](#)

1 Item (12.2" x 8.9".)

Language: English.

Notes: AC0008-0000002.tif (AC Scan No.)

Ink on paper.

Advertisement illustrates Bakelite parts for a Reconnaissance Transit and contains reprinted article from April 1926, Factory

Names: Bakelite Corporation

Topic: Bakelite

Plastics industry and trade

Box 1, Folder 4 [What Lamson gained through changing to a Bakelite Pulley \[advertisement\], 1926](#)

1 Item (12.2" x 8.9".)
 Language: English.
 Notes: AC0008-0000003.tif (AC Scan No.)
 Ink on paper.
 Advertisement illustrates Bakelite pulley for Lamson Cash Carrier and contains reprinted article from July 1926, Factory
 Names: Bakelite Corporation
 Topic: Bakelite
 Plastics industry and trade

Box 1, Folder 9

[\[Electric vibrator and fishing reel, catalog page\], 1933](#)

1 Item (9.1" x 6.1".)
 Language: English.
 Notes: AC0008-0000007.tif (AC Scan No.)
 Ink on paper.
 Page 20 from 1933 Bakelite Laminated catalog
 Names: Bakelite Corporation
 Topic: Plastics industry and trade

Box 1, Folder 11

[Application for shock resistant materials \[catalog page\], 1931](#)

1 Item (9.1" x 6.1".)
 Language: English.
 Notes: AC0008-0000008.tif (AC Scan No.)
 Ink on paper.
 Page 22 from 1931 Bakelite Molded: Fifth Edition catalog
 Names: Bakelite Corporation
 Topic: Plastics industry and trade

[Luxene, the Translucent Bakelite Denture Material \[advertisement\], circa 1940](#)

1 Item (Ink on paper.; 6.3" x 3.6".)
 Language: English.
 Notes: AC0008-0000010.tif (AC Scan No.)
 Names: Bakelite Corporation
 Topic: Dentures
 Plastics industry and trade

[\[Bakelite labels, photograph\], undated](#)

1 Item (Silver gelatin on paper.; 6.9" x 4.2".)
 Language: English.
 Notes: AC0008-0000013.tif (AC Scan No.)
 Unrestricted research use on site by appointment. Photographs must be handled with cotton gloves unless protected by sleeves.
 Names: Bakelite Corporation
 Topic: Plastics industry and trade

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Plastics Trade Catalogs, circa 1920-1953

Box 2**Image(s)**

Scope and Contents: Includes Trade Catalogs for various other companies in the plastics industry in the 1920's and the 1930's, including General Bakelite's two competitors, Condensite and Redmanol. Other company catalogs include: General Electric Plastics; Diamond State Fibre Company. The catalogs date from c. 1920 to 1953.

Box 2, Folder
Formica

[What Formica Is! \[trade literature\], 1927](#)

1 Item (Ink on paper.; 6.0" x 3.3".)

Language: English.

Notes: AC0008-000004.tif (AC Scan No.)

Cover of booklet about Formica manufacturing, uses, properties, etc.

Names: Formica Insulation Co.

Topic: Plastics industry and trade

[Listening in with Celoron \[advertisement\], undated](#)

1 Item (Ink on paper.; 6.2" x 3.3".)

Language: English.

Notes: AC0008-000011.tif (AC Scan No.)

Topic: Sound -- Recording and reproducing
Plastics industry and trade

[Plaskon: Plastic Materials for Modern Industrial Production \[catalog cover\], undated](#)

1 Item (Ink on paper.; 11.0" x 8.4".)

Language: English.

Notes: AC0008-000012.tif (AC Scan No.)

Topic: Plastics industry and trade

[\[Bakelite radio dial\], undated](#)

1 Item (Ink on plastic.; 3.9" x 4.2".)

Language: English.

Notes: AC0008-000014.tif (AC Scan No.)

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

Names: Bakelite Corporation

Topic: Plastics industry and trade

Return to Table of Contents

Series 3: Boonton Rubber Co., 1911-1974

Box 3

Scope and Contents: Includes Material relating to Boonton Rubber Company (later Tech Art Plastics Company), including two notebooks belonging to Richard Seabury, 1911-1923. Seabury, who was president of Boonton from 1906 to 1918, was the first to develop applications for molded Bakelite products. Also in the box are several trade catalogs and advertisements.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 4: Charles Burroughs Co., 1897-1929

Box 4**Image(s)**

Scope and Contents: Includes Material relating to the Charles Burroughs Company, manufacturers of hydraulic machinery and molding equipment for plastics. Includes a trade catalog of molding equipment and hydraulic machinery (1929); photographs of Burroughs machines; copies of patents; and a blueprint for a hydraulic press (1897).

Box 4, Item Leather
Portfolio III

Blowing Press 1 Mold [photograph], undated

1 Item (Silver gelatin on paper.; 9.7" x 7.6".)

Language: English.

Notes: AC0008-0000005.tif (AC Scan No.)

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

Names: Charles Burroughs Co.

Topic: Plastics industry and trade

Box 4, Item Leather
Portfolio III

Hydraulic Sheeter [photograph], undated

1 Item (Silver gelatin on paper.; 9.7" x 7.6".)

Language: English.

Notes: AC0008-0000006.tif (AC Scan No.)

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

Names: Charles Burroughs Co.

Topic: Plastics industry and trade

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 5: Sigfried Higgins & Bakelite Printing Plates, 1925-1959

Box 5, Folder 1

[Research Reports, 1925-1932](#)

Notes: Includes Research Reports of Sigfried Higgins, who was the Research Head of the Mechanical Development Division of the Bakelite Corporation. The reports are dated 1925-1932.

Box 6, Folder 1

Papers and Correspondence, undated

Notes: Papers and Correspondence of Sigfried Higgins. Includes: weekly sales development research reports (1941-1946); material on foreign plastics development; notes and correspondence concerning the use of Bakelite and rubber in printing plates, and miscellaneous catalogs.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 6: Plastic Publication & Miscellaneous Materials, circa 1890-1975

Box 7, Folder 1

Miscellaneous Plastics Industry Material, circa 1890-1970

Notes:

Includes miscellaneous material relating to the plastics industry, dating from c. 1890 to 1970. Included are: trade catalogs for W.L. Brown & Co., selling agents for American and United Zylonite Co., pre 1900; typescripts and reprints on various aspects of the plastics industry such as nylon molding; photographs used in DuBois's "Plastics History U.S.A.", including one of Henry Ford swinging an ax on the trunk of a plastic Ford automobile; a patent for the Recto trademark; and a photograph of Recto molded ignition timers.

Box 8, Folder 1

Publications, 1942-1975

Notes:

Includes miscellaneous publications on the plastics industry, dating from 1942 to 1975, most published by the Society of the Plastics Industry; also contains the Plastics Catalog 1942.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)