

Carl C. Harris Papers

1898-1963

14 boxes (19 linear feet)

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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.

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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 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.

Collection inventory

Series 1. Carl Chester Harris	1898-1959	
Advertisements, other companies: mailings, catalogs and displays	1934-1956	Box 1: 1
Catalogs	1940-1954	Box 1: 2
"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	Box 1: 6
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	Box 1: 11
Home Telephone Company record book	1890	Box 1: 12
Letterhead: Unigraph Manufacturing Co.	ca. 1905	Box 1: 13
Patents: list of early patents	1959	Box 1: 14
Patents: one-piece wooden body pencils	1948	Box 8: 1
Personal notes	1938-1955	Box 1: 15
Russell Manufacturing Co stock certificates	1928-1932	Box 1: 16
Simplex Time Recorder Co.	ca. 1913	Box 1: 17
Simplex Time Recorder Co.: article	1958	Box 1: 18
Time-keeping device	1913	Box 8: 2
Wilkinson, V. L.: correspondence, patent reports of interest	1950-1952	Box 1: 19

Series 2. Rodney Hunt Machine Company

1906-1956

Airplane slide	1931-1932	Box 1: 20
Bassett, Linton: correspondence, patent	1937	Box 8: 3
Card tipper	1944-1945	Box 1: 21
Channing L. Bete Co., Inc.: booklets	1954	Box 1: 22
Channing L. Bete Co., Inc.: correspondence, booklets, and newspaper clipping	1955	Box 1: 23
Channing L. Bete Co., Inc.: correspondence and booklets	1956	Box 1: 24
Clips, clamps, and binders	1933-1956	Box 1: 25
"Corker-Bobber": bulletin no. 132	1932	Box 1: 26
Correspondence: Rodney Hunt	1953-1975	Box 1: 27
Crayon marking sticks	1942-1947	Box 1: 28
Dex copy holder	ca. 1920	Box 1: 29
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, bottle stamp pads	1952-1958	Box 1: 30
Employment application	ca. 1950	Box 1: 31
Fachon, Emile: correspondence, reports	1945-1951	Box 1: 32
Fay, Albert E.: correspondence, safety ladder	1938	Box 1: 33
Fay, Albert E.: correspondence, swimming floats	1937	Box 1: 34
Fay, Charles R.: correspondence, automatic water wheel control	1950	Box 1: 35
Fay, Charles R.: correspondence, product patents	1940	Box 1: 36
Friend Box Co.: model railroading	1941-1955	Box 1: 37
Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, card flipper	1945	Box 1: 38
Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, change to patent law	1940	Box 1: 39
Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, crayon holders and book pencil support	1944	Box 1: 40
Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, goodwill cups	1944-1946	Box 1: 41
Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, motor operated gate	1944	Box 1: 42
Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, plastic hinge box	1943-1946	Box 1: 43
Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, products	1942	Box 1: 44
Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, products	1943	Box 1: 45
Heard, Smith & Tennant: miscellaneous patents	1930s-1940s	Box 1: 46
Heller cabinets	1944-1950	Box 1: 47

Horton Manufacturing Company: contract	1933	Box 1: 48
Housen, Morris: paper napkin dispenser patent	1949	Box 1: 49
Letters and letterhead, miscellaneous	1910-1942	Box 1: 50
Machinery: correspondence and catalogs	1948-1951	Box 1: 51
Memo from VLW with patents	1952	Box 1: 52
Negatives: airplane slide	1934	Box 1: 53
Negatives: Corker-bobbers	ca. 1934	Box 1: 54
Negatives: Corker-bobbers (Bau, C.)	ca. 1934	Box 1: 55
Negatives: card tipper	1949	Box 1: 56
New England Telephone and Telegraph Company	1929	Box 1: 57
Patents	1906-1941	Box 1: 58
Patents: automatic cloth feed control	1938-1941	Box 10: 1
Patents: adjustable cloth guides	1943	Box 10: 2
Patents: adjustable reel for dye kettles and the like	1934	Box 10: 3
Patents: apparatus for drying and conditioning	1939-1942	Box 10: 4
Patents: balanced top roll pressure devices for fulling mills	1939	Box 10: 5
Patents: bathing trolley	1932	Box 8: 4
Patents: bearings for wood rolls	1931	Box 10: 6
Patents, Canada	1925	Box 10: 7
Patents, Canada	1934	Box 10: 8
Patents, Canada	1945	Box 10: 9
Patents: case, game and game piece	ca. 1930	Box 8: 5
Patents: case U and X, open file	ca. 1929	Box 8: 6
Patents: case W, bathing floats	ca. 1928	Box 8: 7
Patents: cloth feed control	1941	Box 10: 10
Patents: cloth-finishing machine	1912	Box 10: 11
Patents: cloth washer	1936-1940	Box 10: 12
Patents: combination safety swimming float	1932	Box 8: 8
Patents: combination washer and dye kettle	1938	Box 9: 1
Patents: continuous machine for treating fabrics	1927-1929	Box 10: 13
Patents: demountable fronts for fulling mills	1938-1939	Box 10: 14
Patents: drains for suds boxes	1942	Box 10: 15
Patents: drip flange for wood rolls	1926	Box 9: 2
Patents: drip flange for wood rolls	1926	Box 9: 3
Patents: drip flanges for wood rolls	1929	Box 10: 16

Patents: drip flanges for wood rolls	1929	Box 10: 17
Patents: end seals for wood rolls	1924	Box 10: 18
Patents: end seals for wood rolls	1924	Box 9: 4
Patents: end seals for wood rolls	1924	Box 9: 5
Patents: end supports for hollow rolls	1923	Box 9: 6
Patents: end supports for hollow rolls	1923-1925	Box 10: 19
Patents: end supports for rolls	1929	Box 10: 20
Patents: flanged roll caps	1923	Box 9: 7
Patents: flanged roll caps	1925	Box 10: 21
Patents: float	1933	Box 8: 9
Patents: foreign patents	1920s	Box 9: 8
Patents: France, objet de toilette	1905	Box 8: 10
Patents: fulling canals	1937-1939	Box 10: 22
Patents: fulling canals	1938	Box 10: 23
Patents: fulling machines	1829-1897	Box 10: 24
Patents: fulling machines	1841-1897	Box 10: 25
Patents: fulling machines	1869-1876	Box 10: 26
Patents: fulling machines	1874-1896	Box 10: 27
Patents: fulling machines	1892-1895	Box 10: 28
Patents: fulling mills	1918	Box 10: 29
Patents: fulling mills	1943	Box 10: 30
Patents: fulling mills	1944	Box 10: 31
Patents: gate-adjusted means for turbines and the like	1929	Box 10: 32
Patents: Germany	1905	Box 8: 11
Patents: Great Britain, improvements in toilet instruments	1905	Box 8: 12
Patents: gudgeon for log roll	1932	Box 9: 9
Patents: gudgeon locking devices	1933	Box 10: 33
Patents: gudgeons	1919-1921	Box 10: 34
Patents: Harris, Carl C.	1947-1953	Box 10: 35
Patents: hydraulic turbines	1941-1951	Box 10: 36
Patents: letters	1920s	Box 10: 37
Patents: letters	1930s	Box 10: 38
Patents: letters	1940-1945	Box 10: 39
Patents: letters	1946-1949	Box 10: 40

Patents: letters	1950s	Box 10: 41
Patents: links for hydraulic turbine	1929	Box 9: 10
Patents: links for hydraulic turbines	1930	Box 10: 42
Patents: means for holding a plug in a tube or shell roll	1930	Box 9: 11
Patents: methods of joining wood pieces for making rolls	1928	Box 10: 43
Patents: methods of making tanks	1934	Box 10: 44
Patents: open file	1929	Box 8: 13
Patents: oxidizing machine	1931	Box 9: 12
Patents: piling machine	1924	Box 9: 13
Patents: piling machines	1927	Box 10: 45
Patents: pipe body stainless reels	1940-1950	Box 10: 46
Patents: rake	1915	Box 10: 47
Patents: reels	1923	Box 9: 14
Patents: reels	1924	Box 10: 48
Patents: reels	1925	Box 10: 49
Patents: re-enforced reels for dye kettles and the like	1936-1937	Box 10: 50
Patents: re-enforced tanks	1934	Box 10: 51
Patents: Rodney Hunt Machine Co.	1869-1876	Box 10: 52
Patents: Rodney Hunt Machine Co.	1888-1929	Box 10: 53
Patents: Rodney Hunt Machine Co.	1915-1943	Box 10: 54
Patents: Rodney Hunt Machine Co.	1924-1937	Box 10: 55
Patents: Rodney Hunt Machine Co.	1932-1940	Box 10: 56
Patents: Rodney Hunt Machine Co.	1938-1945	Box 10: 57
Patents: roll cap wedges	1938-1940	Box 10: 58
Patents: roll for finishing and like machines	1922-1924	Box 10: 59
Patents: slack-loop washing machine	1926	Box 9: 15
Patents: slack-loop washing machine and methods	1930	Box 10: 60
Patents: suds boxes	1934	Box 10: 61
Patents: suds boxes	1939-1941	Box 10: 62
Patents: swimming float	1923	Box 8: 14
Patents: swimming float	1931	Box 8: 15
Patents: swimming float	1932	Box 8: 16
Patents: tank construction	1940-1943	Box 10: 63
Patents: tool post	1907	Box 8: 17
Patents: toy or game	1926	Box 8: 18

Patents: turbine regulating device	1929	Box 9: 16
Patents: turbine-regulating device	1930	Box 710: 64
Patents: turbines	1938	Box 10: 65
Patents:umbrella support	1934	Box 8: 19
Patents: water manifold	1930	Box 9: 17
Patents: water wheels	1933-1954	Box 10: 66
Patents: water wheels	1951	Box 9: 18
Patents: wedges for use in wood rolls and the like	1923	Box 10: 67
Patents: wedges for use in wood rolls and the like	1923	Box 9: 19
Patents: wicket gates	1938	Box 10: 68
Pay stubs	1947-1948	Box 1: 59
Photographs: machines	undated	Box 1: 60
Safety float division: photographs	ca. 1934	Box 1: 61
Safety float division: working sketches for products	ca. 1934	Box 1: 62
Southgate, Fay and Hawley: correspondence, safety floats	1927-1931	Box 1: 63
Southgate, Fay and Hawley: correspondence, safety float division products	1930-1931	Box 1: 64
Southgate, Fay and Hawley: correspondence, safety float division products	1932	Box 2: 1
Southgate, Fay and Hawley: correspondence, safety float division products	1933-1935	Box 2: 2
Stencil equipment	ca. 1955	Box 2: 3
Trademark: corker-bobber	1931	Box 2: 4
Tuman Enterprises: correspondence and catalog	1954	Box 2: 5

Series 3. Rivet-O Manufacturing Company

1915-1959

Adell Corporation	1941-1955	Box 2: 6
Anderson, Albert	1956	Box 2: 7
Anderson, A. E.	1956	Box 2: 8
Balance sheet	1949-1953	Box 2: 9
Bean, Earle: Speed-Mo	1954	Box 2: 10
Bean, Earle: Speed-Mo	1955	Box 2: 11
Bean, Earl: Speed-Mo	1952-1954	Box 2: 12

Bean, Earle: Speed-Mo	1953	Box 2: 13
Bean, Earle: Speed-Mo	1953-1954	Box 2: 14
Bean, Earle: Speed-Mo	1954	Box 2: 15
Bean, Earle: mock-ups	ca. 1941	Box 2: 16
Better Brushes: correspondence and reports	1952-1954	Box 2: 17
Canadian patent: hand tool	1917	Box 8: 20
Canadian patent: inking pad	1946	Box 8: 21
Canadian patent: spring biased valve with lock	1959	Box 8: 22
Capital Stock Insurance	1925-1926	Box 2: 18
Catalogs: Speed-Mo listing	1945-1956	Box 2: 19
Correspondence	1944-1952	Box 2: 20
Correspondence: companies, motion display	1936-1938	Box 2: 21
Correspondence: product placement in catalog	1952-1953	Box 2: 22
Correspondence, sketches, brochures: Rivet-o Products	1915-1928	Box 2: 23
Cromwell, Ralph: correspondence, Sten-Roll testing	1955	Box 2: 24
Customer report	1956	Box 2: 25
Day, Howard: correspondence and reports, Sten-Roll	1957-1959	Box 2: 26
Day, Howard: correspondence and sales reports	1955-1956	Box 2: 27
Deb-u-stamp: Bulletin no. 154	1954	Box 2: 28
Deb-u-stamp: correspondence, design	1954	Box 2: 29
Deb-u-stamp: mock-ups of logo	1953	Box 2: 30
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, bottle Sten Roll	1956	Box 2: 31
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, Canadian patent application	1956	Box 2: 32
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, lock nut valve	1951-1955	Box 2: 33
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, lock nut valve	1951-1953	Box 2: 34
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, Rivet-O dispenser	1952-1956	Box 2: 35
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, sealed stamp pod	1953-1958	Box 2: 36
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, Sten-Roll	1953-1954	Box 2: 37
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, Sten-Roll	1960	Box 2: 38
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, Sten-Roll	1956-1958	Box 2: 39
Direct mail	1947-ca. 1955	Box 2: 40
Fay, Albert E.: correspondence, Speed-Mo products	1936-1938	Box 2: 41
Fay, Charles R.: correspondence, rubber stamp pad	1943	Box 2: 42
Fay, Charles R.: correspondence, Speed-Mo trademark	1940	Box 2: 43

Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, Canadian patent, stamp pad	1945-1946	Box 2: 44
Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, ink pad	1942-1944	Box 2: 45
Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, ink pads	1942	Box 2: 46
Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, ink pads	1945	Box 2: 47
Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, Rivet-O products	1943	Box 2: 48
Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, stamp pads	1941	Box 2: 49
Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, stamp pad products	1940s	Box 2: 50
Heard, Smith & Porter Chittick: correspondence, crayon holder	1951	Box 2: 51
Heard, Smith & Porter Chitick: correspondence, Speed-Mo	1952	Box 2: 52
Leshin, J. : correspondence, Speed-Mo brush	1956	Box 2: 53
Machinery: correspondence and informational fliers	19490-1955	Box 2: 54
Marion, Charles: patent and assignment, combination tool	1916-1919	Box 8: 23
Mailing pieces	ca. 1950	Box 2: 55
Mailing to stockholders	1948	Box 2: 56
Negatives: products and displays, Speed-Mo, Sten-Roll	1954-1956	Box 2: 57
Olson, Charles: correspondence, Speed-Mo brush head	1943-1955	Box 2: 58
Olsen, Charles: correspondence, typewriter brush	1932-1937	Box 2: 59
Olson, Charles: sales and royalties reports	1950-1951	Box 2: 60
Patents	1919-1930	Box 2: 63
Patents: assignment, Rivet-O Manufacturing Co., sealed stamp pad	1958	Box 8: 24
Patents: assignment, Rivet-O Manufacturing Co., hand tool	1917	Box 8: 25
Patents: stencil ink rollers	1933	Box 2: 61
Patents: assignment, stencil ink pad and roller	1930	Box 2: 62
Patents: case, cap for sponge moistener	ca. 1930	Box 8: 26
Patents: case, finger moistener	1929	Box 8: 27
Patents: case K, stamp pad box	ca. 1923	Box 8: 28
Patents: case R, rubber stamp pad	ca. 1929	Box 8: 29
Patents: case R, stamp box	ca. 1928	Box 8: 30
Patents: cup for sponge moisteners	1930	Box 8: 31
Patents: finger moistener	1929	Box 8: 32
Patents: Great Britain, improvement in moistening device	1921	Box 8: 42

Patents: hand tool	1916	Box 8: 33
Patents: history	1941	Box 2: 64
Patents: moistening device	1921	Box 8: 34
Patents: ornamental design for a base moistener	1920	Box 8: 35
Patents: reissue, stamp pad box	1923	Box 8: 43
Patents: Riveto Manufacturing Co., product sketches	1916-1936	Box 2: 60
Patents: sealed stamp pad	1957	Box 8: 36
Patents: spring biased valve with lock	1956	Box 8: 37
Patents: stamp box	1928	Box 8: 38
Patents: stamp pad box (reissue)	1923	Box 8: 39
Patents: stamp pads	1921-1957	Box 2: 66
Patents: stencil roll	1960	Box 8: 40
Patents: structural toy	1916	Box 8: 41
Pay packages: Harris, Marion	1947	Box 2: 67
Pencil sharpener: sketch	1943	Box 2: 68
Pendex: blueprints, brochure	ca. 1930s	Box 2: 69
Photographs: Rohunta plant	1955	Box 2: 70
Photographs: Speed-Mo, Sten-Roll	1954-1956	Box 2: 71
Photographs: Speed-Mo, products and displays	ca. 1950	Box 2: 72
Popper & Sons, Inc.: catalog	1959	Box 2: 73
Products: brochures, catalogs, instruction manuals	ca. 1910	Box 8: 44
Pro-phy-lac-tic Brush Co.: correspondence, brush heads and stamp pad boxes	1951-1955	Box 2: 74
Price lists: punches and pendex	ca. 1920	Box 2: 75
Ranger Products Company: patents	1943-1945	Box 2: 76
Receipts and pay packets	1944-1945	Box 3: 1
Rivet-O catalog, Speed-Mo	ca. 1943	Box 3: 2
Rivet-O ferris wheel	ca. 1920	Box 3: 3
Rivet-O manufacturing Co.: annual meeting notice	1940-1964	Box 3: 4
Rivet-O Manufacturing Co.: letterheads	ca. 1930s	Box 3: 5
Rivet-O products	1930s-1950s	Box 13
Various Rivet-O products.		
Rivet-O products: Speed-Mo	1930s-1950s	Box 14

Various Speed-Mo products.

Southgate & Southgate: correspondence, eyelet holder	1921-1923	Box 3: 6
Sketches and mock ups, Speed-Mo products	1933-1950	Box 3: 7
Speed-Mo: advertisements	1940-1956	Box 3: 8
Speed-Mo: catalogs	ca. 1943	Box 3: 9
Speed-Mo; correspondence, advertisements, fliers	1924-1956	Box 3: 10
Speed-Mo: correspondence, reports, orders	1956	Box 3: 11
Speed-Mo cost reports	1950-1956	Box 3: 12
Speed-Mo: forms, bulletins	1940s-1950s	Box 3: 13
Speed-Mo: mock up with image samples	1953	Box 3: 14
Speed-Mo: orders	1937-1954	Box 3: 15
Speed-Mo: sample requests	ca. 1940s	Box 3: 16
Speed-Mo line dater bulletin no. 134	1934	Box 3: 17
Speed-Mo rubber stamp price list	1946	Box 3: 18
Speed-Mo stamp pad advertisements	ca. 1950s	Box 3: 19
Speed-Mo stamp pads: form 446, bulletin no. SP-737	1946	Box 3: 20
Speed-Mo stamp pads: form 446, bulletin no D2237	1940s-1950s	Box 3: 21
Spirit of Chance game	1927	Box 3: 22
Spirit of Chance game	ca. 1925	Box 14

Examples of Spirit of Chance games.

Stamp pad testing machine: sketch, photographs	1954	Box 3: 23
Sten Roll: correspondence, patent assignments	1945-1959	Box 3: 24
Straits Settlements: advertisement, Rivet-O	1920	Box 8: 45
Toy: punch and Rivet-O	ca. 1920	Box 3: 25
Trademarks: Canada, Speed-Mo	1931	Box 8: 46
Trademarks: Denmark, Rivet-O	1919	Box 8: 47
Trademarks: France, Rivet-o	1919	Box 8: 48
Trademarks: Italy, Rivet-o	1919	Box 8: 49
Trademarks: Portugal , Rivet-o	1921	Box 8: 50
Trademarks: Rivet-O and Speed-Mo	1940-1941	Box 3: 26
Trademarks: Spain, Rivet-o	1920	Box 8: 51
Trademarks: Sweden, Rivet-O	1919	Box 8: 52

Trademarks: United States, Speed-Mo	1921	Box 8: 53
Trademarks: United States, Speed-Mo	1939-1941	Box 8: 54
Waterman, Dick: correspondence, Speed-Mo products	1954-1955	Box 3: 27
Waterman, Dick: correspondence, Sped-Mo products	1956	Box 3: 28
Waterman, Dick: correspondence, Speed-Mo products	1952-1954	Box 3: 29

Series 4. The Slencil Co.

1930-1963

1946 sales and statement	1947	Box 3: 30
Ace Plastic Company: correspondence, lucite balls	1956	Box 3: 31
Acknowledgements: Christmas slencils	1943-1944	Box 3: 32
Adjusto display	1952	Box 3: 33
Advertisements	1938-1956	Box 3: 34
Advertisements and articles	1937-1960	Box 3: 35
Advertsing brochures and mailings	1930s-1940s	Box 3: 36
Article: <i>Enterprose and Journal</i>	1936	Box 3: 37
Balmforth, E. H.: correspondence and reports	1947-1952	Box 3: 38
Bean, Earle: correspondence, Slencil product advertising	1952-1954	Box 3: 39
Bean, Earle: correspondence and sketches	1934-1944	Box 3: 40
Bean, Earle: sketch of Slencil display	1934	Box 3: 41
Boston Blue Print Co.: mock ups and circulars	1956	Box 3: 42
Boston Blue Print Co.: Speed-Mo bulletin	1956	Box 3: 43
Bulletin no. 548	1948	Box 3: 44
Business reply card	ca. 1950	Box 3: 45
Canadian patent: pencil	1936	Box 8: 55
Cart tipper/holder patent	1949	Box 3: 46
Carpenter Slencil	ca. 1940s	Box 3: 47
Catalogs: Slencil library	1939-1948	Box 3: 48
Catalogs, magazines, mailers	1938-1951	Box 3: 49
Circulars	1948-1952	Box 3: 50
Channing L. Bete Co., Inc.: correspondence and booklets	1957	Box 3: 51
Clip patent	1947-1963	Box 3: 52
Commonwealth of Massachusetts: correspondence	1944	Box 3: 53
Company trasemarks	1940s-1950s	Box 3: 54

Competitors' brochures and fliers	ca. 1950	Box 3: 55
Confidential price list no. 86A	1952	Box 3: 56
Corporate tax	1945	Box 3: 57
Correspondence: current products	1948-1954	Box 3: 58
Correspondence: Parley Jones' patent	1933-1937	Box 3: 59
Correspondence: sale of company	1953-1959	Box 3: 60
Correspondence and lists	1934-1952	Box 3: 61
Cromwell, Ralph: notes	1958-1959	Box 3: 62
Customer and consumer reports	1951-1955	Box 3: 63
Day, Howard: correspondence and reports	1952-1957	Box 3: 64
Day, Howard: correspondence and reports, stag slencils	1956-1959	Box 3: 65
Day, Howard: correspondence and sales reports	1954-1956	Box 3: 66
Desk pad developments: sketches and fliers on competitors	1939-1945	Box 3: 67
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, adjustable display easel	1952-1953	Box 3: 68
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, adjustable display easel	1955-1956	Box 3: 69
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, ball point slencils	1956-1957	Box 3: 70
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, duplex clip	1954-1956	Box 3: 71
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, new stag design	1956	Box 4: 1
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, Salient Co. and note book patent	1950	Box 4: 2
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, slencil products and Salient, Inc.	1950-1952	Box 4: 3
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, trademark	1956	Box 4: 4
Diggins, Bartholomew: correspondence, words and phrases	1952	Box 4: 5
Direct mail slencil	1952-1959	Box 4: 6
Displays: sketches for various displays	1937-1938	Box 4: 7
Drawings: cap and barrel for stag slencils	1945-1946	Box 4: 8
Dun & Bradstreet report	1955	Box 4: 9
Factory and office inventory	1948	Box 4: 10
Fay, Albert E.: correspondnece, notebook patents	1937-1938	Box 4: 11
Fay, Albert E.: correspondence, slencil patent	1937-1938	Box 4: 12
Fay, Albert E.: correspondence, slencil patents and trademarks	1936	Box 4: 13

Fay, Albert E.: correspondence, slencil products	1934-1938	Box 4: 14
Fay, Albert E.: correspondence, slencil tie clasp	1938	Box 4: 15
Fay, Albert E.: correspondence, slencil trademarks and British patent	1939	Box 4: 16
Fay, Charles R.: correspondence, erasers	1949-1952	Box 4: 17
Fay, Charles R.: correspondence, slencil British patent	1942-1945	Box 4: 18
Fay, Charles R.: correspondence, slencil patents and trademarks	1940-1944	Box 4: 19
Fay, Charles R.: correspondence, slencils	1945-1946	Box 4: 20
Financial reports	1951-1953	Box 4: 21
Folding pencil: sketches	1952	Box 4: 22
Foreign patents and trademarks	1946-1953	Box 4: 23
Fountain Pen & Mechanical Pencil Manufacturers' Association Inc.: correspondnece and directory	1956	Box 4: 24
General Tool Company: correspondence	1948	Box 4: 25
Harris, Earl F.: correspondence	1945	Box 4: 26
Harris, Earl F.: correspondence, selling Slencil Company	1956-1957	Box 4: 27
Heard, Smith, Porter & Chittick: correspondencem Australian and British patents	1954	Box 4: 28
Heard, Smith, Porter & Chittick: correspondence, mechanical lead pencil patents	1951-1952	Box 4: 29
Heard, Smith, Porter & Chittick: correspondence, memo pad patent	1950-1952	Box 4: 30
Heard, Smith, Porter & Chittick: correspondence, patents	1950-1953	Box 4: 31
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, clips and pads	1945-1946	Box 4: 32
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, competitors	1939-1944	Box 4: 33
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, desk pad	1945	Box 4: 34
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, flat pencil infringements	1944-1946	Box 4: 35
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, flat wood pencils	1944-1945	Box 4: 36
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, Kitchen Aid	1947	Box 4: 37
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, mechanical pencil and memo pad patent	1948-1949	Box 4: 38
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, memorandum pad	1944	Box 4: 39
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, patents	1936-1938	Box 4: 40

Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, patents	1938	Box 4: 41
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, patents	1948-1950	Box 4: 42
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, pen/pencil mailing card	1944	Box 4: 43
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, pencil-bonded memorandum pad	1944-1945	Box 4: 44
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence	1944	Box 4: 45
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, products	1937-1939	Box 4: 46
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, products	1939-1940	Box 4: 47
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, products	1941	Box 4: 48
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, products	1942	Box 4: 49
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, products	1945	Box 4: 50
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, products	1944-1946	Box 4: 51
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, products	1946	Box 4: 52
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, products	1946	Box 4: 53
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, score pad/note book	1945	Box 4: 54
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, scratch pads	1944	Box 4: 55
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, slencil jotter	1944	Box 4: 56
Heard, Smith, & Tennant: correspondence, slencil pad	1945	Box 4: 57
Heard, Smith & Tennant: correspondence, slencil products	1947	Box 8: 56
Hill Co.: slencil window display	ca. 1950	Box 4: 58
History of pencil: articles	1936-1951	Box 4: 59
Howard Johnson's trademark	ca. 1955	Box 4: 60
Jones, Parley: exclusive license agreement	1935	Box 4: 61
Journal: payments, received and paid out	1944-1946	Box 4: 62
Journal: slencil orders	1935-1937	Box 4: 63
Kemper-Thomas Company: correspondence	1955-1956	Box 4: 64
Ledger: slencil order	1934-1936	Box 4: 65
Letterhead	ca. 1950	Box 4: 66
Linton Pencil Co.: correspondence and reports	1945-1947	Box 4: 67
List of customers form	ca. 1950	Box 4: 68
Lists of possible names for slencils, list of products	1936-1948	Box 4: 69
Lists of slencil developments	1943-1945	Box 4: 70
Machinery: correspondence and catalogs	1943-1953	Box 4: 71
	1940s-1950s	Box 4: 72

Mock ups: advertising images and advertisements		
Negatives: displays and products	ca. 1950	Box 4: 73
Negatives: products, displays, and shop	1954-1956	Box 4: 74
Negatives: slencil shop, Hames Photo Shop and Studio	1949	Box 4: 75
Negatives: slencil shop Rohunta	ca. 1950	Box 4: 76
Negatives: Valley Mills Annex	undated	Box 4: 77
Note pads: competitor's patent	1941	Box 4: 78
Note pads: sketches of various designs	1939-1947	Box 4: 79
Note pads: working sketches abd blue prints	1945	Box 5: 1
Orders: stag slencil order form	1954-1956	Box 5: 2
Patents	1933-1947	Box 5: 3
Patents: article clip	1957	Box 8: 57
Patents: assignment to the Slencil Co.	1944-1947	Box 8: 64
Patents: competitors	1937-1938	Box 5: 4
Patents: eraser	1935	Box 8: 58
Patents: lists	1955-1958	Box 5: 5
Payroll, monthly, and stockholder reports	1945-1947	Box 5: 6
Patents: pencil clip	1939	Box 8: 59
Patents: pencil-bonded memorandum pad	1945	Box 8: 60
Patents: slidable clip	1936	Box 8: 61
Patents: wide lead mechanical pencil	1943	Box 8: 62
Patent and reissue: pencil	1934-1937	Box 8: 63
Pencil clips	1943-1944	Box 5: 7
Pencil clips: sketches	1950	Box 5: 8
Pencil tie clips: competitors' advertisement	1938-1940	Box 5: 9
Permutit Company: correspondence	1941	Box 5: 10
Photographs: products and displays	ca. 1950	Box 5: 11
Photographs: products and displays	1950-1954	Box 5: 12
Photographs: products and displays, George M. Cushing, Jr. Photography	ca. 1950	Box 5: 13
Photographs: products and displays, Hames' Photo Shop & Studio	ca. 1950	Box 5: 14
Photographs: products and displays, Harold Duval	1954-1956	Box 5: 15
Photographs: Rohunta Plant and Valley Mills	1946-1955	Box 5: 16
Photographs: slencil shop, Hames Photo Shop & Studio	ca. 1950	Box 5: 17

Photographs: Thincil, George H. Davis Studio	ca. 1950	Box 5: 18
Plant at Rohunta: blueprints	1945	Box 5: 19
Playing cards: articles and catalog	1956	Box 5: 20
Pocket pencil display	ca. 1950	Box 5: 21
Printing plate: stag for G.E. Co.	1955	Box 5: 22
Report of cash advances	1948	Box 5: 23
Reports: machinery and equipment inventory; profit and loss; sales	1953-1955	Box 5: 24
Reports: inquiries, orders, and comparative balance sheet	1955-1956	Box 5: 25
Reports: sales and expenses	1941-1945	Box 5: 26
Retouched photographs: products	1937-1956	Box 5: 27
Retouched photographs: brochures and advertisements	ca. 1950	Box 5: 28
Robert W. Kellogg Co.: catalog	1936	Box 5: 29
Salient, Inc.: correspondence, reports, brochures	1950-1954	Box 5: 30
Score pads: cost and price lists	1956	Box 5: 31
Sisson, Bob: correspondence, slencil products	1952-1953	Box 5: 32
Sketches: slencil displays	1937	Box 5: 33
Sketches, blueprints, mock ups: products, advertisement, displays	1943-1954	Box 5: 34
Sketches for slencil products, components, ads, brochures	1935-1952	Box 5: 35
Sketches: slencil products, displaysm advertisements	1939-1945	Box 5: 36
Sketches and mock ups: products, displays, brochures	1930-1950	Box 5: 37
Sketches and mock ups: slencil products, displays, brochures, advertisements	1933-1949	Box 5: 38
Sketches and mock ups: slencil products, displays, brochures, and advertisements	1934-1956	Box 5: 39
Slencil: air travel log	ca. 1940	Box 5: 40
Slencil binder: materials A-L	1940-1946	Box 5: 41
Slencil binder: materials M-Z	1940-1956	Box 5: 42
Slencil: customer engraving or imprinting order card	ca. 1945	Box 5: 43
Slencil: forms	1937	Box 5: 44
Slencil: forms, price lists, bulletins	1951-1953	Box 5: 45
Slencil: price lists and values of patents	1939-1940	Box 5: 46
Slencil products	1930s-1950s	Box 11

Various slencil products.

Slencil products	1930s-1950s	Box 12
Various slencil products, including marketing samples and displays.		
Slencil: samples sent	1942-1948	Box 5: 47
Slencil: slencil orders	1940-1944	Box 5: 48
Slencil: stag slencil investments	1940	Box 5: 49
Slencil Co. annual meeting notices	1949-1963	Box 5: 50
Slencil displays: correspondence and sketches	1937-1955	Box 5: 51
Slencil gifts folder	ca. 1945	Box 5: 52
Slencil Kitchen Aid: House Beautiful ad	ca. 1950	Box 5: 53
Slencil lines: prices and prospects	1938-1942	Box 5: 54
Slencil notebook: samples sent	1937-1940	Box 5: 55
Slencil products: sketches, advertisements, patents, and correspondence	1935-1950	Box 5: 56
Slencil score pad form	ca. 1950	Box 5: 57
Slencil scrapbook: thincil and slencil	1935-1938	Box 5: 58
Smith, Frank C.: correspondence	1944	Box 6: 1
Social slencil: Bible text circular no. 956	ca. 1956	Box 6: 2
Social slencil: bulletin no. 752	1952	Box 6: 3
Social slencil: bulletin no. 850	1952	Box 6: 4
Social slencil: bulletin no. 949	ca. 1949	Box 6: 5
Social slencil: bulletin no. 950	1956	Box 6: 6
Social slencil: bulletin no. 950B	1956	Box 6: 7
Social slencil: bulletin 1152	1952	Box 6: 8
Social slencil: confidential price lists	1952	Box 6: 9
Social slencil: exclusive features	ca. 1940s	Box 6: 10
Social slencil: form letters with bulletins and inserts	1952	Box 6: 11
Social slencil: George S. Heinemon flier	ca. 1940	Box 6: 12
Social slencil: notebook combinations price sheet	ca. 1950	Box 6: 13
Social slencil: original display bulletin	ca. 1940	Box 6: 14
Social slencil: pocket memo flier	ca. 1940	Box 6: 15
Social slencil: "wafer thin" advertisement	1930	Box 6: 16
Social slencil: gift box advertisement	ca. 1950	Box 6: 17
Southgate, Fay & Hawley: correspondence, products	1934-1937	Box 6: 18

Spiegel: correspondence, interested in slencil products	1946	Box 6: 19
Stag slencil: advertisement, no. 600	ca. 1954	Box 6: 20
Stag slencil: advertisement, no. 610	1954	Box 6: 21
Stag slencil: bulletin no. 553	1951	Box 6: 22
Stag slencil: bulletin no. 1051	1951	Box 6: 23
Stag slencil: customers	1940-1947	Box 6: 24
Stag slencil: desk aid form 249B	ca. 1950	Box 6: 25
Stag slencil: features advertisement	1941	Box 6: 26
Stag slencil: advertisement no. 954	ca. 1950	Box 6: 27
Stag slencil: form letter with special bulletin no. 53	1953	Box 6: 28
Stag slencil: form no. 149A	ca. 1950	Box 6: 29
Stag slencil: form no. 149B	ca. 1950	Box 6: 30
Stag slencil: form no. 149C	ca. 1950	Box 6: 31
Stag slencil: form no. 149D	ca. 1950	Box 6: 32
Stag slencil: General Electric flier	ca. 1943	Box 7: 1
Stag slencil: introduction flier and Protecto advertisement	ca. 1940	Box 7: 2
Stag slencil: news 845	1947	Box 7: 3
Stag slencil: permanent users	1955	Box 7: 4
Stag slencil: Protecto advertisement no. 145 for mailing with book or pocket clip	ca. 1950	Box 7: 5
Stag slencil: reprinted advertisement form Printers' Ink	ca. 1940	Box 7: 6
Stag slencil: Special Bulletin no. 53	ca. 1953	Box 7: 7
Stanley Home Products: newspaper article	1956	Box 7: 8
Swanson, Clifford: sales and commissions	1956	Box 7: 9
Thincil: advertisement no. 935	1935	Box 7: 10
Thincil: development copy and sketches	1934	Box 7: 11
Thincil: letterhead and flier	ca. 1934	Box 7: 12
Tie clip slencils: correspondence and advertisements	1948	Box 7: 13
Tool developments: sketch	1939	Box 7: 14
Verses: advertising slogans	1938	Box 7: 15
Waterman, Dick: correspondence, slencil products	1953-1955	Box 7: 16
Waterman, Dick: correspondence, stag slencils	1956-1957	Box 7: 17
Waterman, Dick: correspondence, stag slencil clip	1955	Box 7: 18
Waterman, Dick: correspondence, slencil products	1951-1956	Box 7: 19
WEC: memo	1946	Box 7: 20

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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- Business people--Massachusetts--Orange
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- Mechanical pencils--Marketing
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- Office equipment and supplies industry--Massachusetts--Orange

Names

- Rivet-O Company
- Rodney Hunt Machine Company
- Speed-Mo
- The Slencil Co.

Genre terms

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