Guide to the Celluloid Corporation Records

NMAH.AC.0009
Robert S. Harding and E.S. Etuk
1985 July 11

On January 30, 1873, The Celluloid Manufacturing Company was organized at Albany, under the laws of the State of New York. In 1877 the factory, then a very small one, was transferred from Albany to Newark, New Jersey, which city has remained the home of The Celluloid Company ever since. The factory now is a large building on Madison Street.

In 1883 a factory building was erected for the Celluloid Manufacturing Company in Newark, New Jersey. By 1886 a large section of the present company plant was erected, and the company continued to expand and add buildings and additional, functional equipment. As the company grew, it was necessary to have a plan for the future, so the records show that the architects and builders of the new plant had to think of expansion. By November 27, 1894, the present Celluloid Company, was formed for the merger of The Celluloid Manufacturing Company with the several subsidiaries organized in 1873, and the company has continued to grow, and add new buildings and equipment. By the beginning of the century, the Celluloid Company, had a number of plants in the United States and the British Isles, and had established a reputation for quality and excellence.

The Celluloid Company was one of the first to use celluloid as a material for manufacturing. It was a thin, flexible plastic that could be easily cut, shaped, and molded into a variety of forms. Celluloid was used for a variety of products, including automobile parts, clothing, and decorative objects.

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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title: Celluloid Corporation Records
Identifier: NMAH.AC.0009
Date: 1883 - 1943
Extent: 3 Cubic feet (3 boxes)
Creator: Hyatt, John Wesley (inventor) Celluloid Corporation.
Language: English.
Summary: The collection consists of trade catalogs, price lists, notebooks, promotional literature, patents, a salesman's kit (including samples), photographs and prints of plant buildings, personnel, celluloid molds and by-products documenting the Celluloid Corporation.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information
Immediate source of acquisition unknown.

Provenance
Transferred 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 and E.S. Etuk, 1985.

Preferred Citation

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

The Celluloid Manufacturing Company is the original corporate name of the present Celluloid Corporation. It was founded in 1872 to present celluloid to the world. The word "celluloid" was registered as a trademark in 1873 by its inventor, John Wesley Hyatt. This registration marked the beginnings of the plastic industry. The first efforts were directed to supplying the dental trade with plates for artificial teeth. In 1882 the corporation began to use amyl acetate as a nitro cellulose solvent, which paved the way for the development of the lacquer industry. In 1910 non flammable "safety film" was made from cellulose acetate. In 1912 the corporation invented Lumarith, a true thermoplastic, meaning it could be molded or cast into any conceivable form without undergoing a chemical change. It came in powder form (granules) for the new injection molding processes. It was injected into the mold and in a matter of seconds the finished article was ejected.

Scope and Contents

These records are divided into four separate series: Series 1: Publications, 1891-1935, including news clippings, notebooks, promotional literature, and patents; Series 2: Trade Catalogs, 1883-1928, including price lists; Series 3: Salesman's Kits, 1937-1943, including samples; and Series 4: Photographs, undated, including photo prints of plant buildings, personnel, celluloid molds and other by-products.

Arrangement

The collection is divided into four series.

Series 1: Publications, 1891-1935
Series 2: Trade Catalogs, 1883-1928
Series 3: Salesman's Kits, 1937-1943
Series 4: Photographs, undated

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:
- Celluloid
- Chemistry
- Physical sciences
- Plastics -- Molding

Types of Materials:
- Catalogs
- Notebooks
- Patents
Price lists

Names:

Celluloid Manufacturing Company.
Nepera Chemical Company.
Container Listing

Series 1: Publications, 1891 - 1935

Box 1, Folder 1  
Boehmer, George H. (General Sales Manager) Celluloid, Grand Daddy of 'Em All. Newark, New Jersey: Celluloid Corporation (2 copies) History of development of Celluloid and the Celluloid Corporation, 1935  
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 1  
[Illustration of Celluloid Factory buildings: section of booklet page], 1935  
1 Item (Ink on paper.; 2.7" x 4.3").  
Image(s)  
English.  
Illustration on page 6 of Celluloid - Grand Daddy of 'Em All, by George H. Boehmenr.

Local Numbers  
AC0009-0000002.tif (AC Scan No.)

Names: Celluloid Corporation.  
Topic: Plastics industry and trade

Box 1, Folder 2  
Lady on Sleigh; History of the different divisions of Celluloid Corporation, undated

Box 3, Folder 7  
Records of Experiments, pp. 1-250, 1891-1893

Box 3, Folder 8  
Amerith and the Arch Line, 1925

Box 3, Folder 9  
Newark Newspaper Clippings on Celluloid Corporation

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Series 2: Trade Catalogs, 1883-1928

Box 1, Folder 3  Celluloid Brush Co., 313 & 315 Broadway, New York, Celluloid Novelty Company, 313 & 315 Broadway, New York, Price List. (2 copies), 1899, 1883

Box 1, Folder 4  Illustrated Catalog & Price List, 30-36 Washington Place, New York (2 copies), 1899

Box 1, Folder 5  Illustrated Catalog & Price List, 427 & 429 Broadway, New York, 1892

Box 1, Folder 5  Illustrated Catalog & Price List, 427 & 429 Broadway, New York, 1895

Box 1, Folder 6  Electrical Fittings Price List, 1903

Box 1, Folder 6  Illustrated Price List, 1906

Box 1, Folder 7  Ivaleur (Ivory like substance) Catalog, 1916

Box 1, Folder 7  Ivaleur Trade Catalog #116 (of brushes, combs, mirrors, clocks and other articles), circa 1915

Box 1, Folder 7  Arch Amerith, Vanity Articles for the Dressing Table: Line of Toilet Requistes and Fancy Goods. New York: Amerith Division of Celluloid Corporation, Includes price list in rear cover, 1925

(This special trademark line is made of amerith and Amer-glo, a "new" distinctive quality pyroxylin material)

Box 1, Folder 7  Arch Amerith, Vanity Articles for the Dressing Table and Other Articles Made of Amerith. New York City: Celluloid Corporation, 1928

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Series 3: Salesman's Kit, 1937 - 1943

Box 2, Folder 1  The Celluloid Corporation - Lumarith, The New Era Plastic, salesman kit, promotional literature in bound leather, late 1937-1943

Box 3, Folder 1  Salesmen's kit, promotional literature titled Protectoid, by G.H. Boehmer, undated

Box 3, Folder 2  The Plus Value of Doing Business with Celluloid Corporation (promotional catalog)

Box 3, Folder 2  Lumarith Protectoid invites you to meet Personable Packages (promotional catalog)

Box 3, Folder 2  Pages from Celluloid Corporation Trade catalogs

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Series 4: Photographs, 1837 - 1920, undated

Box 3, Folder 3  
John Wesley Hyatt, undated
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 3  
[Illustration of John Wesley Hyatt], undated  
1 Item (ink on paper.; 5.3" x 4.5").
Image(s): [Illustration of John Wesley Hyatt];
English.
Local Numbers
AC0009-0000003.tif (AC Scan No.)
Names: Hyatt, John Wesley (inventor)
Topic: Plastics industry and trade

John Wesley Hyatt [photoprint], undated  
1 Item (7.5" x 5.0").
Image(s)
English.
Box 9 Folder 3
Unrestricted research use on site by appointment. Photographs must be handled with cotton gloves unless protected by sleeves.
Silver gelatin on paper.
Local Numbers
AC0009-0000004.tif (AC Scan No.)
Names: Hyatt, John Wesley (inventor)
Topic: Plastics industry and trade

[John Wesley Hyatt and copy of 1869 patent document], undated  
1 Item (7.5" x 5.0").
Image(s)
English.
Box 9 Folder 3
Unrestricted research use on site by appointment. Photographs must be handled with cotton gloves unless protected by sleeves.
Silver gelatin on paper.
Local Numbers
AC0009-0000005.tif (AC Scan No.)
Names: Hyatt, John Wesley (inventor)
Topic: Plastics industry and trade

Box 3, Folder 4  Celluloid Corporation Employees & Factory Buildings, undated

Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 4  [Illustration of Celluloid Factory buildings], undated
1 Item (Ink on paper.; 5.9" x 7.9").

Image(s)

English.

Local Numbers
AC0009-0000001.tif (AC Scan No.)

Names: Celluloid Corporation.

Topic: Plastics industry and trade

Box 3, Folder 5  Products of the company, undated

Box 3, Folder 6  Pages from a book of testimonials to Celluloid dentures, undated

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