The Hotpoint/General Electric Collection, 1911-1975

Ontario City Library Robert E. Ellingwood Model Colony History Room



Ontario, California

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Processed by: Luz Graue 1976. Reorganized by Joanne Boyajian, 2008.

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

The Hotpoint/General Electric Collection, 1911-1975. Robert E. Ellingwood Model Colony History Room, Ontario City Library.

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

31	Hoover Steam Iron Soleplates-photos and negatives
32	Close Presser
33	Negatives-Foundry View; Earl H. Richardson-1925; Harry
	Strunk – 1902; Earl Richardson's original crew-1904; GE irons
34	Negatives-First electric iron made by Harry Strunk; new iron-1929
35	Negatives – 1924-1935
36	Negatives – 1925-1932
37	Negatives – 1933
38	Negatives of prints taken in Philadelphia Plant-April 1939
39	Negatives of Irons – May 26, 1939
40	Negatives for Open House edition of Go Getter – June 1, 1939
41	Negatives – Skeleton Outline of Ingersol – c1930's
42	Negatives – 1941 Tumblast Girls Foundry
43	Negatives – Calrod loading machine
44	Negatives & photos – "S" Switch Reddington
45	Negatives too large for card file
46	Xerox copies of photos taken from this collection and put into
	Model Colony Photo Collection
	Box 2
Folder - Neg	
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.
11	Cost Reduction – Ontario Plant – 1952
12	Booklet, "How Hotpoint Got its Name"
13	GE; Ontario Works; Electric Iron; Electric Heater
14	Photos and negatives-#28 Mr. Riddington Machines
15	Employees
16	Photo album-photos taken in JanFeb. 1982 just before plant
	closure on Feb. 26, 1982
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
- 28 Dry Iron-redesigned F23 Jan. 1950
- 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
- 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
- Negatives for Defense pictures #66-67; 115-176 stored in a GE Heating Pad box.
- Two boxes (3 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$) 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.

Folder	
1	Hotpoint History Photo Album in brown leather written to
	Commemorate the 25 th 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
19	Black binder, "Description of Facilities and Operations Used
	In the Manufacture of Flatirons" by A. L. Palmer and R. D. Pollock
	Ontario Works, General Electric Company April 5, 1951
20	Engineer's Memos -1943 Defense Jobs.
21	Engineering Memos – 1947 (original binder behind folder)
22	Engineering Memos – 1948, 1949 (original binder behind folder)

Box 5

Engineering memos – 1950-1952 (original binder behind folder)

Folder

23

- 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

- 3 Xerox copy of album V. II index and prints 90-141, 1947-1949
- 4 Photos V. II index and prints 90-141, 1947-1949
- 5 Xerox copy of album V. I "Description of Facilities and Operations Used in the Manufacture of Flatirons" (Palmer & Pollock)
- 6 Photos V. I of Folder 5
- 7 Xerox copy of album V. II "Description of Facilities and Operations Used in the manufacture of Flatirons" (Palmer & Pollock)
- 8 Photos Vol. II of Folder 7
- Folders 9-41 Photos taken out of 1949 maroon Photograph album containing Photos of machinery, iron parts, signs, iron making, workers, parts, Works entrance, calrod section, assembly line, employees working And index.
 - 42 General Electric patents. 1938-1962
 - 43 General Electric patents. 1951-1963
 - 44 General Electric patents. 1961-1974
 - 45 In Memory of Bryan Spencer
 - 46 Calculations for GE plant expansion July 1955
 - 47 GE color drift control-appliance green and yellow Feb. 1955
 - 48 Business cards-P.H. Vanden Berg and Bryce Denton
 - 49 Flyer for Hotpoint Exhibit at Ontario Museum of History June 1984
 - 50 GE mailing folder
 - 51 Appliance records 1930-1940
 - 52 "Reminiscences of the Early Life of E.H. Richardson" by Una Richardson Winter
 - 53 Hotel & Bakery Division Bulletin introducing waffle iron June 1925
 - 54 Misc. tags-blank
 - Copy of Articles of Incorporation for Edison Electric ApplianceCompany, Inc., Nov. 1917. Donated by Bryce Denton Sept. 30, 1976

- 1. Copy of the book prepared for the Historical Dept. of the Huntington Library entitled "Historical Manuscript Dealing with a Southern California Enterprise and its Founder Earl H. Richardson". Book prepared in 1944 and presented to the Ontario Works of the GE Company by the Ontario Quarter Century Club on Feb. 23, 1945.
- 2. Scrapbook of E. H. Richardson and Hotpoint prepared by his sister, Una Winter of Upland in 1942.

- **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.

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.
- 3 Edison Electric Appliance Co. Inc. Process Specifications Book #17 1927-1938 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

- 1 Original "Hotpoints" Pacific Electric Heating Co. Newsletters. Sept. 1908-July 1912. (incomplete)
- 2-4 Xeroxed copies of "Hotpoints" 1908-1912 (incomplete)
- 5-6 "El Amigo" Newsletters by Hotpoint Electric Heating Co. March 1916-Aug. 1919 (incomplete). 2 sets of originals donated by Bryce Denton.
 - 7 Xeroxed copies of "El Amigo" March 1916-Aug. 1919 (incomplete) Donated by Bryce Denton.
 - 8 Jet Times 1967 one issue

- 9 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
- 16-25 Ten folders of Hotpoint appliances, parts, pricing information: 1917; 1923-1979 (some years missing)

Newsletters – "The General Electric News". Each year bound – 1943-1953. 2 copies – 1945; 2 copies – 1951; Missing 1948; 1952.

Box 14

Newsletters – "The General Electric News" and "Monogram" Magazines The GE News – each year bound – 1954-1972. 1961-62 and 1967-69 are missing.

Monograms – 1976-1982. Bi-monthly (33 issues) 3 issues of Mar/Apr 1978. All donated by Bryce Denton.

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)

Scrapbook – newspaper clippings – 1949-50

Scrapbook – 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

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
- 20 Ontario Plant Organization 1966 and 1968
- 21 Ontario Office Personnel List Nov. 2, 1982
- 22 [News of] Iron Plant Employee Job Center
- 23 Ontario Salaried Organization; 1975, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1982
- 24 GE Employee Benefits plan Document Jan. 1, 1977
- 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
- 43 Reprint from "Works News" 1945-46 appearing in 1970 "GE News". Also a GE history brochure covering 1904-1927.
- 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

- 5 Iron Parts 1905-1915
- 6 Irons 1923-1927

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
- 10 Manual Spray Iron 1962
- 11 Spray Iron-Deeper Tank-Lower Thermostat 1963
- 12 Wrinkle Light/O.W. 650-91 & OW 650-9M 1961-1963
- 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

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