



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Wade Corset Collection

NMAH.AC.1580

Alison Oswald

2022

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Collection Overview

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|--------------------|---|
| Repository: | Archives Center, National Museum of American History |
| Title: | Wade Corset Collection |
| Date: | 1894-1906 (bulk 1900-1906) |
| Identifier: | NMAH.AC.1580 |
| Source: | Colby, Anne (Donor) |
| Creator: | Wade , Alzira Hewitt Cowardin , 1839-1929 (Inventor) |
| Extent: | .15 Cubic feet (1 box) |
| Language: | English . |
| Summary: | Collection documents the Wade Corset Company of Minneapolis, Minnesota, founded by inventor, Alzira Hewitt Cowardin Wade. |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Collection donated by Anne Colby, July 2022.

Available Formats

Collection digitized in July 2022.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Clare McElhaney, intern, and Alison Oswald, archivist, 2022.

Preferred Citation

Wade Corset Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History

Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical

Alzira Hewitt Cowardin Wade (1839-1929), was born in Huntsville, Alabama to Colin Manley Cowardin and Mary Hewitt Morehead. She was one of six children that included Agnes Hunter Cowardin; Mary Elizabeth Cowardin; Margaret Cowardin; Henry Cowardin and Robert Cowardin.

She married Dr. James Howlett Hunter on June 11, 1857 and had two children, Colin Hiram Hunter and Alzira Allie Belle Hunter. Dr. Hunter died of Yellow Fever in 1860. Her second marriage was to William Elijah Wade on June 26, 1866, and the couple had two children, Margaret Ruth Wade and George Munson Wade.

Wade worked as a seamstress and established the Wade Corset Company in Minneapolis, Minnesota, expanding eventually to New York City, Atlantic City, Paris and London. The company offered corset waists, abdominal bands, bust supports, corsage ruffles and girdles. Wade patented an abdominal supporter (US 517,941) in 1894; a reversible corset busk (US 640,839) in 1900; and an apparel corset (US 656,913) in 1900.

Content Description

Ephemera and photographs related to the Wade Corset Company founded by inventor, Alzira Hewitt Cowardin Wade.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into one series, topically.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Corsets
- Women inventors -- 20th century

Types of Materials:

- Ephemera
- Photographs -- 20th century

Names:

- Colby, Anne
- Marlowe, Julia, 1865-1950
- Wade Corset Company

Container Listing

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Box 1, Folder 1 | Alzira Wade, undated |
| Box 1, Folder 2 | Julia Marlowe, 1905-1906 |
| Box 1, Folder 3 | Product information and advertisements, circa 1900 |
| Box 1, Folder 4 | Stock certificate, 1902-07-03 |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | Patents, copies, 1894, 1900 Notes: Includes patents for an Abdominal supporter (US 517,941); Reversible corset busk (US 640,839); and Apparel corset (US 656,913). |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | Clothing tag for Wade corsets, undated |