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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title: Alexander Binder Company Records
Identifier: NMAH.AC.1100
Date: 1903-1965 (bulk 1921-1955)
Extent: 6 Cubic feet (6 boxes)
Creator: Alexander, Clinton B.
Work and Industry, Division of, NMAH, SI
Clinton B. Alexander Binder Company (Washington, D.C.)
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

Restrictions
The collection is open for research use.
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

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 Autoset 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 Autoset 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.

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**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:
  Work and Industry, Division of, NMAH, SI
## Container Listing

**Series 1: Correspondence, 1920-1935**

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