Finding Aid to the Colt Industries Museum Collection Archives 87.118

Finding aid prepared by Holly Rose Larson and Jeffrey Richardson
Autry National Center, Autry Library
4700 Western Heritage Way
Los Angeles, CA, 90027
(323) 667-2000 ext. 349
room@theautry.org
2012 March 7
Title: Colt Industries Museum Collection Archives
Identifier/Call Number: 87.118
Contributing Institution: Autry National Center, Autry Library
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 8.7 Linear feet (22 boxes)
Date (inclusive): 1848-1949
Abstract: Samuel Colt patented his revolver with a mechanically rotating cylinder in 1835 and 1836. It revolutionized the firearms industry and was the first truly global manufacturing export in American history. The success of the revolver ultimately allowed Samuel Colt to incorporate Colt’s Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company in 1855. The Colt Industries Museum Collection records span from 1848-1949 and include blueprints, catalogs, price lists, and patents for Colt’s Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company products.
Language: English and French.
creator: Colt Manufacturing Company
creator: Colt’s Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company
creator: Colt, Samuel, 1814-1862
creator: Gatling, Richard Jordan, 1818-1903
Access
Collection is open for research. Appointments to view materials are required. To make an appointment please visit http://theautry.org/research/research-rules-and-application or contact library staff at rroom@theautry.org. An item-level inventory is available from library staff.
Use
Copyright has not been assigned to the Autry National Center. All requests for permission to publish or quote from manuscripts must be submitted in writing to the Autry Archivist. Permission for publication is given on behalf of the Autry National Center as the custodian of the physical items and is not intended to include or imply permission of the copyright holder, which must also be obtained by the reader.
Preferred citation
Colt Industries Museum Collection Archives, Autry National Center; 87.118.[item number]; [date].
Acquisition
This collection was purchased by the Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum in September 18, 1987.
Biographical/Historical note
A revolver with a mechanically rotating cylinder had eluded gunsmiths for centuries. Finally, in 1831, sixteen-year-old Samuel Colt constructed the first rudimentary model of such a revolver. Over the next five years, he worked with several gunsmiths to manufacture prototypes. Colt patented his invention around the world over the course of several months in 1835 and 1836. The Colt revolver was extremely popular, especially on the American frontier, because it was the first practical revolving firearm capable of firing more than one shot without having to be reloaded. It revolutionized the firearms industry and was the first truly global manufacturing export in American history. The success of the revolver ultimately allowed Samuel Colt to incorporate Colt’s Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company in 1855. The company was a pioneer in the use of research and development. It also benefitted from the use of state-of-the-art machinery and interchangeable parts. Still in existence to this day, Colt’s continues to produce revolvers and a variety of other firearms.
Scope and contents
The bulk of this collection is catalogs, patents, and price lists for Colt’s Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company products from 1848-1949. Patent papers in this collection are held by Colt’s Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company or relate to improvements in firearms by various individuals, such as John Browning, Samuel Colt, Carl Ehbets, William Franklin, Richard Gatling, Samuel G. Green, William Mason, and E. K. Root. Other items include advertisements, blueprints, books, correspondence, item lists, and notes.
Processing History
Initial inventory, physical processing, and cataloging by Autry National Center staff. Finding aid completed by Holly Rose Larson, NHPRC Project Archivist, March 6, 2012, made possible through grant funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.
Custodial History note
This collection was assembled for Colt Industries by R. L. (Larry) Wilson, who also assembled extensive documentation for it. Said documentation was archived by Colt Industries in special document boxes made by R. L. Wilson's father-in-law, a professional bookbinder. The document boxes with documentation enclosed were part of the purchase made by Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum. The document boxes were entitled as follows: No. 1 Colt Museum Collection No. 2 Governor Moore of Alabama from Col. Colt, No. 108 No. 3 Colt Ephemera, No. 139-162 No. 4 Colt, Museum Collection, No. 79-103 No. 5 Colt Museum Collection I, No. 1-16 No. 6 Colt, Museum Collection II, No. 17-42 No. 7 Colt Museum Collection, Nos. 104-138 No. 8 Colt Museum III, Nos. 43-78. Colt firearms

**Arrangement**

Arranged by item type, and chronologically within item type.

**Related Archival Materials**

Autry National Center; 89.62;

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Advertisements
Blueprints
Colt firearms
Colt revolvers
Commercial catalogs
Correspondence
Firearms
Firearms -- United States
Firearms industry and trade -- United States
Patents
Revolvers
Weapons