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Carl C. Harris Papers

1898-1963

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Carl Chester Harris was born in 1880 in Orange, Massachusetts and resided there his entire life. Growing up in a small town in rural Massachusetts did not have a deleterious effect on his ability to use his entrepreneurial skills and his eccentric ingenuity for inventing or improving products. Carl's creativity combined with his ability to work tirelessly allowed him to successfully invent items to fill needs or improve various aspects of public or business life. In addition, his ingenuity led him to successfully market items to different segments of the population. He was never one to rest upon his laurels or to be content if improvements could be made. It is because of his ability to keep moving forward, even when faced with an occasional setback, combined with his civility, patience, professionalism and creativity that allowed Carl C. Harris to become the success he was.

The collection is comprised of records related to the various business interests of and product creation by Carl Chester Harris. The core of the collection focuses on The Slencil Co. and Rivet-O Manufacturing Company. The central aspect of the collection is correspondence with several patent law firms, patent lawyers and employees. In addition, there is correspondence with other companies, photographs and negatives, sketches, blueprints and mock-ups of products and advertising, various forms of informational fliers, and records, reports and lists related to the running of the companies. Finally, there are examples of various products covering the spectrum from some of his earliest inventions up through the Slencil.

See similar SCUA collections:

Innovation and entrepreneurship

Manufacturing

Massachusetts (West)

Photographs

Background on Carl C. Harris

Carl Chester Harris was born May 9, 1880 in Orange, Massachusetts to Nelson Elvius Harris and Evie Sophia Sawyer. Carl's first marriage was to Marie Elizabeth Stewart on August 23, 1905 in Boston. They had three children before Marie's death on November 10, 1914. He remarried before 1918 to Marion Felton and had two sons with her. It was his son Earl from this marriage, who joined Rodney Hunt Machine Company and took over the management when Carl retired in 1956. Carl C. Harris passed away on April 4, 1960 at the age of 79.

At the age of 18 while still in school, Carl began his first entrepreneurial endeavor by starting and running the Home Telephone Co. He ran it for approximately a year before selling it to an outside interest. By the time of his first marriage, Carl was already employed at Rodney Hunt Machine Company as an agent and at the beginning of a long and successful, if eccentric, career with the company. When Carl registered in 1918 for duty in World War I, he was remarried and was Vice President and Treasurer of Rodney Hunt Machine Company. The following year he became a member of the Masons and maintained an unblemished membership until his death. When World War II arrived, Carl was President of the machine shop, when he registered for duty at the age of 61.

Other early endeavors included C.C. Harris & Co. and The Harris Register Company. Under the auspice of the C.C. Harris & Co., two of Carl's earliest inventions were The Harris "Wrench-less" Tool Post and the personal toiletry item called the Climax Pocket Instrument. One of his earlier patents for this company was for a Time Keeping Device, which was officially patented in 1913. This system was eventually referred to as the Harris or Unigraph Individual Time-Keeping System during its lifespan. The Harris Pocket Adder was created by Carl under the auspice of C.C. & Harris Co., but was marketed by The Harris Register Company, a subsidiary of the former company. This early interest in marketing, as well as the model of subsidiaries, served him well throughout his career.

Eventually, Carl, following in his father's and grandfather's footsteps, started working for Rodney Hunt Machine Company, where he helped create not only an Automatic Water Wheel Control, but also a Motor Operated Gate. This did nothing to curb his curiosity and the need to improve or create products for various aspects of people's lives from the office to recreation. The items for the office or home included plastic hinge box, bottle stamp pad, Good Will Cup (for smokers), Pendex, an open desktop filing system, and the card flipper, which appears to be an early version of a roll-a-dex. At this time his main effort in devising products



The noble Slencil

for recreation was focused on the beach front and included an "Airplane" Slide, Corker-Bobbers, which are floatation devices, and an umbrella support. Carl was even able to pull ideas for products from newspaper articles as demonstrated by his safety ladder, which he devised after reading an article that detailed the ineffectiveness of regular ladders during an unsuccessful attempt to save three children who had fallen through the ice.

With his next endeavors, Carl created his first subsidiary named Rivet-O Manufacturing Company. Once again Carl's inventions covered a range from toys to improving business/office efficiency. Among the toys he created are the Spirit of Chance Game and the Rivet-O Toy and Punches. For the Rivet-O Toy, various kits, designs and booklets were created, which allowed children to assemble the items with plastic rivets, while playing quietly for hours. On the other hand, there were the products for the office including the Speed-Mo Line, whose main focus was stamp pads, envelope moisteners and typewriter cleaner. With this last product, Carl demonstrated his ability to multipurpose a product by marketing it as a spot remover for clothing. Additional products, included Sten-Roll, used for stenciling labels onto boxes, and a stamp pad testing machine.

Carl's second subsidiary was The Slencil Co., whose main product was the Slencil, a flat mechanical pencil. Carl demonstrated his ingenuity for marketing by envisioning sales both directly to the public as well as to businesses for giveaways and eventually advertising. Slencils were originally constructed of metal and named Socials and were eventually made of plastic and called Stags. In addition, Carl invented various clip styles and products to be used in conjunction with Slencils. He also focused on creating displays to properly showcase the products to different segments of the public. The most successful of these was the Adjusto Display unit, which could be properly viewed no matter on what shelf it was placed.

It is during the Rivet-O and Slencil years that Carl built up a connection with various patent law firms and a personal rapport with specific patent lawyers. It is with these lawyers that Carl was able to obtain patents and trademarks in Canada and various European countries. In addition, when physical examples of products were needed or if there were production complications, Carl came to rely on four individuals at the factories. These gentlemen were Earle Bean, Howard Day, Bob Sisson and Dick Waterman.

Carl C. Harris was a gentleman, whose creativity combined with his ability to work tirelessly allowed him to successfully invent items to fill needs or improve various aspects of public or business life. In addition, his ingenuity led him to successfully market items to different segments of the population. He was never one to rest upon his laurels or to be content if improvements could be made, which is demonstrated by the innumerable Slencil variations and products. It is because of his ability to keep moving forward, even when faced with an occasional setback combined with his civility, patience, professionalism and ingenuity that allowed Carl C. Harris to become the success he was.

Scope of collection

The collection is comprised of records related to the various business interests of and product creation by Carl Chester Harris. The core of the collection focuses on The Slencil Co. and Rivet-O Manufacturing Company with additional material focusing on Rodney Hunt Machine Company and earlier ventures such as the Home Telephone Co. and C.C. Harris & Co. The central aspect of the collections is the correspondence with several patent law firms and lawyers and employees, the former dealing with patents and trademarks and the latter focusing on the creation and production issues of the products. In addition, there is correspondence with other companies, photographs and negatives, sketches, blueprints and mock-ups of products and advertising, various forms of informational fliers, and records, reports and lists related to the running of the companies. Finally, there are examples of various products covering the spectrum from some of his earliest inventions up through the Slencil.

Series descriptions

Series 1. Carl Chester Harris

1898-1959

Consists of personal correspondence, patents awarded to him, as well as patents of interest, a list of early patents, a brief history of Rivet-O and Slencil, early business ventures and product ideas including the Home Telephone Co. and C.C. Harris & Co., an example of the Time-Keeping device, and magazines and catalogs, some of which contain advertisements, as well as from other companies, such as the Simplex Time Recorder Co.

Series 2. Rodney Hunt Machine Company

1906-1956

Consists of correspondence with various patent lawyers dealing with patents and products, correspondence with other companies, for example Channing L. Bete co., Inc., original patent certificates, sketches, blueprints and physical examples of products, photographs and negatives of products including some by C. Bau of Corker-Bobbers, employment application and pay stubs for Carl C. Harris.

Series 3. Rivet-O Manufacturing Company

1915-1959

Consists of correspondence with various patent lawyers dealing with patents and products, correspondence with other

companies, for example The Pro-phy-lac-tic Brush Co., correspondence with employees regarding products in development, original patent and trademark certificates, sketches, mock-ups and physical examples of products, photographs and negatives of products, displays and the plant at Rohunta, some by Harold Duval, product brochures, broadsides, folders, forms and catalogs, gift catalogs with products listings and pay packages for Carl and Marion Harris.

Series 4. The Slencil Co.

1930-1963

Consists of correspondence with various patent lawyers dealing with patents and products, correspondence with other companies, correspondence with employees regarding products in development, original patent and assignment certificates, sketches, blueprints, mock-ups and physical examples of products, displays, brochures, images and advertisements, photographs and negatives of products, displays and of the Valley Mills Annex and the Slencil Shop by various photographers including Harold Duval, Hames' Photo Shop & Studio (Robert W. Hames), George M. Cushing, Jr. Photography and George H. Davis Studio, product brochures, broadsides, bulletins, folders, forms, form letters, letterheads and price lists, lists of material providers, samples sent, orders, investments, price list and value of patents, journals of payments received and paid out and orders, ledger of Slencil orders, and company logos used on Stag Slencils.

Inventory

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1898-1959

Advertisements, other companies: mailings, catalogs and displays

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1940-1954

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"Climax": pocket instrument

ca. 1920

Box 1: 3

Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, personal

1955-1957

Box 1: 4

Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, various patents

1956

Box 1: 5

Graff, Leonard: correspondence

1955-1958

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Harris, Carl C.: C. C. Harris & Co.

ca. 1910

Box 1: 7

Harris, Carl C.: patents

1914-1932

Box 1: 8

Harris Pocket Adder

1908-1913

Box 1: 9

Harris Pocket Adder

ca. 1920

Box 14

Examples of Harris Pocket Adders.

Harris Time System

ca. 1915

Box 1: 10

Harris Time-Keeping System

ca. 1920

Box 14

Examples of Harris Pocket Systems.

History: development of Rivet-o and Slencil companies

1959

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Home Telephone Company record book

1890

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Letterhead: Unigraph Manufacturing Co.

ca. 1905

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Patents: list of early patents

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Patents: one-piece wooden body pencils

1948

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1928-1932

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Simplex Time Recorder Co.

ca. 1913

Box 1: 17

Simplex Time Recorder Co.: article

1958

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Time-keeping device

1913

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Wilkinson, V. L.: correspondence, patent reports of interest

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1906-1956

Airplane slide

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Bassett, Linton: correspondence, patent

1937

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Card tipper

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Channing L. Bete Co., Inc.: correspondence, booklets, and newspaper clipping

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Channing L. Bete Co., Inc.: correspondence and booklets

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Patents: bathing trolley
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1931

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Patents, Canada

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Patents, Canada

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Box 10: 8

Patents, Canada

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Box 10: 9

Patents: case, game and game piece

ca. 1930

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Patents: case U and X, open file

ca. 1929

Box 8: 6

Patents: case W, bathing floats

ca. 1928

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Patents: cloth feed control

1941

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Patents: cloth-finishing machine

1912

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Patents: cloth washer

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Patents: combination safety swimming float

1932

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Patents: combination washer and dye kettle

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1927-1929

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Patents: drains for suds boxes

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Patents: drip flange for wood rolls

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Patents: drip flanges for wood rolls

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Patents: drip flanges for wood rolls

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Patents: end seals for wood rolls

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Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, ink pad
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Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, ink pads
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Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, ink pads
1945

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Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, Rivet-O products
1943

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Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

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Related Material

SCUA also holds the records of the **Rodney Hunt Machine Company** (MS 105), for which Carl C. Harris was a long-term executive and co-owner.

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Mechanical pencils
Mechanical pencils--Marketing
Office equipment and supplies industry--Marketing
Office equipment and supplies industry--Massachusetts--Orange
Rivet-O Company
Rodney Hunt Machine Company
Speed-Mo
The Slencil Co.

Contributors

Harris, Carl C. [main entry]

Genres and formats

Board games (game sets)
Construction toys
Life preservers
Mechanical pencils
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Photographs

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