Table of Contents

Collection Overview ........................................................................................................ 1
Administrative Information .............................................................................................. 1
Arrangement ..................................................................................................................... 3
Scope and Contents ........................................................................................................ 2
Biographical / Historical ............................................................................................... 2
Names and Subjects ........................................................................................................ 4
Container Listing ........................................................................................................... 5
  Series 1: Correspondence, 1920-1935.................................................................... 5
  Series 2: Company Forms and Printing Plates, 1921-1954, undated...................... 6
  Series 3: Advertising and Sales Materials, 1912-1965 ............................................ 7
  Series 4: Drawing, Patterns and Instructions, 1916-1959...................................... 10
  Series 5: Patent and Trademark Materials, 1903-1941.......................................... 11
  Series 6: Competitors, 1931-1939......................................................................... 12
  Series 7: Binder Samples, 1956, 1931, 1933, 1918, undated......................... 13
  Series 8: Articles and Publications, 1909-1947....................................................... 14
### 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.

**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**

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**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

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

Return to Table of Contents
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

Return to Table of Contents
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

*Image(s)*

Box 1, Folder 22  Autolock Binder Company advertisements, undated
Box 1, Folder 23  Autolock and Thonglock Loose Leaf binders (pamphlets), undated

*Image(s)*

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
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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 2, Folder 14</th>
<th>Shipments - loose leaf binder and instruments, 1933</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 15</td>
<td>Orders - loose leaf binders and instruments, 1934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 16</td>
<td>Orders - loose leaf binders and instruments, 1935 February - 1935 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 17</td>
<td>Orders - loose leaf binders and instruments, 1935-1936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 18-19</td>
<td>Loose leaf binders, tape splicers and plummet adjusters, 1936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 1</td>
<td>Business orders for loose leaf binders, tape splice and plummet adjusters, 1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 2</td>
<td>Business orders for loose leaf binders, tape splice and plummet adjusters, 1938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 3</td>
<td>Loose leaf binder, tape splice and plummet adjuster, 1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 4-5</td>
<td>Orders, 1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 6-7</td>
<td>Loose leaf binder, tape splice and plummet adjuster accounts, 1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 8-9</td>
<td>Loose leaf binders and tape splices, 1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 10</td>
<td>Orders, 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 11</td>
<td>Loose leaf binder shipments, 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 12</td>
<td>Instruments - tape splice and plummet adjusters orders filled, 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 13</td>
<td>Binders and loose leaf orders filled, 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 14</td>
<td>Crescent forms - binders and instrument orders filled, 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 15</td>
<td>Tape splicers and plummet adjusters, 1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 16</td>
<td>Orders - tape splice, plummet adjuster forms, 1947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 17</td>
<td>Orders - tape splice, plummet adjuster forms, 1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 18</td>
<td>Tape splice and plummet adjuster sales, 1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 4, Folder 1</td>
<td>Final order from Aluminum Company of America, 1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 4, Folder 2</td>
<td>Tape splice and plummet adjuster, 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 4, Folder 3</td>
<td>Tape splices shipped, 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 4, Folder 5</td>
<td>Sale of tape splices and plummet adjusters, 1953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 4, Folder 5</td>
<td>Tape splices and plummet adjusters, 1953</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

Return to Table of Contents
Series 4: Drawing, Patterns and Instructions, 1916-1959

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
  Image(s)

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
  Image(s)

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

Return to Table of Contents
Series 5: Patent and Trademark Materials, 1903-1941

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

Return to Table of Contents
Series 6: Competitors, 1931-1939

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

Return to Table of Contents
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

Return to Table of Contents
Series 8: Articles and Publications, 1909-1947

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

Return to Table of Contents