



Smithsonian

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Irving Naxon Papers

NMAH.AC.1592

Alison Oswald

2023

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| Collection Overview | |
| Administrative Information | 1 |
| Biographical | 2 |
| Scope and Contents | 3 |
| Arrangement | 3 |
| Names and Subjects | |
| Container Listing | |
| Series 1: Biographical Materials , 1925-2019 | 4 |
| Series 2: Naxon Utilities Corporation , 1920s-1970s | 5 |
| Series 3: Naxon Telesign, Inc. , 1938-1973 | 6 |
| Series 4: Patent and Trademark Materials , 1932-1968 | 7 |

Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Archives Center, National Museum of American History |
| Title: | Irving Naxon Papers |
| Date: | 1925-2019 |
| Identifier: | NMAH.AC.1592 |
| Creator: | Naxon, Irving , 1902-1989 (Inventor) |
| Source: | Eisenberg, Eileen (Donor) Klein, Jewel N. (Donor) Naxon, Lenore D. (Donor) |
| Extent: | .75 Cubic feet (2 boxes) |
| Language: | English . |
| Summary: | Papers document Irving Naxon (1902-1989), an inventor best known for the Crock-Pot. Papers include photographs, patents, trademarks, correspondence, drawings and notes for many of Naxon's inventions. |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Collection donated by Lenore Naxon, Jewel N. Klein, and Eileen Eisenberg, 2023.

Related Materials

Materials in the Archives Center

Edgecraft Corporation Records (NMAH.AC.1382)

Goya Foods, Inc. Collection (NMAH.AC.0694)

Kubla Kahn Frozen Food Company Records (NMAH.AC.1316)

Paul Ma Papers (NMAH.AC.1469)

Virginia Mericle Menu Collection (NMAH.AC.1212)

Nordic Ware Company Records (NMAH.AC.0980) Product Cookbook Collection (NMAH.AC.0396)

Charlotte Cramer Sachs Papers (NMAH.AC.0878)

Jane and Michael Stern Collection (NMAH.AC.1392)

Warshaw Collection of Business American Series: Food (NMAH.AC.0060)

Warshaw Collection of Business American Series: Kitchen Appliances and Utensils (NMAH.AC.0060)

A. Bernie Woods Papers (NMAH.AC.0962)

Division of Work & Industry

The Division of Work & Industry holds artifacts related to this collection. See accession 2023.0089 which includes the Naxon Boston Beanery, Naxon Flavor Crock, Turkey Roaster, and Automatic Chicken Fryer.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Alison Oswald, archivist, 2023.

Preferred Citation

Irving Naxon Papers, Archives Center, National Museum of American History

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Biographical

Irving Naxon was born Irving Nachumsohn (1902-1989) in Jersey City, New Jersey, to Julius Nachumsohn (1870-1905) and Tamora "Mary" Kassloski Nachumsohn (1874-1966), Jewish immigrants with roots in Germany and Lithuania. His father died when Irving was two years old, and the family moved to North Dakota and Canada, finally settling in Chicago. Naxon had two siblings, Meyer Nachumsohn (1898-1980) and Sadie Nachumsohn (1899-1963).

An electrical engineer by training, Naxon worked for Western Electric and was the company's first Jewish engineer. He was an inveterate tinkerer and inventor, and passed the patent bar exam himself, thereby eliminating the need to hire a patent lawyer. Naxon filed US Patent 2,187,888 on May 21, 1936, for a "Cooking Apparatus," or slow cooker. The patent was awarded on January 23, 1940, but the device wasn't put into commercial production until the 1950s. The idea for an electric slow cooker relates to stories about the inventor's great grandmother, who observed the labor restrictions of Shabbat by taking her cholent, a traditional stew of meat, potatoes, and beans, to the local bakery before sundown on Friday so it would cook slowly overnight in the residual heat of the bakery's oven.

By the time the slow cooker was brought to market, it was called the "The Boston Beanery," or "Naxon Beanery" and consisted of a ceramic crock fitted with a heating element that wrapped around an inner chamber, promoting even heat for cooking. Naxon advertised his slow cooker as "the All-Purpose Cooker," and even made a model that sported names of international dishes that could be made in the device. Naxon founded two companies, Naxon Utilities Corporation to manufacture his precision electrical devices, and Naxon Telesign, Inc., to focus on the telesign, an electronic sign that showed moving text resembling a news ticker and which Naxon leased to other companies.

Naxon retired in 1970 and sold his business to the Rival Manufacturing Company in Kansas City. Rival rebranded the Beanery as the "Crock Pot" and provided updated recipes developed by the company's home economists. Rival introduced the Crock Pot at the 1971 National Housewares Show in Chicago and sales took off. The Crock Pot appealed to consumers who wanted to come home at the end of a long day to a home-cooked meal without having to do much actual cooking. Crock Pot sales remain strong, despite a plethora of other kitchen appliances like the Insta-Pot which also minimize the amount of time and cooking technique required to turn out a home-cooked meal.

Naxon married Fern Dubin (1915-2008) in 1940 and, in 1945, changed the family name from Nachumsohn to Naxon due to anti-German sentiment in the United States. The Naxons had three daughters, Lenore Naxon, Jewel N. Klein, and Eileen Eisenberg.

Sources

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/brief-history-crock-pot-180973643/>

<https://www.cnet.com/home/kitchen-and-household/from-humble-to-high-tech-a-slow-cookerhistory/>

<https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/food/articles/jewish-inventor-of-slow-cooker-irving-naxon>

Scope and Contents

This collection documents a portion of the long and productive career of inventor Irving Naxon (1902-1989). Best known for inventing the slow-cooker that became the ubiquitous Crock-Pot, he was awarded many patents for various kitchen and household devices including an electric frying pan, a lidded turkey roaster, and a tabletop tub with an agitator for washing cloth diapers. Naxon also invented an electronic billboard system (the "telesign"), first used in Times Square. The archival materials offer insights into Naxon's business and advertising acumen, while also providing rich contextual material for understanding the revolution in countertop appliances for the home kitchen at a time when many more American women were employed outside of the home.

Arrangement

Collection is arranged into four series.

Series 1: Biographical Materials, 1925-2019

Series 2: Naxon Utilities Corporation, 1920s-1970s

Series 3: Naxon Telesign, Inc., 1938-1973

Series 4: Patent and Trademark Materials, 1932-1968

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Cooking
- Inventions -- 20th century
- Inventors -- 20th century
- Kitchen appliances

Types of Materials:

- Advertisements -- 20th century
- Correspondence -- 20th century
- Newspaper clippings
- Notebooks -- 20th century
- Patents -- 20th century
- Photographs
- Trademarks

Names:

- Eisenberg, Eileen
- Klein, Jewel N.
- Naxon Telesign, Inc. (Chicago, Illinois)
- Naxon Utilities Corporation (Chicago, Illinois)
- Naxon, Lenore D.

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Materials , 1925-2019

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| Box 1, Folder 1 | Biographical information , undated |
| Box 1, Folder 2 | Wisdom Hall of Fame, 1971, 1974 |
| Box 1, Folder 3 | Newspaper Clippings, 1925-2019 |

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Naxon Utilities Corporation , 1920s-1970s

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|------------------|---|
| Box 1, Folder 4 | Invention Notebook, 1920s 1 Volume (4.75 in x 7 in) Notes: Notebook contains documentation about patents filed, information about radio frequency amplifier stabilizers, absolute unidirectional D.C. generator, vacuum tube structures, and other notes and drawings. |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | Miscellaneous drawings , 1927, undated |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | Correspondence, 1927-1945 |
| Box 1, Folder 7 | Naxon Utilities Corporation, branding logos, undated |
| Box 1, Folder 8 | Naxon Utilities Corporation, Product Plant, Chicago, Illinois, photographs , circa 1960s |
| Box 1, Folder 9 | Naxon Boston Beanery, circa 1970 Notes: Includes the United Nations' Taste Sensations recipe booklet. |
| Box 1, Folder 10 | Naxon Cooker-Roaster/Broilrange, 1940s |
| Box 1, Folder 11 | Naxon Filtered Spectrum Sun Lamp, 1969 |
| Box 1, Folder 12 | Naxon Electric Frymasters , 1950s Notes: Includes information for the frying pan, chicken fryer, and French fryer and a time, temperature and recipe wheel. The frymaster is covered by US Patent 2,187,888 and US Patent 2,253,043. |
| Box 1, Folder 13 | Naxon Ice Well, circa 1960s |
| Box 1, Folder 14 | Naxon Kitchen Appliances , 1950s Notes: Includes information for the Broileroaster, Broilerserver, Beanery, Griddles, and Portable Washers. |
| Box 1, Folder 15 | Naxon Portable Washer, 1950s |
| Box 1, Folder 16 | Naxon Swivel Wringer, circa 1950s |

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 3: Naxon Telesign, Inc. , 1938-1973

Scope and Contents: Naxon Telesign Corporation was incorporated on April 15, 1938, in Illinois "to manufacture, buy, sell, and generally deal with goods, wares, merchandise and personal property of any interest." The first meeting of Naxon Telesign was held on April 18, 1938, with three directors present, Irving Nachumsohn, Kenneth Whitney, and Sadie Nachumsohn. Telesign was an electronic sign that showed moving text resembling a news ticker. Naxon leased the device to sign companies.

Box 1, Folder 17 Articles of incorporation, by-laws and meeting minutes , 1938-1973

Box 1, Folder 18 Telesign, photographs, 1930s

Box 1, Folder 19 Telesign lamp design, 1956, 1968, 1969, 1971

Telesign, promotional materials , 1950s-1960s

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 4: Patent and Trademark Materials , 1932-1968

Scope and Contents: This series consists primarily of original and copies of patents issued to Irving Naxon and others and trademarks issued to Naxon Utilities Corporation and Naxon Telesign Corporation. Other materials include litigation related to infringement of Naxon patents.

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| Box 1, Folder 20 | Leo L. Beck. US Patent 1,969,719, Running Vacuum Tube Light, 1934 |
| Box 1, Folder 21 | Theodore A. Cohen. US Patent 3,366,946, Multiple Tape Transmitter for Changing Message Signs and the Like, 1968 |
| Box 1, Folder 22 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 1,535,176, Remote Control Typewriting Mechanism, 1925 |
| Box 1, Folder 23 | Irving Nachumsohn. Us Patent 1,769,851, 1930 |
| Box 1, Folder 24 | H.H. Golden and Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 1,859,665, Method and Means for Combining Pictures with Sound, 1932 |
| Box 1, Folder 25 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 1,859,676, Signal, 1932 |
| Box 1, Folder 26 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 1, 859,677, Electron Discharge Device, 1932 |
| Box 1, Folder 27 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 1,859,678, Electron Discharge Devices, 1932 |
| Box 1, Folder 28 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 1,859,679, Vacuum Tubes and Methods of Treating Thereof, 1932 |
| Box 1, Folder 29 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 1,863,411, Remote Control Selective Mechanism, 1932 |
| Box 1, Folder 30 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 1,913,504, Sign, 1933 |
| Box 1, Folder 31 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 1,913,505, Sign, 1933 |
| Box 1, Folder 32 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 1,913,506, Synchronous Motor, 1933 |
| Box 1, Folder 33 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 1,935,857, Electric Cream-Whipper and Drink Mixer, 1933 |
| Box 1, Folder 34 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 1,984,939, Sign Flasher, 1934 |
| Box 2, Folder 35 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 2,006,999, Sign, 1935 |
| Box 2, Folder 36 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 2,023,282, Sign, 1935 |
| Box 2, Folder 1 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 2,253,043, Cooking Temperature Guide, 1941 |

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| Box 2, Folder 2 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 2,505,741, Motorized Washing Machine Drive Unit, 1950 |
| Box 2, Folder 3 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 2,633,198, Keyboard Tape Perforator, 1953 |
| Box 2, Folder 4 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 2,778,213, Manual Controls for Motor-Operated Wringers, 1957 |
| Box 2, Folder 5 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 2,798,931, Electric Frying Pans, 1957 |
| Box 2, Folder 6 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 2,817,703, Electric Selective Apparatus, 1957 |
| Box 2, Folder 7 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 2,856,507, Cooking and Frying Indicators, 1958 |
| Box 2, Folder 8 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 2,880,301, Heating Units for Electric Fry Pans and the Like, 1959 |
| Box 2, Folder 9 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 2,888, 986, Push Controls for Washing Machines, Clothes Driers and Other Motorized Equipment, 1959 |
| Box 2, Folder 10 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 2,951,967, Ultra Violet Lamps, 1960 |
| Box 2, Folder 11 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 2,965,738, Yieldable Ball Feeds for Traveling Sign Controls, 1960 |
| Box 2, Folder 12 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 3,020,386, Electric Heaters, 1962 |
| Box 2, Folder 13 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 3,041,597, Character-Transmission Means for Traveling Message Signs, 1962 Notes: Includes a Small Business Administration list of addresses for field offices and an example of perforated tape. |
| Box 2, Folder 14 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 3,099,737, Instantaneous Electric Water Heaters, 1963 |
| Box 2, Folder 15 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 3,107,779, Ball Feed Storage Mechanisms, 1963 |
| Box 2, Folder 16 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 3,123,815, Multiple Tape Transmitters Controlling Traveling Message Sign, 1964 |
| Box 2, Folder 17 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 3,217,312, Traveling Message Sign Control Apparatus Having Rotating Members Which Bear Switch Activating Elements, 1965 |
| Box 2, Folder 18 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 3,217,313, Traveling Message Sign Control Apparatus Having Direct Magnetic Selection Switch Control Elements, 1965 |
| Box 2, Folder 19 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 3,265,882, Ultraviolet Lamp, 1966 |

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|------------------|---|
| Box 2, Folder 20 | Irving Nachumsohn. US Patent 3,281,824, Rotating Swich Apparatus for Controlling Traveling Message Signs, 1966 |
| Box 2, Folder 21 | US Trademark 344,155, "Naxon," Naxon Utilities Corporation, 1937 |
| Box 2, Folder 22 | US Trademark 374,115, "Boston Beanery," Naxon Utilities Corporation, 1940 |
| Box 2, Folder 23 | US Trademark 574,739, "Personal," Naxon Utilities Corporation, 1953 |
| Box 2, Folder 24 | US Trademark 584,378, "DaintyDuds," Naxon Utilities Corporation, 1954 |
| Box 2, Folder 25 | US Trademark 584,762, "Frymaster," Naxon Utilities Corporation, 1954 |
| Box 2, Folder 26 | US Trademark 586,662, "Menustat," Naxon Utilities Corporation, 1954 |
| Box 2, Folder 27 | US Trademark 835,839, "Telecruiser," Naxon Telesign Corporation, 1967 |
| Box 2, Folder 28 | US Trademark 835,840, "News Cruiser," Naxon Telesign Corporation, 1967 |
| Box 2, Folder 29 | Naxon Telesign Corporation vs. Laystrom Manufacturing Company, 1962 |
| Box 2, Folder 30 | Naxon Telesign Corporation vs. Digit Display Corporation. K. Kimberly Corporation, Bernard Mariano, Guenther Selig and Roselyn Schwartz, 1958, 1960s Notes: Materials relate to infringement of patents related to traveling message sign invented by Irving Naxon and assigned to Naxon Telesign Corporation. |
| Box 2, Folder 31 | List of patents related to telesign, undated |

[Return to Table of Contents](#)