



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Victor L. Ochoa Papers

NMAH.AC.0590

Alison L. Oswald, archivist

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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Archives Center, National Museum of American History |
| Title: | Victor L. Ochoa Papers |
| Identifier: | NMAH.AC.0590 |
| Date: | circa 1894-1945 |
| Extent: | 0.5 Cubic feet (2 boxes) |
| Creator: | Ochoa, Elizabeth V. Ochoa, Victor Leaton International Airship Co. |
| Language: | English Some materials in Czech; French; German; Japanese; Spanish; Dutch; Polish |
| Summary: | The papers document Victor L. Ochoa, Mexican American inventor of the Ochoaplane, orinthopter (an aircraft that flies by flapping its wings), a windmill, magnetic brakes, a wrench and a reversible motor. The papers include correspondence, photographs, patents, both U.S. and foreign, drawings and typescripts for a short story, "The Making of an American," and a novel <i>The Cycle of Life or Professor Mimo Abas: The Wise Man of the Land of Moctezuma</i> . |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

This collection was donated by Elizabeth Victoria Ochoa on May 17, 1997.

Related Materials

Record Group 129, Records of the Bureau of Prisons held by the National Archives, Central Plains Division, Kansas City, Missouri (<http://www.archives.gov/central-plains/kansas-city/>), contains a 54 page file on Victor L. Ochoa's imprisonment.

Processing Information

Processed by Alison L. Oswald, archivist, February, 1999.

Preferred Citation

Victor L. Ochoa Papers, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

Restrictions

The collection is open for research use. Researchers must handle unprotected photographs with gloves.

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Biographical / Historical

Victor Leaton Ochoa (1850-1945?) was born in Ojinaga, Mexico. Ochoa later moved to Presidio del Norte, Texas, (Presidio is on the Rio Grande River) and became a United States citizen in 1889. Ochoa was the son of Juan Ochoa, a customs collector in Presidio.

Victor Ochoa was a journalist/writer, founding (*El Hispano-American* and *El Correo del Bravo*); a politician (running unsuccessfully in El Paso); a union leader founding (La Union Occidental *Mexicana* to help Mexicans in the United States preserve their language); a revolutionary (opposing the Mexican government of President Porfirio Díaz, the President of Mexico from 1876 to 1880 and from 1884 to 1911); a prisoner, corporate president of the International Airship Company and the Ochoa Tool and Machine Company; miner and inventor. Ochoa was bitterly opposed to the dictatorship of President Porfirio Díaz. He became involved in the fight by Mexican rebels in the early 1890s to overthrow Díaz. Some consider Ochoa to be the originator of the revolt, and Díaz ultimately issued a \$50,000 reward for Ochoa, "dead or alive." Ochoa's participation in Mexican revolutionary activities led to his arrest in 1894 for supplying and hiring Mexican dissidents in El Paso, Texas, thus violating United States neutrality laws. As a result of his illegal actions, a federal warrant was issued for Ochoa's arrest. The Texas Rangers as well as the U.S. Marshal Service sought Ochoa. In October of 1894, Pecos County Sheriff A. J. Royal and Texas Ranger James W. Fulgham arrested Victor Ochoa while rounding up suspected horse thieves. Ochoa was put in the Pecos County Jail and promptly escaped. He was eventually found and returned to El Paso. Ochoa was ultimately sentenced to two years in federal prison at Kings County Penitentiary in Brooklyn. Ochoa was stripped of his United States citizenship, but it was ultimately restored by Theodore Roosevelt in 1906.

Ochoa was as committed to inventing as he was to his revolutionary ideals. He was known to reside in the New York City and the Patterson, New Jersey area in the late 1890s. Ochoa's issued patents list him at New York, New Jersey, and Texas addresses. He also worked with Watson E. Coleman, a solicitor of patents in Washington, D.C. Coleman helped Ochoa file for and obtain patents in other countries such as Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, and Spain. Ochoa's patents include: a magnetic brake (US Patent No. 867,147); a reversible motor (US Patent No. 718,508); a rail magnetic brake (US Patent No. 873,587); a windmill (US Patent No. 1,319,174); and a wrench (US Patent No. 1,417,196 and 1,454,333).

Ochoa had a strong interest in aviation. He created the "Ochoaplane," circa 1908-1911. He designed it with an automobile in mind, and it included collapsible wings so that it could be housed in a garage or barn. He also incorporated the International Airship Company in Patterson, New Jersey, presumably to manufacture his "airships." Ochoa was imprisoned at the United States Penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas on February 18, 1917 and was released on May 1, 1918 upon completion of his sentence. In a September 17, 1917, letter written from Leavenworth, Ochoa asks the Naval Consulting Board to consider the use of metal wings constructed in such a manner that they fold back and over the body of the airship. Ochoa called this his fluttering wing machine. Ochoa's letter is deliberate, and he writes, "There was no

desire on my part of abandoning this and three other patents that at this time went to issue. At that time I was taken sick with consumption and my struggle for life then became my sole purpose and then there arose other circumstances, over which I had no control, to prevent my taking them out."

Ochoa married Amanda Cole, granddaughter of Thomas Cole, the American painter, whose most famous painting is *The Last of the Mohicans*. They had one son, Stephen Ochoa. Victor Ochoa returned to Sinaloa, Mexico, in 1936, and it is believed he died there in 1945.

Source Romo, David Dorado. *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juarez: 1893-1923*. El Paso, Texas: Cinco Puntos Press, 2005.

Scope and Contents

The papers document Victor Leaton Ochoa, Mexican American inventor of the Ochoaplane, orinthropter (an aircraft that flies by flapping its wings), a windmill, magnetic brakes, a wrench and a reversible motor. The papers include correspondence, photographs, patents, both United States and foreign, drawings and typescripts for a short story and a novel.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into seven series.

Series 1: Correspondence, 1895-1945

Series 2: Financial materials, 1911, 1912, undated

Series 3: Patent Materials, 1901-1925

Subseries 3.1: Patent Papers, 1922; 1925

Subseries 3.2: Drawings, undated

Subseries 3.3: Foreign Patents, 1901-1922

Subseries 3.4: United States Patents, 1903-1922

Series 4: Writings, undated

Series 5: Photographs, 1933, undated

Series 6: Newspaper Clippings, circa 1894-1912

Series 7: Miscellaneous Printing Blocks, undated

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Aeronautics
Airplanes
Inventions -- 20th century
Inventors -- 1890-1960

Types of Materials:

Clippings
Correspondence -- 1930-1950
Drawings
Patents
Photographs -- 20th century

Geographic Names:

El Paso (Texas)
Mexico -- 20th century
Texas -- 20th century

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1895-1945

Box 1, Folder 1

[Image\(s\)](#)

Correspondence, 1895-1945, primarily consists of documents exchanged between Ochoa and the United States Patent Office, patent attorneys, the United States Naval Consulting Board and the War Department Board of Ordnance and Fortification about Ochoa's inventions.

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Series 2: Financial materials, 1911, 1912, undated

Financial Materials, 1911, 1912, undated, contains one International Airship Company capital stock certificate from 1911 and several cancelled checks bearing Ochoa's signature. All of the checks were written to A. G. O'Rourke and were drawn on the First National Bank of El Paso, Texas. There is one First Texas Prudential Insurance Company envelope for an insurance policy Ochoa purchased. The policy envelope is undated.

Box 1, Folder 2 International Airship stock certificate, 1911 - 1911

Box 1, Folder 3 Cancelled checks, 1922 - 1922

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Series 4: Patent Materials, 1901-1925

Patent Materials, 1901-1925, is divided into four subseries: Subseries 1, Patent Papers, 1922; 1925; Subseries 2, Drawings, undated; Subseries 3, Foreign Patents, 1901-1922; and Subseries 4, United States Patents, 1903-1922. The series contains typescript patent application documents, drawings for patent applications and United States and foreign issued patents to Ochoa. The Great Britain patent (#192,617) for improvements to a wrench was also issued to co-inventor William Conrad Worth.

Subseries 4.1: Patent Papers, 1922; 1925

Subseries 4.2: Drawings, undated

Box 2, Folder 1

[Image\(s\)](#)

Subseries 4.3: Foreign Patents, 1901-1922

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Box 1, Folder 5 | Belgium, #242432 , 1922 - 1922 |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | Czechoslovakia, [#15843?] , 1922 - 1922 |
| Box 1, Folder 7 | Czechoslovakia, #15871 , 1925 - 1925 |
| Box 1, Folder 8 | France, #159439 , 1922 - 1922 |
| Box 1, Folder 9 | France, #551,500 , 1923 - 1923 |
| Box 1, Folder 10 | Germany, [#12889?] , 1922 - 1922 |
| Box 1, Folder 11 | Great Britain, #192,617 , 1922 - 1923 |
| Box 1, Folder 12 | Japan, 1922 - 1922 |
| Box 1, Folder 13 | Mexico, #21490 , 1922 - 1922 |
| Box 1, Folder 14 | Netherlands, #22003 , 1922 - 1922 |
| Box 1, Folder 15 | Poland, 1922 - 1922 |
| Box 1, Folder 16 | Spain, #81642 , 1922 - 1922 |

Subseries 4.4: United States Patents, 1903-1922

| | |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Box 1, Folder 17 | Reversible Motor, #718,508, 1903 January 13 |
| Box 1, Folder 18 | Magnetic Brake, #867,147, 1907 September 24 |

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|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Box 1, Folder 19 | Rail Magnetic Brake, #873,587, 1907 December 10 |
| Box 1, Folder 20 | Windmill, #1,319,174, 1919 October 21 |
| Box 1, Folder 21 | Wrench, #1,417,196, 1922 May 23 Image(s) |
| Box 1, Folder 22 | Wrench, #1,454,333, 1922 March 15 |

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Series 5: Writings, undated

Writings, undated, contains two pieces written by Ochoa. "The Making of An American," is a short story written by Ochoa as related by Pedro Calderon of San Luis Potosi, Mexico. The story is undated, but discusses the "American dream" broadly from the perspective of Calderon who eventually joins the United States Army, fighting during World War I, and Calderon's eventual receipt of United States citizenship. Also included is Ochoa's a novel *The Cycle of Life or Professor Mimo Abas: The Wise Man of the Land of Moctezuma*.

Box 1, Folder 23 *The Cycle of Life or Professor Mimo Abas* (original), undated

Box 1, Folder 24 *The Cycle of Life or Professor Mimo Abas* (reference copy), undated

Box 1, Folder 25 "The Making of an American" , undated
[Image\(s\)](#)

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Series 6: Photographs, 1933, undated

Box 1, Folder 26

Photographs, 1933, undated, consists of black-and-white images of Ochoa and his inventions. The inventions include his "Ochoa Airplane" and pliers.

Ochoa's clincher Pliers [sic]. Patent Pending. [black-and-white photoprint], [ca. 1900-1920]

1 Item (3.25" x 6.25").

[Image\(s\): Ochoa's clincher Pliers \[sic\]. Patent Pending. \[black-and-white photoprint\].](#)

Ochoa, Victor Leaton, Patentee

Caption in ink on photograph. Photographer unidentified.

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

Silver gelatin on paper.

Local Numbers

01059004.tif (AC Scan)

In Box 1, Folder 25.

Topic: Models (Patents)
 Pliers
 Tools

Genre/Form: Photographs -- 1900-1950 -- Black-and-white photoprints --
 Silver gelatin

Box 1

[Man in Mexican-style clothes.] [Black-and-white photoprint on cabinet card]
1 Item (Silver gelatin on paper.; 6-7/8" x 4-1/8").

[Image\(s\): \[Man in Mexican-style clothes.\] \[Black-and-white photoprint on cabinet card\].](#)

Addis, A.S., Mrs., Photographer

Man in Mexican-style clothes, including a sombrero and serape. "Mrs. A.S. Addis, Chihuahua, Mex." stamped under the picture. "Victor L. Ochoa" written on the back, undated.

Unrestricted research access on site by appointment. Gloves required with unprotected photographs.

Local Numbers

AC0590-0000001.tif (AC Scan No.)

Topic: Sombreros
Place: Mexico
Genre/Form: Cabinet prints
 Photographs

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Series 7: Newspaper Clippings, circa 1894-1912

Box 1, Folder 27

Newspaper Clippings, circa 1894-1912, consists of photocopies of newspaper articles featuring Ochoa.

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