Thomas Edison collection: Finding Aid

Finding aid prepared by Laura R. Rips.
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Descriptive Summary

Title: Thomas Edison collection

Dates: 1877-1985

Collection Number: mssEdisonThomascollection

Creator: Edison, Thomas A. (Thomas Alva), 1847-1931

Extent: 3 boxes

Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department

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Abstract: The bulk of this collection is made up of historical and modern ephemera related to Thomas Edison. It also contains some of Edison's correspondence, patents, and original and reproduced photographs of Edison and his associates.

Language of Material: The records are in English.

Access

Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item]. Thomas Edison Collection, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Provenance

Burndy Library Collection, Gift of Dibner Family, November 2006. Was MS Collection 8.

Biographical Note

Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931) is probably the best known American inventor of all time. His most famous invention was the light bulb, but he also invented the phonograph and the first practical storage battery, along with dozens of other impressive devices, for a total of 1,093 patents during his lifetime.

Scope and Content

The collection is made up of correspondence, patents, photographs, and ephemera. The correspondence includes some original and contemporary copies of Edison's letters regarding the Phonoplex System of Telegraphy, the Edison Phonograph Toy Manufacturing Co., the use of paraphenylenediamine to manufacture phonograph records, the American Fine Arts Society, and the Society for Electrical Development, as well as a letter dismissing Charles H. Davids from his post as superintendent of the West Orange laboratory. There are additional items from the Edison-Bell Phonograph Corporation, Ltd. in England, as well as correspondence between Mina Miller Edison and Lester A. Grimes regarding a signed apron made from Thomas Edison's shirt, also included in the collection.

The collection also contains some original and reproduced photographs of Edison and his associates (many with captions by Francis Jehl, Edison's laboratory assistant), and his Bronx movie production studio. There are also photographs of Charles Edison, as well as Bern Dibner with Richard G. Berger, another laboratory assistant for Edison. The bulk of the collection is made up of historical and modern ephemera, including advertisements, clippings, pamphlets, and prints. There are also three oil paintings of Edison, one of which is signed by illustrator Howell Dodd.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in three boxes by item format:

Box 1 contains correspondence, autographed notecards, patents, photographs, prints, and historical ephemera.

Box 2 contains historical and modern ephemera.

Box 3 is oversize. It contains miscellaneous ephemera, oil paintings of Edison, and photographs.

Personal Names

Edison, Thomas A. (Thomas Alva), 1847-1931
Box 1
Folder 1  Correspondence, patents, photographs, prints, and historical ephemera
Correspondence (1883-1924)
24 items.

Folder 2  Autographed Notecards (1926)
9 items.

Folder 3  Patents (1877-1907)
9 items.

Folder 4  Photographs of Thomas A. (Thomas Alva) Edison, 1847-1931 [ca. 1887-1929]
11 items.

Folder 5  Photographic Portraits of Edison [ca. 1877-1922]
14 items.

Folder 6  Photographs with Francis Jehl's Captions (1929)
17 items.

Folder 7  Photographs of Movie Set/Production Studio [ca. 1907-1918]
4 items.

Folder 8  Photographs and Negatives of Charles A. Edison, 1890-1969 (1947)
24 items.

Folder 9  Photographs of Bern Dibner with Richard G. Berger [ca. 1956]
7 items.

Folder 10  Prints [undated]
33 items.
Folder 11  
**Historical Ephemera: Advertisements [ca. 1880-1919]**
36 items.

Folder 12  
**Historical Ephemera: Clippings [ca. 1879-1928]**
15 items.

Folder 13  
**Historical Ephemera: Patented Record [ca. 1900]**
1 item.

Folder 14  
**Historical Ephemera: Miscellaneous [ca. 1879-1931]**
6 items.

Box 2  
**Historical and modern ephemera**

Folder 1  
**Historical Ephemera: Miscellaneous, Apron with Edison's Autograph [undated]**
1 item.

Folder 2  
**Modern Ephemera: Clippings, Miscellaneous (1947-1985)**
38 items.

Folder 3  
**Modern Ephemera: Clippings, Newspaper (1931-1985)**
30 items.

Folder 4  
**Modern Ephemera: Magazines and Newsletters (1947-1969)**
7 items.

Folder 5  
**Modern Ephemera: Miscellaneous [ca. 1947-1957]**
16 items.

Folder 6  
**Modern Ephemera: Pamphlets (1947-1980)**
12 items.

Folder 7  
**Modern Ephemera: Thomas Alva Edison Foundation Reports (1966-1969)**
2 items.

Box 3  
**Oversize**

Folder 1  
**Miscellaneous Ephemera (1883-1964)**
12 items.

Folder 2  
**Oil paintings of Edison [ca. 1940-1960]**
3 items.

Folder 3  
**Photograph: Edison with Associates and Families [ca. 1908-1919]**
1 item. Signed by Edison, Harrison Gilman Thompson and Elisha Evans Hudson.

Folder 4  
**Photograph: Large Portrait of Edison [undated]**
1 item.

Folder 5  
**Signed Portrait of Edison to J.D. Pahlman [undated]**
1 item.