



Smithsonian

*National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center*

Archives Center National Film Preservation  
Foundation Industrial Film Collection

NMAH.AC.1435

Archives Center Staff

2021

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
<b>Title:</b>	Archives Center National Film Preservation Foundation Industrial Film Collection
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAH.AC.1435
<b>Date:</b>	1914-1917
<b>Creator:</b>	National Film Preservation Foundation (U.S.) (Preservationist) Kalem Company (Film producer) Lambert, Jeff
<b>Extent:</b>	3 Cubic feet (3 boxes)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	Collection consists of three film elements of three films: <i>The Dairy Industry and the Canning of Milk</i> ; <i>Making High Grade Papers</i> and <i>From Ore to Finished Product</i> as part of the National Film Preservation Foundation's collaborative film repatriation project with the EYE Filmmuseum.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

National Film Preservation Foundation, through Jeff Lambert, September 8, 2014.

### Preferred Citation

Archives Center National Film Preservation Foundation Industrial Film Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History

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## Historical

The films represent American silent era titles examined and described by a consultant and sent by the National Film Preservation Foundation (NFPF) to EYE Filmmuseum Netherlands (EYE) in Spring 2013. EYE and NFPF identified American silent-era films held by EYE, which are of interest to the American archival community's ongoing program to preserve and make available the film heritage of the United States. With the goal of returning these long-unseen materials to the public and preserving them for future generations, EYE, the NFPF, and selected American film archives have embarked on a multiyear preservation partnership with the objective of making the films widely available for study and education.

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## Content Description

Collection consists of three film elements of three films: *The Dairy Industry and the Canning of Milk*; *Fine Papers* and *From Ore to Finished Product* as part of the National Film Preservation Foundation's

collaborative film repatriation project with the EYE Film Institute. The films represent American silent era titles examined and described by a consultant and sent by the National Film Preservation Foundation (NFPF) to the EYE Filmmuseum Netherlands (EYE) in Spring 2013.

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged into one series.

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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:

- Canning and preserving
- Dairying industry
- Films
- Industrial films
- Iron and steel industry
- Labor -- History -- 20th century -- United States
- Paper mills
- Papermaking
- Silent films

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## Container Listing

Box 1

The Dairy Industry and the Canning of Milk, 1917

2 Film reels (Total Running Time: 11:13; 35mm stenciled and tinted print, silent @ 18 f.p.s.)

1 Videocassettes (HDCam) (Total Running Time: 11:13)

1 Videodiscs (Blu-ray) (Total Running Time: 11:13)

Notes: Sponsor: Libby, McNeill & Libby Company. Production Co.: Unknown. Transfer Note: Copied at 18 frames per second from a 35mm print preserved by the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, from source material provided by EYE Filmmuseum. New Music: Michael D. Mortilla. Running Time: 11 minutes.

The industrial film *The Dairy Industry and the Canning of Milk*, produced around 1917, documents the technology of canning evaporated milk at the Libby, McNeill & Libby Company's Chicago plant. The film was most likely made as an industrywide effort to quell fears of unsanitary conditions in the food processing industry. The use of stenciled color helps set this early industrial film apart.

The industrialization of food processing in the late 1800s and early 1900s lowered costs, raised availability, but posed health risks to consumers. Books like Upton Sinclair's popular 1906 novel *The Jungle* (an exposé of the Chicago meatpacking industry) as well as earlier concerns about adulteration of patent medicines made many consumers question the safety of prepared food. Government intervened by passing inspection regulations in the form of laws like the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act and the 1907 Meat Inspection Act. Industry also sought to quiet public fears by distributing educational films and advertisements and offering tours of its factories (where employees in uniform gave the impression of hygienic safety).

Libby, McNeill & Libby was a canning company pioneer founded in 1875 in Chicago. Its first product, corned beef, was heavily marketed and packaged in a distinctive trapezoidal can. Later it expanded into the canned milk market (first developed by Borden in 1855). The shelf stability of canned evaporated milk (60 percent of water removed) made it attractive to people concerned about spoilage. The film follows the path of raw milk delivery to the dairy and processing into a final consumer product. At all stages, the scientific modernity of the dairy operation is stressed and the hygienic conditions featured. Most of the workers wear white uniforms. The end of the film covers a small portion on cows and the healthy conditions under which they are raised.

### Source

National Film Preservation Foundation Website (<https://www.filmpreservation.org/preserved-films/screening-room/the-dairy-industry-and-the-canning-of-milk-1917>)

Peter Liebhold, Curator of Division of Work and Industry,  
National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

### **About the Preservation**

The Dairy Industry and the Canning of Milk was preserved in 2015 at Colorlab Corp. using a 35mm stencil-colored nitrate print from EYE Filmmuseum. The intertitles were translated from the Dutch and are modern re-creations. The work was supervised by the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, and funded through a National Endowment for the Humanities grant secured by the NFPF.

### **About the Music**

The new music for this presentation was composed and performed by Michael D. Mortilla. Michael has been composing professionally for more than four decades and has accompanied silent film screenings throughout the United States. Among his many NFPF projects are the accompaniments for the DVDs Treasures 5: The West and Lost and Found: American Treasures from the New Zealand Film Archive. The score for The Dairy Industry and the Canning of Milk was improvised in one continuous "take" in order to recreate the live experience of an audience at the time of the film's original release. According to Michael, "the creative process involves running through the film repeatedly, recording most of the performances. A typical piano solo for a one-reeler like this usually requires about 14 takes to arrive at the final musical work. There is little to no editing of my performances, and absolutely no editing of the score's overall structure."

#### Box 2

From Ore to Finished Product, Reel # 4, 1915

1 Film item (Total Running Time: 11:53; 35mm black and white print, silent @ 18 f.p.s.)

1 Videocassettes (HDCam) (Total Running Time: 11:53)

1 Videodiscs (Blu-ray) (Total Running Time: 11:53)

Notes: Sponsor: National Tube Company. Production Co.: Unknown.  
Transfer Note: Copied at 18 frames per second from a 35mm print preserved by the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, from source material provided by EYE Filmmuseum. New Music: Michael D. Mortilla. Running Time: 9 minutes (incomplete, reel 4 of 4).

The industrial film From Ore to Finished Product is a four-reel production commissioned by the National Tube Company and probably shot around the Fourth of July 1915. In 1921 the company produced a small book with the same title. The motivations for creating this early film were complex — partly a baseline advertising effort, partly an attempt to diffuse public unease over the rise of large corporations, and partly an effort to quell labor discord. The first three reels of the film documented the technical process of making steel and steel tubes. These reels probably didn't survive, but reel four did, and it admirably documents the company's efforts at welfare capitalism.

National Tube Works Company was formed in the 1870s when Flagler & Company relocated from Boston to McKeesport, Pennsylvania, near the nation's iron and steel center of Pittsburgh. In 1899, during the height of the American merger movement, lawyer William Cromwell and banker Edmund Converse, with the help of financier J.P. Morgan, brought together 16 pipe and tube manufacturers under the National Tube name. In 1901, National Tube merged with other steel companies as part of the formation of the U.S. Steel Corporation.

In the second half of the 19th century many American manufacturing companies expanded in size, and the resulting economies of scale and application of new technology lowered costs of production. By the late 1880s and 1890s cutthroat competition broke out as firms fought for larger shares of the national and global markets. Faced with high fixed costs, businesses followed many strategies to prevent ruinous price battles, including trusts, mergers, and monopolies. Companies often absorbed their suppliers or distributors in an effort to control the market. Kickbacks, bribery, price fixing, and secret deals were widespread. Americans became uneasy and debated the virtues and detriments of free enterprise. Films such as *From Ore to Finished Product* helped counter the impact of Progressive era muckraker books (like Ida Tarbell's *The History of Standard Oil*).

In the early 1900s the rising power of organized labor and general concerns regarding American capitalism versus Marxism motivated some business leaders to turn to the new medium of film to sway public opinion. As W.L. Schaefer of the National Tube Works advertising department explained, "Our motion pictures were taken for the purpose of using them as educational propaganda" (Reel and Slide, October 1918, p. 43–44). In 1909 National Tube shut down the Dewees Wood plant after a bitter strike. As a company official explained, "McKeesport...has a population that is largely in sympathy with lawlessness, and has a mayor who will not use his police to protect the property of manufacturers and will not permit a nonunion man seeking work to enter town" (National Tube Works Historical Marker). Interestingly labor was also an early adopter of film as a persuasive tool.

At the turn of the century, increasingly complex operations, the threat of unionization, and massive influxes of immigrant workers led many businessmen to change the way they ran their companies. The quest for cheap labor had led factory managers to hire recent immigrants who spoke little or no English. The chorus of foreign tongues seemed to confirm managers' beliefs that their companies were slipping out of their control. As workers' rights and managers' prerogatives clashed, the two sides battled over control of the workplace. Workers struck over hours, new machinery, work rules, and union representation in an attempt to retain some control over their jobs. Managers' ethnic and racial fears of the rising tide

of immigrant workers in the American workforce led them to seek new methods of control such as welfare work ("welfare work" is a period term growing out of the early 20th-century personnel movement and should not be confused with later concepts of state-sponsored welfare). Proponents of welfare work, the subject of this film, believed that improvements such as lunchrooms, recreational facilities, company outings, and vegetable gardens would instill company values and thereby boost productivity. This paternalistic corporate attitude sometimes even intruded into employees' personal lives. By making changes in work environments, company officials sought to remake the working class in their own middle-class image. The use of employee gardens as a tool of control is not always apparent, but labor stoppages become much less likely when striking workers not only lose their pay but also their source of vegetables.

While paternalistic, welfare work was not always egalitarian; companies often excluded blacks from their welfare programs or established separate facilities for them. From Ore to Finished Product shows that National Tube followed a different course, and a number of scenes show white and African American children playing together. However, other aspects of mill life likely remained segregated. In 1937 U.S. Steel signed a contract with the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, which was one of the first integrated industrial unions.

#### **Source**

National Film Preservation Foundation Website (<https://www.filmpreservation.org/preserved-films/screening-room/from-ore-to-finished-product-1915>)

Peter Liebhold, Curator of Division of Work and Industry, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

#### **About the Preservation**

From Ore to Finished Product was preserved in 2015 at Colorlab Corp. using a 35mm nitrate print from EYE Filmmuseum. The work was supervised by the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, and funded through a National Endowment for the Humanities grant secured by the NFPF.

#### **About the Music**

The new music for this presentation was composed and performed by Michael D. Mortilla. Michael has been composing professionally for more than four decades and has accompanied silent film screenings throughout the United States. Among his many NFPF projects are the accompaniments for the DVDs Treasures 5: The West and Lost and Found: American Treasures from the New Zealand Film Archive. The score for From Ore to Finished Product was improvised in one continuous "take" in order to recreate the live experience of an audience at the time of the film's original release. According to Michael, "the creative process



involves running through the film repeatedly, recording most of the performances. A typical piano solo for a one-reeler like this usually requires about 14 takes to arrive at the final musical work. There is little to no editing of my performances, and absolutely no editing of the score's overall structure."

Box 3

Making High Grade Papers, 1914

2 Film items (Total Running Time: 11:53; 35mmblack and white print, silent @14 f.p.s.)

1 Videocassettes (HDCam) (Total Running Time: 11:53)

1 Videodiscs (Blu-ray) (Total Running Time: 11:53)

Notes: Sponsor: Strathmore Paper Co. Production Co.: Kalem Company. Transfer Note: Copied at 14 frames per second from a 35mm print preserved by the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, from source material provided by EYE Filmmuseum. New Music: Michael D. Mortilla. Running Time: 11 minutes.

Making High-Grade Paper was produced by the Kalem Company, a studio better known for its feature films. This example of Kalem's industrial film efforts featuring the Strathmore Paper Company was shown in theaters as well as business settings. Strathmore executives believed it would prove of particular interest to those involved in the advertising and printing trades—their primary clients. As announced in the journal *The Printing Art* (1914), Strathmore's advertising department prepared a circular that encouraged printers' and advertisers' organizations to arrange special screenings of the film that they could attend as a group, presumably to facilitate discussion. The company also offered to arrange showings of the film in connection with a lecture on papermaking that apparently it had developed before the film was produced.

"Strathmore" was a brand name in use from the 1890s by the Mittineague Paper Company of West Springfield, Massachusetts. The firm was owned by Horace A. Moses, who later purchased the nearby Woronoco Paper Mills and merged the two entities into the Strathmore Paper Company in about 1911. The brand name and its symbol, the thistle, represented the owner's personal regard for Scotland; Strathmore means "large valley" in Gaelic. In 1914 Moses opened an impressive new mill with a large, state-of-the-art paper machine, and this likely is the facility shown in the film.

Throughout its corporate existence, the Strathmore Company emphasized the firm's commitment to fine papermaking. Making High-Grade Paper served that agenda by picturing each step of the process, beginning with a view of the clear local water and the quality of the rags used as raw material. Through close-ups and tight shots focused on individual workers, the film demonstrated the attention to detail practiced by the company's personnel, and it also recognized the firm's employment of women. Owing to losses incurred over time, some sections of film are missing or misidentified, but what remains offers a good idea of most of the processes involved, including sorting,

washing, cutting, and beating the rags into a watery pulp that flowed onto the moving wire screen of the huge paper machine. As the water drained away, the pulp formed a continuous web that could be passed through several pairs of rollers. These extracted more water and finally wound the damp paper onto large heated drying rolls. Employees then turned to the finishing operations of sizing, cutting, pressing or "calendering," as it's known in the paper trade, and final inspection of the sheets.

The featured paper, "Strathmore Parchment," was used for high-grade letterhead and business stationery. Strathmore worked in association with Rag Content Paper Manufacturers, which promoted the use of quality papers, those made from rags. Much of the paper produced at the time was made from wood pulp, which resulted in cheaper but much less durable paper. Pulp papers became brittle and were prone to rapid yellowing or fading. Rag papers were stronger, noted for durability and for "impressiveness," according to the marketing materials produced by their manufacturers.

Strathmore was a leader in the effort to promote the use of fine papers. The company emphasized paper's important role in the effectiveness of printed pieces for marketing and advertising. Over the years the firm employed the best graphic designers for its own marketing efforts, beginning with Will Bradley in the 1890s and going on to include work by T.M. Cleland, W.A. Dwiggin, and Walter Dorwin Teague, among others, into the 1930s. These artists brought out the best features of papers that performed well and provided high-quality expressive products for advertising many types of businesses. The booklets, fliers, and sample books they designed demonstrated Strathmore's papers to their best advantage and offered ideas and suggestions to potential clients. The 1914 film served in much the same way. It informed clients and the public how the product was made in a modern facility by skilled workers using the best equipment and clear water, in this way demonstrating the firm's commitment to quality.

#### **Source**

Helena E. Wright, Curator of Division of Culture and the Arts, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

#### **About the Preservation**

Making High-Grade Paper was preserved in 2016 at Colorlab Corp. using a 35mm nitrate print from EYE Filmmuseum. The intertitles were translated from the Dutch and are modern recreations. The work was supervised by the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, and funded through a National Endowment for the Humanities grant secured by the NFPF.

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