The Hotpoint/General Electric Collection, 1911-1975

Ontario City Library
Robert E. Ellingwood Model
Colony History Room

Ontario, California

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Date Completed: March 2008
Descriptive Summary

Title
The Hotpoint/General Electric Collection, 1911-1975

Creator
This collection was created from photographs, patents, scrapbooks, articles, company newsletters and brochures documenting the history of the Hotpoint Flat Iron Plant in Ontario from its early beginnings to 1975. Bryce A. Denton, GE engineer and historian, coordinated the original donation in 1976 and augmented it with yearly contributions from 1980-1989.

Extent
Number of containers: 31
Linear feet:

Abstract
Earl H. Richardson was a meter reader for the Ontario Power Company in the early 1900’s. In his spare time, he experimented with electrifying flat irons. Designing a small, lighter weight model (flatirons could weigh 5-10 pounds each), he convinced his company to generate power all day every Tuesday (ironing day) so power customers could use his new iron. He reasoned that if enough electric irons were in use, customers would demand more power and the high rates would be reduced. It worked. By 1904, he left the power company and started up the Pacific Electric Heating Company on Euclid Avenue just below the railroad tracks to manufacture electric irons.

A major problem was soon identified: the iron got too hot in the center of the ironing plate. Richardson asked his wife Mary for advice (!). She suggested that he make an iron with more heat at the point for easier pressing around buttonholes, ruffles and pleats. He fabricated this new improved version and gave several to local laundresses to try for one week. When he returned, they refused to part with “the iron with the hot point”. In 1905, he made and sold more electric irons under the “Hotpoint” name than any other company in America.

Between 1911 and 1917, Richardson found other innovative ways to marry electricity with household appliances. Thus was born the “El” line (El meaning “electric”): El Perco (an electric coffeepot), El Chafo (chafing dish), El Tosto
(electric toaster), El Stovo (an early hotplate), El Eggo, El Teballo (electric teapot), and El Warmo (electric heating pad). An early crockpot, (the “jug cooker”) came out in 1929.

With World War I raging in Europe, a merger was proposed with Richardson’s Hotpoint Electric Heating Company, George Hughes (owner/inventor of the electric range) and the heating device section of the General Electric Company. The new company, formed in 1918, was known as the Edison Electric Appliance Company. In 1952, Hotpoint became a division of the General Electric Company. The Ontario plant continued to manufacture electric irons until it closed in 1982.

Several milestones marked the Ontario plant’s history: the 20 millionth iron (gold-plated) was presented to Una Winter, Earl Richardson’s sister in 1941; the 50 millionth produced in 1956 with President Eisenhower looking on; the 100 millionth in 1969 and the 150 millionth in 1980. Legend has it that the last iron was buried in the grounds of the Ontario plant rather than sent back to GE’s Bridgeport Conn. Plant in 1982.

The Model Colony Room also has an extensive Oral History of Bryce Denton and a slide/transcript presentation he created on the history of Hotpoint.

Administrative Information

Access
Collection is open for research during the operating hours of the Robert E. Ellingwood Model Colony History Room, or by appointment.

Preferred Citation

Acquisitions Information
This collection was donated to the Model Colony Room over a period of years from 1976 to 1989 by the Engineering Management of the General Electric Iron Plant in Ontario. Bryce A. Denton, GE engineer and historian, coordinated the original donation and augmented it with yearly contributions from 1980-1989.

Processing Information
Luz Graue, Joanne Boyajian
Container List

Box 1

Folder

1. Selection of early photos and a 1919 photo album with Factory Layout from the P.H. Vanden Berg Collection.
2. Letter from W. H. Tangeman (Sep. 5, 1947) that came with Old Photograph Prints of Iron Manufacture sent from Bridgeport c. 1918.
3. Original envelope for contents of Folder 2.
4. Photographs-views of Ontario Plant and Clubhouse (1920's)
5. 1931 album with 5 photographs donated by Bryce Denton
6. Ontario Plant Open House photos – June 8, 1939
7. Machinery and inside of Plant photos
8. Aerial Views of Ontario Plant
9. Machinery and inside of Plant photos
10. Flow Line Charts – 1934
11. Photos-assembly; appliances; inside of plant
12. Employees
13. Photos-1934-36; 1938-39
14. Machinery – 1940’s
15. Machinery
16. Machinery – c1953
17. Salesmen’s Convention – 1941
18. Negatives-Festivities of the making of the 20 millionth iron -1941
19. War Products
20. Ontario Plant Victory Bond Caravan – 1943
21. Engineering Dept. group photo – 1948
22. Machinery and Assembly room photos – 1949-55
23. Stockholder’s meeting – May 27, 1950
24. GE plant and employees – c1950’s; photos and negatives
25. Photos-“manufacture of flatirons”
26. Early day irons and sewing machine!
27. Irons – photos 1935-36
28. Revised Moderne Flatiron – 1938
29. Irons  See also Box 2 folders 19-29
30. More photos of Irons plus an index of photos and other materials

Found in the Blueprint Room cabinet Aug. 27, 1954
Box 2

Folder - Negatives

1. Cannery Bldg. and Mr. Shrene
2. 1934
3. 1935
4. 1936
5. 1937
6. 1938
7. 1939
8. 1940-1941
9. 20 Millionth Iron – 1941
10. Misc.
13. GE; Ontario Works; Electric Iron; Electric Heater
14. Photos and negatives-#28 Mr. Riddington Machines
15. Employees
17. Misc. Photographs:
   Hotpoint Baseball team-Ontario champs 1927
Cheesecake ladies with stoves
Eisenhower, Nixon, Reagan at 50 millionth iron celebration
1956

18 Photos of machinery with index (found in bottom of blueprint drawer)
19 Iron by Elda (German) – 1948
20 Early Steam Iron – May 14, 1941
21 Dry iron – never produced – 1946
22 Steam irons F20 and F30 – c 1946
23 Dry iron F12 and F22 – c 1946
24 Dry Iron F23 – the most ever made-5,000,000 – c1947
25 Dry Iron F27 – never produced – c1947
26 Steam Iron F30 – c1947
27 Iron F26 – never produced – 1948
29 Travel iron AC-DC – Jan. 1950
30 3 oversized aerial photos – 1966 and 1969
Four slide boxes containing photos of GE employees
One metal slide box containing GE slides

Box 3

Folder
1-12 Photos of appliances, aviation cold weather gear from 1918-1925
With index of photos in Folder 1
13 Two 78 rpm records and copy of cover: “Talk by C. E. Wilson, June
1, 1940”
14 Two 16mm films: one untitled, one titled “The Wide Body Jet
Sound Quiet” donated by Russ Myers, Feb. 2, 1993
15 Negatives for Defense pictures #66-67; 115-176 stored in a GE
Heating Pad box.
16 Two boxes (3 ¾ x 3 ½) with 30 prints and negatives of “para pack
rack”
17 Three boxes lantern slide plates: 2 boxes of caricatures of GE
Management c. 1930’s, 1 box Financial & Production graphs
of the Ontario Plant and one aerial view 1932-1935
18 Negatives on 2 black notebooks.
Box 4

Folder
1. Hotpoint History Photo Album in brown leather written to commemorate the 25th anniversary, 1904-1929
2. Negatives used in producing History Photo Album Feb. 9, 1945
3. Hotpoint Photos c 1940’s-first photos in book
4. Building views
5. Engineering
6. Foundry
7. Calrod
8. Machine Shop
9. Press
10. Finish
11. Cold Mold
12. Handle
13. Iron Assembly
14. Heating Pad Assembly
15. Switch
16. Warehouse
17. War Project
18. Photos taken from an album of the GE Stockholder’s Meeting May 27, 1950 – the only one ever held at Ontario’s plant
22. Engineering Memos – 1948, 1949 (original binder behind folder)
23. Engineering memos – 1950-1952 (original binder behind folder)

Box 5

Folder
1. Xerox copy of photo album showing original order of prints And how album was put together. V. 1, index and prints 1-89, 1943-1948
2. Photos – V. 1 index and prints 1-89, 1943-1948
Box 6


Box 7 - Index cards with Employees’ Photographs

Box 8 - Negatives from file Drawer labeled “negatives 1-600”. Box contains #’s 1-350

Box 9 - Negatives from File drawer labeled “Negatives 1-600”. Box contains #’s 351-664. And 6 color negs of the plant from Bryce Denton.

Box 10 - Engineer’s Instructions – original notebook and 1 folder: 1919-1927. Folder contains Engineering Instructions 1-151 with indexing and filing Instructions
Engineer’s Memos – 7 original notebooks: 1930; 1934; 1935; 1939; 1940; 1941; 1942.

Box 11

Folder
1 Edison Electric Appliance Co. Inc. – Material Specifications #1-174, 1927-1931 with index.
2 Edison Electric Appliance Co. Inc. – Standards – Book #21, 1927-1932 With index.
4 Notebook of Descriptions and parts of irons including changes, 1934-1950.
5 Notebook of “Obsolete Irons” – 1946-1954. Descriptions and parts of Irons including changes.
6 Notebook – “Process Specifications” (Inactive)

Box 12

Folder
2-4 Xeroxed copies of “Hotpoints” 1908-1912 (incomplete)
8 Jet Times – 1967 - one issue
GE Employee Communicator - 1971 bound (36 issues); 1972 1 issue
10 GE Employee Communicator – 1974-75 (8 issues)
11 GE Employee Communicator – 1976-77 (41 issues)
12 GE Employee Communicator – Jan. 1978-Nov 1979 (69 issues)
13 GE Employee Communicator – 1980-1982 (41 issues)
14 GE Employee Communicator – 1974-1978, duplicates (14 issues)
15 “News Notes for Pensioners” – June 1976 and March 1978

Ten folders of Hotpoint appliances, parts, pricing information: 1917; 1923-1979 (some years missing)

Box 13


Box 14

Newsletters – “The General Electric News” and “Monogram” Magazines

Box 15

General Electric “Candid Camera Captures” newsletters – 1939-1951 (12 issues)
General Electric “Gogetter” newsletters – May 1938-Dec. 1942 (21 issues and 6 duplicate issues)
Scraps – newspaper clippings – 1949-50
Scraps – newspaper clippings – 1950-51

clippings scrapbooks MISSING – 1943-49 and 1952-53-were in Box 22
all of (former) Box 23 MISSING-Gamma Epsilon Club 3 scrapbooks
1946-52, 1952-61 and 1960-64

Box 16
Scrapbook – Army-Navy “E” award for defense work. Jan. 1943

Box 17
Catalogs – Original Binders
1  1925-1929: contains price lists, regular catalogs, retail sales handbook for electric water heaters; specifications; Several pages of small pamphlets glued on notebook paper; service manuals; supply parts catalog.
2  1928-1931: contains regular catalogs; supply parts catalogs; service catalogs.
3  1928-1931: Hotpoint Supply Parts Catalog
4  1928-1931: Service and parts catalog

Box 18
Folder – Correspondence, advertising, Hotpoint signs, instruction booklets

1  Letters concerning the buying of new property – 1906
2  Collection of Correspondence re: the transfer-original folder – no papers
3  Early Business Correspondence – 1925-1935
4  Open House Invitations – June 8, 1939
5  Hotpoint signs for the “El” line: El Perco, El Chafo, El Teballo, etc.
6  Early advertising
7  GE appliance instruction booklets
8  Misc. early booklets including the “Cooking Jug” (1929 crock-pot)
9  “Utility model of the Hotpoint Iron”
10 Booklet – “A letter to the Boss” – 1949 to William H. Tangeman
11 Softback books-3 copies-“An Industrial Adventure” – 1951
12 Iron Description Book (removed from original notebook)
13 “The Sourcebook” (facts & figures about General Electric) – 1949
14 Booklets – GE 100 (1878-1978); GE in the West-1968; GE and the West-1968; “What to do about Communism in Unions” 1952
15 Papers and articles: “Ontario Heating Device-Historical Data” – 1957
   “Mission Accomplished” – 1951
   “An Automatic Electric Flatiron with Controlled Steam” – 1949
   “Dry and Steam Irons”
16 Housewares Division checklist for reliability evaluation
17 Graphs of units (irons) and value in millions of dollars
18 1972 GE production tour
19  GE Iron production summary – 1928-1982 at Ontario Plant
21  Ontario Office Personnel List – Nov. 2, 1982
22  [News of] Iron Plant Employee Job Center
25  Resolutions celebrating 100 millionth iron – 1968
26  Newspaper articles on GE strike – 1960
27  “Operation Upturn” – 1958
28  UE 1012 Newsletters 1959 and 1960 on strike/negotiations
29  GE vs. United Electrical Workers Motion for Dissolution of Preliminary Injunction – Oct. 1969
30  History of Hotpoint (Earl H. Richardson) typed transcript and revision
31  Manuscript (first draft) of the History of Hotpoint
32  Original envelope with notes of Elsberry folder
33  Copy of “Early Ontario and G.E. – Hotpoint”
34  “Electricity in 1895, Retrospect and Prospect” by Thomas Commerford Martin. Jan. 1896
35  Adelanto
36  Hotpoint article. Daily Report articles 1920 and 1931
37  Patents
38  Patents continued
39  Patents continued
40  Extra patents
41  Advertisements and notes
42  List of old GE irons. Travel irons, early Hotpoint irons, model letter, Ontario serial numbers
44  “Bill Raisers” (campaign materials to induce housewives to buy electric products even though it raised their electric bills)
45  Advertisements for the Pacific Electric Heating Company circa 1911
46  Hotpoint/GE “print index” June 1949-Jan 1955
47  “the Product History, Development, and General Characteristics of the Ontario Engineering Section”
48  Flatiron production statistics 1980-1982
49  Explanation of Cataloging System and description of models and years of production
50 Old Iron parts lists
51 Typed introduction for a book of photographs taken between 1919-1925 at the GE flatiron plant Ontario
52 A. L. Palmer letter to W. H. Demler, Dec. 23, 1953 [transparencies are somewhere in the Compact Storage room]
53 Floor plan for house at 556 E. “E” St. Ontario drawn by E.T. Casler, Mr. Denton’s uncle by marriage and foreman of Hotpoint’s toolroom from 1909-1918.
54 Ontario Record typed copies of headlines from 1907 and one from the Ontario Observer Feb. 17, 1900
55 Kiwanis “Legion of Honor” certificated presented to Bryce Denton undated.
56 Misc. letters and articles
57 Loose Papers undated and papers concerning clean-up of GE property after the plant closed.

Small box containing 8mm film of award presented to A. C. Sanger, sister of H. P. Richardson

Box 19

Folder – Mechanical Drawings
1 Iron parts, Carton Boxes, Cords, Labels – 1907-1940
2 Mechanical Drawing of Machinery Parts – 1949-1951
3 Parapack Specification Sheet Abbreviations
4 Schedules – 1923-1924
5 Calrod Winding Specification Sheet – 1931
6 Mechanical Drawings of Iron Parts: heating Unit Assembly; Disc Stove Assembly; Cords, Plugs and Cartons – 1931
7 Mechanical Drawings of Iron Parts – 1905-1952
8 Bills of Material – 1909-1916

Box 20

Folder – Mechanical Drawings
1 Iron Parts – Ontario – 1937-39
2 Iron Parts and carton – Bridgeport – 1933-1938
3 U-spring – 1931-1932
4 Iron Parts – 1921-1931
Box 21

Folder – Mechanical Drawings
1 Steam Brush – 1955
2 Tank Heater – 1959
3 Safety Fill Valve for F60 Iron – 1957
4 F61 Valve & Cam – 1957, 1958
5 Revised F43 Thermostat – 1955-1957
6 Misc. – 1955

Box 22

Folder – Mechanical Drawings
1 Cost Steam Iron – 1964
2 Thermostat with Horizontal Movement - 1964
3 Proposed 2 added angle drilled holes – 1965
4 Pressure Control Valve
5 Push Button Thermostat – 1958
6 OW-650-10v (6001) Low Cost Steam Iron – 1962, 1964
7 Low Cost F70 Steam Iron - 1962
8 Low Cost Manual Spray Iron – 1964
9 Misc. Improvements, Revisions – 1964
13 Low Cost Sprayer & Spray Iron – 1963

Box 23

Folder – Mechanical Drawings
1 F101 Spray Iron – 1962-1963
2 Simplified Spray Iron – 1961
3 Manual spray Iron (Diaphragm type) – 1963-1964
4 F70 Wet Steam Iron #5 – 1956
5 F70 Wet Steam Iron #1,2,3 – 1956
6 F71 Spray Iron Prelim – 1956-1959
7  F70 Wet Steam Iron #4 – 1955-1957

**Box 24**

Folder – Mechanical Drawings
1  Iron & Kitchen Drawings – 1950-1951
2  Iron Drawings – 1940-1942
3  Pressure Cooker, Percolator Styling Sketches – 1944
4  Hotplate Styling Sketches – 1942-1943
5  Steam Iron Styling Sketches – 1944-1948
6  Flatiron Styling Sketches – 1943-1947
7  Iron Drawings – 1947-1949

**Box 25**

Folder – Engineering Dept. Standard parts List – 1921-1931
1  Immersion Heater; Curling Iron; Soldering Irons; Mica Washers; Disc Stoves; Cord and Plug
2  “Engineering Records, A Brief Explanation of What They are and How They are Used.

**Box 26** – Guests and Callers at the Hotpoint/GE Plant – 1912-1914

**Box 27** – Folder 1 – Drawing of Hotpoint Electric Co. – 1913
Folder 2 – Aerial photograph of Hotpoint Plant

**Box 28** - Oversized scrapbook circa 1911 of ads for Hotpoint products (El Tosto Etc.)

**Box 29** - Mechanical Drawings and Part Records – 31 folders of drawings of Parts, irons, nameplates for appliances and process specifications – 1905-1938

**Box 30** - Misc. items:
1. Charles Albert Coffin Award presented to Bryce Denton
   In 1977 “for outstanding initiative and effort contributing to the progress of the company”. Coffin was the first president of GE in 1894. 12 employees are selected annually for this honor.
2. Wooden binder, “GE Quarter Century Club Album”, no pages
3. 20 glass slides of plant/production
4. 16mm film, “GE Ontario Works Training Film”
5. Wooden paddle “Christmas Greetings 1929” signed by employees and bunnies on the reverse

**Box 31** - 6 folders of Print Requisitions-1962-1966-some sheets reproduced