



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Alexander Binder Company records

NMAH.AC.1100

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2012

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Collection Overview

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Repository: | Archives Center, National Museum of American History |
| Title: | Alexander Binder Company Records |
| Date: | 1903-1965 (bulk 1921-1955) |
| Identifier: | NMAH.AC.1100 |
| Creator: | Alexander, Clinton B. Clinton B. Alexander Binder Company (Washington, D.C.) |
| Source: | National Museum of American History (U.S.). Division of Work and Industry |
| Extent: | 6 Cubic feet (6 boxes) |
| Language: | English . |
| Summary: | Collection documents the business records of the Alexander Binder Company, as well as the inventions and creations of Clinton B. Alexander. The collection includes business receipts and forms, pamphlets, drawings, trade literature, notes, patents, correspondence, and material samples. |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Collection was donated at some time before 1980 and has no acquisition information, thus rendering this archive as "found in collection."

Provenance

Collected for the Museum by the Division of Work and Industry (then known as the Division of Engineering and Industry). Transferred to the Archives Center in 2007.

Processing Information

Processed by Laura Fielding (intern), March, 2009; supervised by Alison Oswald, archivist.

Preferred Citation

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Restrictions

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Biographical / Historical

Clinton B. Alexander was an inventor and entrepreneurial businessman from Washington, D.C. during the twentieth-century. He was born in 1873 in Clearfield, Pennsylvania, where he worked as a mining engineer, moving to Washington D.C. after 1900. From 1915 to 1965, he began to patent and sell various items for businesses and record keeping, such as a plumb adjuster, paper puncher, tape splice, as well as the loose leaf binder. The loose-leaf binder was his most successful invention improvement and was sold under the name Autoset Company and Autolock Company. He also sold his other inventions under the company name The Alexander Instrument Company. Both of these companies—The Autoset Company/Autolock Company and the Alexander Instrument Company—formed part of the Alexander Binder Company. The Alexander Binder Company was located at 467 C St. NW, Washington, D.C. It was a small family business for its entire existence. Both Clinton Alexander's wife (Maria Dixon Alexander) and son (William B. Alexander) are recorded as helping with the business and the patenting process. In February of 1966, Clinton B. Alexander died, and the Alexander Binder Company ceased to exist.

Scope and Contents

The Alexander Binder collection consists of 7.5 cubic feet of records and business materials which were created between the 1910s and 1965. Most of the collection deals with the binders sold under the Autoset Company and the Autolock Company names. There is also material covering the inventions created and sold under the Alexander Instrument Company. Business and sales information and materials from competitor companies are also included. The vast majority of this collection is textual material, especially business ephemera used to improve the business or sales records between Mr. Alexander and his suppliers and customers. The biggest customer of the Alexander Binder Company was the Aluminum Company of America, now known as Alcoa. However, the Alexander Binder Company sold frequently to companies outside of the United States as well. Along with these sales and business documents, there are material samples, such as grommets, extenders, fabric samples, printing plates, and sample binders from both the Autoset Company and its competitors.

Series 1, Correspondence, 1920-1935, contains correspondence by the Alexander Binder Company about loose leaf binders as well as correspondence with suppliers that the Alexander Binder Company worked with, such as G.H Mansfield and Company, Murphy Specialty Company, and United Screw & Bolt Corporation.

Series 2, Company Forms and Printing Plates, 1921-1954, undated, contains both business letters and information sent out concerning the investment account book, one of the more heavily publicized uses for the loose-leaf binders. It also contains the printing plates and associated materials that were used by the company for all of the various products sold by the company, ranging from the Plummet Adjustor to the Crescent Accounting System.

Series 3, Advertising and Sales Materials, 1912-1965, is divided into four subseries: Subseries 1, Advertising Materials, 1912-1941; Subseries 2, Catalogs, 1916-1921, undated; Subseries 3, Orders, Receipts, Shipments, 1913-1964; and Subseries 4, Sales Materials, 1916-1966. Materials include various marketing books and sales ephemera that Clinton B. Alexander collected to improve the sales and marketing of his products as well as orders, receipts, and shipments that the Alexander Binder Company or one of its subsets received from customers.

Subseries 1, Advertising Materials, 1912-1941, consists of documents that Clinton B. Alexander used to advertise his products. To increase sales, Alexander collected both advertising materials from his suppliers and his competitors as well as books that pertained to business marketing. Also included in this subseries are advertisements that Alexander used for his own products, such as the Crescent Accounting System.

Subseries 2, Catalogs, 1916-1921, includes catalogs from suppliers such as the Lantham Machinery Company and the Dietzgen Supply Company, as well as the Autaset Company. Clinton B. Alexander collected catalogs of various companies, particularly those of his suppliers in order to create catalogs of his own that could successfully market his products.

Subseries 3, Orders, Receipts, Shipments, 1913-1964, consists of all of the orders and sales made by the Alexander Binder Company and its subsets during the period of its existence. This includes not only sales of loose-leaf binders, but also sales of plumb adjusters and tape splices.

Subseries 4, Sales Materials, 1916-1966, contains sales materials that Clinton B. Alexander procured and to improve marketing his products. Included are various sales strategies as well.

Series 4, Drawing, Patterns, and Instructions, 1916-1959, consists of Clinton B. Alexander's drawings, patterns, and instructions concerning his inventions. These materials focus mostly on his loose leaf binder inventions, but also deal with how to create shipping boxes and parts for the machines used to create his products.

Series 5, Patent and Trademark Materials, 1912-1941, consists of all of the patent and trademark materials that Clinton B. Alexander used while inventing. Included is a certificate of copyright for his book, *The Crescent Accounting System for Investments and Income Tax* (1936) as well as trade names that he considered while starting his company.

Series 6, Competitors, 1931-1939, contains samples and related material for the creation of loose leaf binders as well as correspondence with the supplying companies. The samples are mostly fasteners and screws that were used in loose leaf binders.

Series 7, Binder Samples, 1918, 1931, 1933, 1956, undated, contains samples of binders created by the Alexander Binder Company under the Autaset Company and AutoSet Company names. It also includes binders that were created by competitor binder companies, such as the Walcott-Taylor Company and the Cesco Company.

Series 8, Articles and Publications, 1909-1947, consists of articles and publications pertaining to business development, in particular, documents such as "how to" guides, knowledge journals, and printed material from the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Arrangement

Collection organized into eight series.

Series 1, Correspondence, 1920-1935

Series 2, Company Forms and Printing Plates, 1921-1954, undated

Series 3, Advertising and Sales Materials, 1912-1965, undated

Subseries 1, Advertising Materials, 1912-1941

Subseries 2, Catalogs, 1916-1921, undated

Subseries 3, Orders, Receipts, Shipments, 1913-1964

Subseries 4, Sales Materials, 1916-1966

Series 4, Drawings, Patterns, and Instructions, 1916-1959

Series 5, Patent and Trademark Materials, 1912-1941

Series 6, Competitors, 1931-1939

Series 7, Binder Samples, 1918, 1931, 1933, 1956, undated

Series 8, Articles and Publications, 1909-1947

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Engineers
- Inventors
- Office equipment and supplies
- Office equipment and supplies industry

Types of Materials:

- Advertisements
- Brochures
- Correspondence -- 20th century
- Sales records
- Samples

Names:

- National Museum of American History (U.S.). Division of Work and Industry

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1920-1935

Box 1, Folder 1 Supplier Correspondence, 1920-1931

Box 1, Folder 2 Supplier Correspondence, 1932

Box 1, Folder 3 Supplier Correspondence, 1934

Box 1, Folder 4 Supplier Correspondence, 1935

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Series 2: Company Forms and Printing Plates, 1921-1954, undated

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Box 1, Folder 5 | Papers regarding materials used in binding and developing shop manufacturing practice, 1921 February - 1950 July |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | Crescent Investment Accounting System and ring binders, 1933 February - 1955 February |
| Box 1, Folder 7 | Materials relating to search for manufacturer of snap fasteners, 1934 January 14 - 1934 July 30 |
| Box 1, Folder 8 | Crescent Accounting System folders, 1936 |
| Box 1, Folder 9 | Materials relating to search for paper to use as index sheets, 1951 June 27 - 1954 March 9 |
| Box 1, Folder 10 | Materials relating to search for manufacturing of fasteners and binder board (1 of 2), 1953 April - September |
| Box 1, Folder 11 | Materials relating to search for manufacturing of fasteners and binder board (2 of 2), 1953 April - September |
| Box 1, Folder 12 | Crescent Accounting systems, 1937 August - 1952 July |
| Box 1, Folder 13 | Account books, 1954 |
| Box 1, Folder 14 | Capital Account Book, 1954 |
| Box 1, Folder 15 | Investment Account Book, 1954 |
| Box 9, Folder 2 | Plummet Adjustor printing plates, undated |
| Box 9, Folder 3 | Tape Splice cut printing plates, undated |
| Box 10, Folder 1 | Crescent Accounting System (associated loose materials), undated |
| Box 10, Folder 2 | Crescent Accounting System printing plates, undated |
| Box 11, Folder 1 | AutoLock binder (associated loose materials), undated |
| Box 11, Folder 2 | AutoLock printing plates, undated |
| Box 12, Folder 1 | AutoSet Plummet Adjustor and Alexander Little Giant, undated |
| Box 12, Folder 2 | Investment and Accounting printing plate, undated |

Box 13, Folder 1 Crescent Accounting System (associated loose materials), undated

Box 13, Folder 2 Crescent Accounting System printing plates, undated

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Series 3: Advertising and Sales Materials, 1912-1965

Subseries 3.1: Advertising Materials, 1912-1941

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Box 1, Folder 16 | Advertisement cards (suppliers and competitors), 1912-1924 |
| Box 1, Folder 17 | Direct by Mail Advertising, Profit Making Up-to-date, Letters as Business Builders, Business Short Cuts, 1915, 1933 |
| Box 1, Folder 18 | Competitors and suppliers advertisements, circa 1920s-1930s |
| Box 1, Folder 19 | Advertisement ideas, 1930s |
| Box 1, Folder 20 | Crescent Financial advertisements, 1941 |
| Box 1, Folder 21 | Little Giant Tape Splice and Plummet Adjustor (postcards) , undated |
| Box 1, Folder 22 | Autolock Binder Company advertisements, undated |
| Box 1, Folder 23 | Autolock and Thonglock Loose Leaf binders (pamphlets) , undated |
| Box 1, Folder 24 | Business letterhead samples, 1934 |

Subseries 3.2: Catalogs, 1916-1921

| | |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| Box 2, Folder 1 | Machinery Catalogue, 1916? |
| Box 2, Folder 2 | Power Press Catalogue, 1920 |
| Box 2, Folder 4 | Autoset Catalogues, undated |
| Box 2, Folder 5 | Dietzgen Supply Catalogue, undated |

Subseries 3.3: Orders, Receipts, Shipments, 1913-1964

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Box 2, Folder 6 | Miscellaneous, 1913-1930 |
| Box 2, Folder 7 | Orders, tape splice and plummet adjusters, 1921 |
| Box 2, Folder 8-9 | Data for purchase of drill press and topping device, 1923 |
| Box 2, Folder 10 | Shipments - loose leaf binders and instruments, 1931 January-April |
| Box 2, Folder 11 | Shipments - loose leaf binders and instruments, 1931 May-December |

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|---------------------|--|
| Box 2, Folder 12 | Keys for lock binder, 1932 January 14 - 1932 April 6 |
| Box 2, Folder 13 | Shipments - loose leaf binders and instruments, 1932 January 5 - 1932 October 21 |
| Box 2, Folder 14 | Shipments - loose leaf binder and instruments, 1933 |
| Box 2, Folder 15 | Orders - loose leaf binders and instruments, 1934 |
| Box 2, Folder 16 | Orders - loose leaf binders and instruments, 1935 February - 1935 May |
| Box 2, Folder 17 | Orders - loose leaf binders and instruments, 1935-1936 |
| Box 2, Folder 18-19 | Loose leaf binders, tape splicers and plummet adjusters, 1936 |
| Box 3, Folder 1 | Business orders for loose leaf binders, tape splice and plummet adjusters, 1937 |
| Box 3, Folder 2 | Business orders for loose leaf binders, tape splice and plummet adjusters, 1938 |
| Box 3, Folder 3 | Loose leaf binder, tape splice and plummet adjuster, 1939 |
| Box 3, Folder 4-5 | Orders, 1940 |
| Box 3, Folder 6-7 | Loose leaf binder, tape splice and plummet adjuster accounts, 1941 |
| Box 3, Folder 8-9 | Loose leaf binders and tape splices, 1942 |
| Box 3, Folder 10 | Orders, 1943 |
| Box 3, Folder 11 | Loose leaf binder shipments, 1944 |
| Box 3, Folder 12 | Instruments - tape splice and plummet adjusters orders filled, 1945 |
| Box 3, Folder 13 | Binders and loose leaf orders filled, 1945 |
| Box 3, Folder 14 | Crescent forms - binders and instrument orders filled, 1945 |
| Box 3, Folder 15 | Tape splicers and plummet adjusters, 1946 |
| Box 3, Folder 16 | Orders - tape splice, plummet adjuster forms, 1947 |
| Box 3, Folder 17 | Orders - tape splice, plummet adjuster forms, 1948 |
| Box 3, Folder 18 | Tape splice and plummet adjuster sales, 1949 |
| Box 4, Folder 1 | Final order from Aluminum Company of America, 1949 |
| Box 4, Folder 2 | Tape splice and plummet adjuster, 1950 |

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Box 4, Folder 3 | Tape splices shipped, 1951 |
| Box 4, Folder 5 | Sale of tape splices and plummet adjusters, 1953 |
| Box 4, Folder 5 | Tape splices and plummet adjusters, 1953 |
| Box 4, Folder 6 | Tape splices plumb bob adjusters, 1958 |
| Box 4, Folder 7 | Tape splices shipped, 1954 |
| Box 4, Folder 8 | Tape splices shipped, 1955 January 26 - 1955 August 23 |
| Box 4, Folder 9 | Tape splice and plumb bob adjusters sales, 1956 February 14 - 1956 December 7 |
| Box 4, Folder 10 | Miscellaneous correspondence, 1958 January 7 - 1965 August 9 |
| Box 4, Folder 11 | State Highway Commissions, Tape splice, 1950, 1952 |
| Box 4, Folder 12 | Tape splicers, 1958 |
| Box 4, Folder 13 | Chain splicers, 1960 |
| Box 4, Folder 14 | Tape splicers, 1962 |
| Box 4, Folder 15 | Plumb bob adjusters, 1964 |
| Box 4, Folder 16 | Order book, 1915-1927 |

Subseries 3.4: Sales Materials, 1916-1966

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Box 4, Folder 17 | Sales strategies, 1931-1932, 1924 |
| Box 4, Folder 18 | Correspondence, 1965-1966, 1933 |
| Box 4, Folder 19 | Sales letters (examples), 1932, 1923, 1925 |
| Box 4, Folder 21 | Supply inventory for Alexander Binder Company, undated |
| Box 4, Folder 22 | Sales book (example), 1914 |

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Series 4: Drawing, Patterns and Instructions, 1916-1959

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| Box 5, Folder 1 | Method, 1919, 1916 |
| Box 5, Folder 2 | Material specifications for AutoLock binder, 1918 October 4 |
| Box 5, Folder 3 | Metal hinge method, 1917, 1918, 1920 |
| Box 5, Folder 4 | Bound volume of product specifications, 1921 February 1 |
| Box 5, Folder 5 | Patterns for metal, 1919, 1921, 1927 |
| Box 5, Folder 6 | Shipping box patterns, 1927 |
| Box 5, Folder 7 | Patterns and drawings for foot press die base, 1932 |
| Box 5, Folder 8 | Drawings and method, 1932-1933 |
| Box 5, Folder 9 | Drawings, 1933 |
| Box 5, Folder 10 | Drawings and instructions, 1933-1934 |
| Box 5, Folder 11 | Materials relating to new AutoLock loose leaf binder, 1933 November - 1954 November |
| Box 5, Folder 12 | Instructions and method, 1939, 1921, 1934, 1938 |
| Box 5, Folder 13 | Crescent Account System instruction and drawings, 1935, 1937, 1939 |
| Box 5, Folder 14 | 38" tape splice instructions and drawings, 1931, 1946, 1944, 1948 |
| Box 5, Folder 15 | Materials relating to manufacture of tape splices, 1941 April - 1949 October |
| Box 5, Folder 16 | Instructions and method, 1952 |
| Box 5, Folder 17 | Tape splice instructions, 1957, 1956, 1959 |
| Box 5, Folder 18 | Box patterns and samples, 1959 |

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Series 5: Patent and Trademark Materials, 1903-1941

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|-------------------|---|
| Box 5, Folder 19 | Patent materials for plummet adjuster and slack adjuster, 1929, 1916, 1948 |
| Box 5, Folder 20 | Alexander, C.B., patents (copies), 1915-1933, 1903 Image(s): Patents |
| Box 5, Folder 21 | List of trade names, 1912 |
| Box 5, Folder 22A | Certificate of copyright, 1936 December 28 |
| Box 5, Folder 22B | Certificate of copyright registration, 1941 |
| Box 5, Folder 44 | Autoset loose leaf binders, trademark, 1912 |
| Box 5, Folder 45 | Rob Roy loose leaf binders, trademark, 1921-1922 |
| Box 5, Folder 46 | Casings and method of making same, 1922-1926 |
| Box 5, Folder 47 | Semi-permanent loose leaf, 1921-1922 |
| Box 5, Folder 48 | Loose leaf binders, 1922-1925 |
| Box 5, Folder 49 | Connector for repairing metallic measuring tapes, 1931-1932 |

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Series 6: Competitors, 1931-1939

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|------------------|--|
| Box 5, Folder 22 | Correspondence, 1931-1939 |
| Box 5, Folder 23 | Correspondence and samples (eyelets, screws, post extenders, grommets) of the Stimpson Company, 1935 |
| Box 5, Folder 24 | Snap fastener samples and catalogue, 1934 |
| Box 5, Folder 25 | Dot fastener sample and correspondence, 1934 |
| Box 5, Folder 26 | Fastener (miscellaneous), 1934 |
| Box 5, Folder 27 | Brass nut samples, 1934 |
| Box 5, Folder 28 | Extender screw examples, 1934 |
| Box 5, Folder 29 | Unidentified samples, undated |
| Box 5, Folder 30 | Upholstery samples, 1935 |

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Series 7: Binder Samples, 1956, 1931, 1933, 1918, undated

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Box 6, Folder 1 | AutoSet special file equipment with hole punch, No. FB-4, undated |
| Box 6, Folder 2 | AutoSet blank binder with memo routing, undated |
| Box 6, Folder 3 | AutoSet special file with hole punch, undated |
| Box 6, Folder 4 | AutoSet AutoLock binder, undated |
| Box 6, Folder 5 | B and D Standard, undated |
| Box 6, Folder 6 | Cesco Company, undated |
| Box 7, Folder 1 | AutoLock binder, undated |
| Box 7, Folder 2 | AutoLock binder, undated |
| Box 7, Folder 3 | AutoLock binder, undated |
| Box 7, Folder 4 | AutoLock binder, undated |
| Box 7, Folder 5 | Binder (with extenders), undated |
| Box 7, Folder 6 | Binder (blank), undated |
| Box 7, Folder 7 | AutoLock binder, 1956 January 19 |
| Box 7, Folder 8 | AutoLock binder, undated |
| Box 7, Folder 9 | AutoLock binder, undated |
| Box 7, Folder 10 | Autoset special file equipment binder, undated |
| Box 7, Folder 11 | Autoset binder No. 5211, undated |
| Box 8, Folder 1 | AutoLock binder, undated |
| Box 8, Folder 2 | AutoSet Company binder, undated |
| Box 8, Folder 3 | Prototype, 1931 April 2 |
| Box 8, Folder 4 | Prototype with notes, 1918 October 4 |

Box 9, Folder 1

Proposed drawings for AutoLock binder, 1933 December

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Series 8: Articles and Publications, 1909-1947

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| Box 9, Folder 31 | Business Development Company (handbooks), 1910s |
| Box 9, Folder 32 | Financial Handbook: The Art of Promotion, Advertising and Selling; The Art of Financiering: Knowledge and Business and Finance, 1910, 1909 |
| Box 9, Folder 33 | Knowledge, 1924, 1920, 1923 |
| Box 9, Folder 34 | Contacts, Bell Telephone Company, undated |
| Box 9, Folder 35 | Brochures about eyeleting machinery of Southworth Brothers and Stimpson Company, 1925 |
| Box 9, Folder 36 | Miscellaneous clippings and publications, 1924, 1926, 1918 |
| Box 9, Folder 37 | The Office Economist, 192 |
| Box 9, Folder 38 | Notes from American Society of Civil Engineers Yearbook, 1921 |
| Box 9, Folder 39 | American Society of Civil Engineers Yearbook, 1921 |
| Box 9, Folder 40 | Contacts from American Society of Civil Engineers Yearbook, 1926 |
| Box 9, Folder 41 | American Society of Civil Engineers Yearbook, 1926 |
| Box 9, Folder 42 | Printing and advertising clippings, 1933, 1926 |
| Box 9, Folder 43 | United States Service Journal, 1947 |

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