Guide to the Cyril Frank Elwell Papers M0049

Elwell (Cyril Frank) papers

Processed by Special Collections staff; machine-readable finding aid created by Patricia White
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Scope and Contents Note:
These papers contain several versions of Elwell's autobiography, including one written under a pseudonym and correspondence with possible ghost writers, especially R. B. Stone. Also included are engineering papers, clippings, biographical materials, and correspondence.

Biographical Note:
Cyril Frank Elwell (1884 – 1963) was an American inventor and pioneer in the development of radio-telegraphy and long-distance communication. Born in Melbourne, Australia in 1884 to an American father and a German mother, Elwell arrived in the United States in 1902. He studied electrical engineering at Stanford University, graduating with an engineering degree in 1907. While he first was involved with electric metallurgy, in 1908 he began research in wireless communication after investigating a system for voice transmission invented by Francis Joseph McCarty (1888-1906) six years earlier. Elwell founded the Poulsen Wireless Telephone and Telegraph Company, later renamed Federal Telegraph Company in 1909. By 1910 Elwell had successfully demonstrated voice communication between Stockton and Sacramento, California. Equipment and technique rapidly improved and by 1911 Federal Telegraph was prepared to bid on contracts to provide Navy communication to Hawaii. After a dispute with the Federal Telegraph board of directors, Elwell resigned in 1913 but continued his research, joining the short-lived Universal Wireless Syndicate. During World War I he was a consulting radio engineer for the French and Italian governments. Subsequently he moved to England where in the early 1920s he established and managed the company C. F. Elwell, Ltd., originally to mainly supply wireless apparatus for maritime communication but later manufacturing home radio receivers for the emerging radio broadcasting service. While in England he also became involved in other electronics enterprises, including collaborating with Lee de Forest on talking pictures with the British de Forest Phonofilms Company. He also briefly worked on motion picture sound in France. Elwell was a founding investor in the Mullard Radio Valve Company, manufacturers of vacuum tubes. After his term as director at Mullard, he returned to the United States in 1947 and was a consulting engineer for Hewlett Packard. He died in 1963.

Preferred Citation:
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Provenance:
Gift of Mrs. Cyril Frank Elwell, 1963

Conditions Governing Access
Open for research. Note that material must be requested at least 36 hours in advance of intended use.

Related Materials
Stanford holds a few related collections:
MSS PRINTS 0085 "600-foot tower design for Federal Telegraph Co. : blueprints and typescript, 1912"
https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/5175668
MISC 1035 "Clippings about Elwell and his work, 1912-1934" https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/4703395

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Radio -- History
Electrical engineering
Elwell, C. F. (Cyril Frank)
Autobiography

box 1, folder 1  
Autobiography. Notebook with typed copy and manuscript corrections.

box 1, folder 2  

box 1, folder 3  

box 1, folder 4  
Autobiography. Notebook with typed copy and manuscript corrections. Version C.

box 1, folder 5  

box 1, folder 6  
Autobiography. Typed copy of tape recorded reminiscences, revised.

box 1, folder 7  

box 1, folder 8  
Autobiography. Another version.

box 1, folder 9  
Revised autobiography with the aid of R. B. Stone. Outline for possible publisher.

box 1, folder 10  
Revised autobiography written under the name Frank Rossa.

box 1, folder 11  

box 1, folder 12  
Autobiography. Miscellaneous notes.

box 2, folder 13  

box 2, folder 14  

box 2, folder 15  
Autobiography. Van Etten, deForest and Hewlett Packard material.

box 2, folder 16  
Autobiography. Miscellaneous notes.

Correspondence

box 2, folder 17  

box 2, folder 18  
Letters, incoming, A - Z.

box 2, folder 19  
Letters not to Elwell but concerning his work.

Clippings

box 2, folder 20  
Clippings 1930s.

box 2, folder 21  
Clippings 1940s.

box 2, folder 22  
Clippings 1950s.

box 2, folder 23  
Clippings undated

Articles, speeches, papers, etc.

box 3, folder 24  
Speeches and articles by Elwell.

box 3, folder 25  
Magazine articles pertaining to Elwell.

box 3, folder 26  
Contracts and certificates.

box 3, folder 27  
Financial papers.

box 3, folder 28  
Engineering papers. Notebook of designs and circuits.

box 3, folder 29  
Engineering papers. History of Radio, notes by Elwell.

box 3, folder 30  
Engineering papers. Structural designs.

box 4, folder 31  
Engineering papers. Antennas

box 4, folder 32  
Engineering papers. Antennas

box 4, folder 33  
Engineering papers. Transistors

box 4, folder 34  
Engineering papers. Lapp radio material.

box 4, folder 35  
Engineering papers. Radio towers.

box 4, folder 36  
Engineering papers. Linear electron accelerator.

Photographs

Scope and Contents
Approximately 150 early 20th century photographic prints of radio towers, equipment and people. There are also portraits of Elwell.

box 5, folder 1  
“The C.F. Elwell Collection of Photographs & Equipment Used in Connection With the First Continuous Wave Commercial Stations on the West Coast Built by Federal Telegraph Company”

Scope and Contents
listing for exhibit with most of the photos listed

box 5, folder 2  
Portraits of Elwell, residences, other people

box 5, folder 3  
Photo album pages
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box and Folder</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>box 5, folder 4</td>
<td>&quot;Anderson&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>box 5, folder 5</td>
<td>Unidentified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>box 5, folder 6</td>
<td>South San Francisco/California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>box 5, folder 7</td>
<td>El Paso, Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One photo from the El Paso file is in Folder 1 (portrait of C.V. Logwood)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>box 5, folder 8</td>
<td>England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily Newcastle &amp; Horsea Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>box 5, folder 9</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>box 5, folder 10</td>
<td>Lyon/France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>box 5, folder 11</td>
<td>Rome, Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>box 5, folder 12</td>
<td>Misc. Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Romania, Hungary, Malta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>box 5, folder 13</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>