



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

American Optical Company Photograph Album

NMAH.AC.1635

Alison Oswald

2025

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Collection Overview

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|--------------------|--|
| Repository: | Archives Center, National Museum of American History |
| Title: | American Optical Company Photograph Album |
| Date: | 1917-1918, 1923 (bulk 1917-1918) |
| Identifier: | NMAH.AC.1635 |
| Source: | Museum of History and Technology (U.S.) National Museum of American History (U.S.). Division of Work and Industry (Compiler) Wells, John M. (Donor) |
| Extent: | .5 Cubic feet (1 box) |
| Language: | English . |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Collection donated to the Smithsonian by John Wells, in memory of J. Cheney Wells, in March 1968.

Provenance

Collection transferred to the Archives Center from the Division of Work and Industry in November 2024.

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Collection transferred to the Archives from the Division of Work & Industry in November 2024.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Alison Oswald, archivist, 2025.

Preferred Citation

American Optical Company Photograph Album, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Historical

The American Optical Company was established in 1833 by William Beecher's a jeweler and watchmaker.

Source

Matuck, Diane. "A History of the American Optical Company," 2017. (last accessed January 13, 2025 <https://www.opticalheritagemuseum.com/learn/va/aohistory>)

Content Description

Collection consists of one photograph album of black-and-white photographs documenting the manufacturing operations and offices of the American Optical Company. The album was disassembled and the photographs foldered. A typescript index provides caption information and a corresponding photograph identifier, e.g. L48 or 105, which is stamped in the lower right corner along with a date. The photographs were not assembled in numeric or alphanumeric order. See museum accession 328865.

Arrangement

Collection is arranged into one series.

Series 1: Photograph Album, 1917-1918, 1923

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Eye equipment and supplies
- Eyeglasses

Types of Materials:

- Photograph albums -- 20th century
- Photographs

Names:

- Museum of History and Technology (U.S.)
- National Museum of American History (U.S.). Division of Work and Industry
- Wells, John M.

Container Listing

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Box 1, Folder 1 | Photograph Album, index |
| Box 1, Folder 2 | Photograph Album, 1917-1918, 1923 |
| Box 1, Folder 3 | Photograph Album, 1917-1918, 1923 |
| Box 1, Folder 4 | Photograph Album, 1917-1918, 1923 |