

The Hotpoint/General Electric Collection, 1911-1975

**Ontario City Library
Robert E. Ellingwood Model
Colony History Room**



Ontario, California

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Processed by: Luz Graue 1976. Reorganized by Joanne Boyajian, 2008.

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Descriptive Summary

Title

The Hotpoint/General Electric Collection, 1911-1975

Creator

This collection was created from photographs, patents, scrapbooks, articles, company newsletters and brochures documenting the history of the Hotpoint Flat Iron Plant in Ontario from its early beginnings to 1975. Bryce A. Denton, GE engineer and historian, coordinated the original donation in 1976 and augmented it with yearly contributions from 1980-1989.

Extent

Number of containers: 31

Linear feet:

Abstract

Earl H. Richardson was a meter reader for the Ontario Power Company in the early 1900's. In his spare time, he experimented with electrifying flat irons. Designing a small, lighter weight model (flatirons could weigh 5-10 pounds each), he convinced his company to generate power all day every Tuesday (ironing day) so power customers could use his new iron. He reasoned that if enough electric irons were in use, customers would demand more power and the high rates would be reduced. It worked. By 1904, he left the power company and started up the Pacific Electric Heating Company on Euclid Avenue just below the railroad tracks to manufacture electric irons.

A major problem was soon identified: the iron got too hot in the center of the ironing plate. Richardson asked his wife Mary for advice (!). She suggested that he make an iron with more heat at the point for easier pressing around buttonholes, ruffles and pleats. He fabricated this new improved version and gave several to local laundresses to try for one week. When he returned, they refused to part with "the iron with the hot point". In 1905, he made and sold more electric irons under the "Hotpoint" name than any other company in America.

Between 1911 and 1917, Richardson found other innovative ways to marry electricity with household appliances. Thus was born the "El" line (El meaning "electric"): El Perco (an electric coffeepot), El Chafo (chafing dish), El Tosto

(electric toaster), El Stovo (an early hotplate), El Eggo, El Teballo (electric teapot), and El Warmo (electric heating pad). An early crockpot, (the “jug cooker”) came out in 1929.

With World War I raging in Europe, a merger was proposed with Richardson’s Hotpoint Electric Heating Company, George Hughes (owner/inventor of the electric range) and the heating device section of the General Electric Company. The new company, formed in 1918, was known as the Edison Electric Appliance Company. In 1952, Hotpoint became a division of the General Electric Company. The Ontario plant continued to manufacture electric irons until it closed in 1982.

Several milestones marked the Ontario plant’s history: the 20 millionth iron (gold-plated) was presented to Una Winter, Earl Richardson’s sister in 1941; the 50 millionth produced in 1956 with President Eisenhower looking on; the 100 millionth in 1969 and the 150 millionth in 1980. Legend has it that the last iron was buried in the grounds of the Ontario plant rather than sent back to GE’s Bridgeport Conn. Plant in 1982.

The Model Colony Room also has an extensive Oral History of Bryce Denton and a slide/transcript presentation he created on the history of Hotpoint.

Administrative Information

Access

Collection is open for research during the operating hours of the Robert E. Ellingwood Model Colony History Room, or by appointment.

Preferred Citation

The Hotpoint/General Electric Collection, 1911-1975. Robert E. Ellingwood Model Colony History Room, Ontario City Library.

Acquisitions Information

This collection was donated to the Model Colony Room over a period of years from 1976 to 1989 by the Engineering Management of the General Electric Iron Plant in Ontario. Bryce A. Denton, GE engineer and historian, coordinated the original donation and augmented it with yearly contributions from 1980-1989.

Processing Information

Luz Graue, Joanne Boyajian

Container List

Box 1

Folder

- 1 Selection of early photos and a 1919 photo album with Factory Layout from the P.H. Vanden Berg Collection.
- 2 Letter from W. H. Tangeman (Sep. 5, 1947) that came with Old Photograph Prints of Iron Manufacture sent from Bridgeport c. 1918.
- 3 Original envelope for contents of Folder 2.
- 4 Photographs-views of Ontario Plant and Clubhouse (1920's)
- 5 1931 album with 5 photographs donated by Bryce Denton
- 6 Ontario Plant Open House photos – June 8, 1939
- 7 Machinery and inside of Plant photos
- 8 Aerial Views of Ontario Plant
- 9 Machinery and inside of Plant photos
- 10 Flow Line Charts – 1934
- 11 Photos-assembly; appliances; inside of plant
- 12 Employees
- 13 Photos-1934-36; 1938-39
- 14 Machinery – 1940's
- 15 Machinery
- 16 Machinery – c1953
- 17 Salesmen's Convention – 1941
- 18 Negatives-Festivities of the making of the 20 millionth iron -1941
- 19 War Products
- 20 Ontario Plant Victory Bond Caravan – 1943
- 21 Engineering Dept. group photo – 1948
- 22 Machinery and Assembly room photos – 1949-55
- 23 Stockholder's meeting – May 27, 1950
- 24 GE plant and employees – c1950's; photos and negatives
- 25 Photos-"manufacture of flatirons"
- 26 Early day irons and sewing machine!
- 27 Irons – photos 1935-36
- 28 Revised Moderne Flatiron – 1938
- 29 Irons See also Box 2 folders 19-29
- 30 More photos of Irons plus an index of photos and other materials Found in the Blueprint Room cabinet Aug. 27, 1954

- 31 Hoover Steam Iron Soleplates-photos and negatives
- 32 Close Presser
- 33 Negatives-Foundry View; Earl H. Richardson-1925; Harry Strunk – 1902; Earl Richardson’s original crew-1904; GE irons
- 34 Negatives-First electric iron made by Harry Strunk; new iron-1929
- 35 Negatives – 1924-1935
- 36 Negatives – 1925-1932
- 37 Negatives – 1933
- 38 Negatives of prints taken in Philadelphia Plant-April 1939
- 39 Negatives of Irons – May 26, 1939
- 40 Negatives for Open House edition of Go Getter – June 1, 1939
- 41 Negatives – Skeleton Outline of Ingersol – c1930’s
- 42 Negatives – 1941 Tumblast Girls Foundry
- 43 Negatives – Calrod loading machine
- 44 Negatives & photos – “S” Switch Reddington
- 45 Negatives too large for card file
- 46 Xerox copies of photos taken from this collection and put into Model Colony Photo Collection

Box 2

Folder - Negatives

- 1 Cannery Bldg. and Mr. Shrene
- 2 1934
- 3 1935
- 4 1936
- 5 1937
- 6 1938
- 7 1939
- 8 1940-1941
- 9 20 Millionth Iron – 1941
- 10 Misc.
- 11 Cost Reduction – Ontario Plant – 1952
- 12 Booklet, “How Hotpoint Got its Name”
- 13 GE; Ontario Works; Electric Iron; Electric Heater
- 14 Photos and negatives-#28 Mr. Riddington Machines
- 15 Employees
- 16 Photo album-photos taken in Jan.-Feb. 1982 just before plant closure on Feb. 26, 1982
- 17 Misc. Photographs:
 - Hotpoint Baseball team-Ontario champs 1927

Cheesecake ladies with stoves

Eisenhower, Nixon, Reagan at 50 millionth iron celebration-
1956

- 18 Photos of machinery with index (found in bottom of blueprint drawer)
 - 19 Iron by Elda (German) – 1948
 - 20 Early Steam Iron – May 14, 1941
 - 21 Dry iron – never produced – 1946
 - 22 Steam irons F20 and F30 – c 1946
 - 23 Dry iron F12 and F22 – c 1946
 - 24 Dry Iron F23 – the most ever made-5,000,000 – c1947
 - 25 Dry Iron F27 –never produced – c1947
 - 26 Steam Iron F30 – c1947
 - 27 Iron F26 – never produced – 1948
 - 28 Dry Iron-redesigned F23 – Jan. 1950
 - 29 Travel iron AC-DC – Jan. 1950
 - 30 3 oversized aerial photos – 1966 and 1969
- Four slide boxes containing photos of GE employees
One metal slide box containing GE slides

Box 3

Folder

- 1-12 Photos of appliances, aviation cold weather gear from 1918-1925
With index of photos in Folder 1
- 13 Two 78 rpm records and copy of cover: "Talk by C. E. Wilson, June 1, 1940"
- 14 Two 16mm films: one untitled, one titled "The Wide Body Jet Sound Quiet" donated by Russ Myers, Feb. 2, 1993
- 15 Negatives for Defense pictures #66-67; 115-176 stored in a GE Heating Pad box.
- 16 Two boxes (3 ¾ x 3 ½) with 30 prints and negatives of "para pack rack"
- 17 Three boxes lantern slide plates: 2 boxes of caricatures of GE Management c. 1930's, 1 box Financial & Production graphs of the Ontario Plant and one aerial view 1932-1935
- 18 Negatives on 2 black notebooks.

Box 4

Folder

- 1 Hotpoint History Photo Album in brown leather written to Commemorate the 25th anniversary, 1904-1929
- 2 Negatives used in producing History Photo Album Feb. 9, 1945
- 3 Hotpoint Photos c 1940's-first photos in book
- 4 Building views
- 5 Engineering
- 6 Foundry
- 7 Calrod
- 8 Machine Shop
- 9 Press
- 10 Finish
- 11 Cold Mold
- 12 Handle
- 13 Iron Assembly
- 14 Heating Pad Assembly
- 15 Switch
- 16 Warehouse
- 17 War Project
- 18 Photos taken from an album of the GE Stockholder's Meeting May 27, 1950 – the only one ever held at Ontario's plant
- 19 Black binder, "Description of Facilities and Operations Used In the Manufacture of Flatirons" by A. L. Palmer and R. D. Pollock Ontario Works, General Electric Company April 5, 1951
- 20 Engineer's Memos -1943 Defense Jobs.
- 21 Engineering Memos – 1947 (original binder behind folder)
- 22 Engineering Memos – 1948, 1949 (original binder behind folder)
- 23 Engineering memos – 1950-1952 (original binder behind folder)

Box 5

Folder

- 1 Xerox copy of photo album showing original order of prints And how album was put together. V. 1, index and prints 1-89, 1943-1948
- 2 Photos – V. 1 index and prints 1-89, 1943-1948

- 3 Xerox copy of album V. II index and prints 90-141, 1947-1949
- 4 Photos – V. II index and prints 90-141, 1947-1949
- 5 Xerox copy of album V. I “Description of Facilities and Operations
Used in the Manufacture of Flatirons” (Palmer & Pollock)
- 6 Photos V. I of Folder 5
- 7 Xerox copy of album V. II “Description of Facilities and Operations
Used in the manufacture of Flatirons” (Palmer & Pollock)
- 8 Photos Vol. II of Folder 7
- Folders 9-41 Photos taken out of 1949 maroon Photograph album containing
Photos of machinery, iron parts, signs, iron making, workers, parts,
Works entrance, calrod section, assembly line, employees working
And index.
- 42 General Electric patents. 1938-1962
- 43 General Electric patents. 1951-1963
- 44 General Electric patents. 1961-1974
- 45 In Memory of Bryan Spencer
- 46 Calculations for GE plant expansion July 1955
- 47 GE color drift control-appliance green and yellow Feb. 1955
- 48 Business cards-P.H. Vanden Berg and Bryce Denton
- 49 Flyer for Hotpoint Exhibit at Ontario Museum of History June 1984
- 50 GE mailing folder
- 51 Appliance records 1930-1940
- 52 “Reminiscences of the Early Life of E.H. Richardson” by Una
Richardson Winter
- 53 Hotel & Bakery Division Bulletin introducing waffle iron June 1925
- 54 Misc. tags-blank
- 55 Copy of Articles of Incorporation for Edison Electric Appliance
Company, Inc. , Nov. 1917. Donated by Bryce Denton Sept. 30, 1976

Box 6

1. Copy of the book prepared for the Historical Dept. of the Huntington
Library entitled “Historical Manuscript Dealing with a Southern
California Enterprise and its Founder Earl H. Richardson”. Book
prepared in 1944 and presented to the Ontario Works of the GE
Company by the Ontario Quarter Century Club on Feb. 23, 1945.
2. Scrapbook of E. H. Richardson and Hotpoint – prepared by his sister,
Una Winter of Upland in 1942.

Box 7 - Index cards with Employees' Photographs

Box 8 - Negatives from file Drawer labeled "negatives 1-600". Box contains #'s 1-350

Box 9 - Negatives from File drawer labeled "Negatives 1-600". Box contains #'s 351-664. And 6 color negs of the plant from Bryce Denton.

Box 10 - Engineer's Instructions – original notebook and 1 folder: 1919-1927.
Folder contains Engineering Instructions 1-151 with indexing and filing Instructions
Engineer's Memos – 7 original notebooks: 1930; 1934; 1935; 1939; 1940; 1941; 1942.

Box 11

Folder

- 1 Edison Electric Appliance Co. Inc. – Material Specifications #1-174, 1927-1931 with index.
- 2 Edison Electric Appliance Co. Inc. – Standards – Book #21, 1927-1932 With index.
- 3 Edison Electric Appliance Co. Inc. – Process Specifications – Book #17 1927-1938 with index.
- 4 Notebook of Descriptions and parts of irons including changes, 1934-1950.
- 5 Notebook of "Obsolete Irons" – 1946-1954. Descriptions and parts of Irons including changes.
- 6 Notebook – "Process Specifications" (Inactive)

Box 12

Folder

- 1 Original "Hotpoints" Pacific Electric Heating Co. Newsletters. Sept. 1908-July 1912. (incomplete)
- 2-4 Xeroxed copies of "Hotpoints" 1908-1912 (incomplete)
- 5-6 "El Amigo" Newsletters by Hotpoint Electric Heating Co. March 1916-Aug. 1919 (incomplete). 2 sets of originals donated by Bryce Denton.
- 7 Xeroxed copies of "El Amigo" March 1916-Aug. 1919 (incomplete) Donated by Bryce Denton.
- 8 Jet Times – 1967 - one issue

- 9 GE Employee Communicator - 1971 bound (36 issues); 1972 1 issue
- 10 GE Employee Communicator – 1974-75 (8 issues)
- 11 GE Employee Communicator – 1976-77 (41 issues)
- 12 GE Employee Communicator – Jan. 1978-Nov 1979 (69 issues)
- 13 GE Employee Communicator – 1980-1982 (41 issues)
- 14 GE Employee Communicator – 1974-1978, duplicates (14 issues)
- 15 “News Notes for Pensioners” – June 1976 and March 1978
- 16-25 Ten folders of Hotpoint appliances, parts, pricing information: 1917; 1923-1979 (some years missing)

Box 13

Newsletters – “The General Electric News”. Each year bound – 1943-1953.
2 copies – 1945; 2 copies – 1951; Missing 1948; 1952.

Box 14

Newsletters – “The General Electric News” and “Monogram” Magazines
The GE News – each year bound – 1954-1972. 1961-62 and 1967-69 are missing.
Monograms – 1976-1982. Bi-monthly (33 issues) 3 issues of Mar/Apr 1978.
All donated by Bryce Denton.

Box 15

General Electric “Candid Camera Captures” newsletters – 1939-1951 (12 issues)
General Electric “Gogetter” newsletters – May 1938-Dec. 1942 (21 issues and 6 duplicate issues)
Scrapbook – newspaper clippings – 1949-50
Scrapbook – newspaper clippings – 1950-51

**clippings scrapbooks MISSING – 1943-49 and 1952-53-were in Box 22
all of (former) Box 23 MISSING-Gamma Epsilon Club 3 scrapbooks
1946-52, 1952-61 and 1960-64**

Box 16

Scrapbook – Army-Navy “E” award for defense work. Jan. 1943

Box 17

Catalogs – Original Binders

- 1 1925-1929: contains price lists, regular catalogs, retail sales handbook for electric water heaters; specifications; Several pages of small pamphlets glued on notebook paper; service manuals; supply parts catalog.
- 2 1928-1931: contains regular catalogs; supply parts catalogs; service catalogs.
- 3 1928-1931: Hotpoint Supply Parts Catalog
- 4 1928-1931: Service and parts catalog

Box 18

Folder – Correspondence, advertising, Hotpoint signs, instruction booklets

- 1 Letters concerning the buying of new property – 1906
- 2 Collection of Correspondence re: the transfer-original folder – no papers
- 3 Early Business Correspondence – 1925-1935
- 4 Open House Invitations – June 8, 1939
- 5 Hotpoint signs for the “El” line: El Perco, El Chafo, El Teballo, etc.
- 6 Early advertising
- 7 GE appliance instruction booklets
- 8 Misc. early booklets including the “Cooking Jug” (1929 crock-pot)
- 9 “Utility model of the Hotpoint Iron”
- 10 Booklet – “A letter to the Boss” – 1949 to William H. Tangeman
- 11 Softback books-3 copies-“An Industrial Adventure” – 1951
- 12 Iron Description Book (removed from original notebook)
- 13 “The Sourcebook” (facts & figures about General Electric) – 1949
- 14 Booklets – GE 100 (1878-1978); GE in the West-1968; GE and the West-1968; “What to do about Communism in Unions” 1952
- 15 Papers and articles: “Ontario Heating Device-Historical Data” – 1957
“Mission Accomplished” – 1951
“An Automatic Electric Flatiron with Controlled Steam” – 1949
“Dry and Steam Irons”
- 16 Housewares Division checklist for reliability evaluation
- 17 Graphs of units (irons) and value in millions of dollars
- 18 1972 GE production tour

- 19 GE Iron production summary – 1928-1982 at Ontario Plant
- 20 Ontario Plant Organization – 1966 and 1968
- 21 Ontario Office Personnel List – Nov. 2, 1982
- 22 [News of] Iron Plant Employee Job Center
- 23 Ontario Salaried Organization; 1975, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1982
- 24 GE Employee Benefits plan Document – Jan. 1, 1977
- 25 Resolutions celebrating 100 millionth iron – 1968
- 26 Newspaper articles on GE strike – 1960
- 27 “Operation Upturn” – 1958
- 28 UE 1012 Newsletters 1959 and 1960 on strike/negotiations
- 29 GE vs. United Electrical Workers Motion for Dissolution of Preliminary Injunction – Oct. 1969
- 30 History of Hotpoint (Earl H. Richardson) typed transcript and revision
- 31 Manuscript (first draft) of the History of Hotpoint
- 32 Original envelope with notes of Elsberry folder
- 33 Copy of “Early Ontario and G.E. – Hotpoint”
- 34 “Electricity in 1895, Retrospect and Prospect” by Thomas Commerford Martin. Jan. 1896
- 35 Adelanto
- 36 Hotpoint article. Daily Report articles 1920 and 1931
- 37 Patents
- 38 Patents continued
- 39 Patents continued
- 40 Extra patents
- 41 Advertisements and notes
- 42 List of old GE irons. Travel irons, early Hotpoint irons, model letter, Ontario serial numbers
- 43 Reprint from “Works News” 1945-46 appearing in 1970 “GE News”. Also a GE history brochure covering 1904-1927.
- 44 “Bill Raisers” (campaign materials to induce housewives to buy electric products even though it raised their electric bills)
- 45 Advertisements for the Pacific Electric Heating Company circa 1911
- 46 Hotpoint/GE “print index” June 1949-Jan 1955
- 47 “the Product History, Development, and General Characteristics of the Ontario Engineering Section”
- 48 Flatiron production statistics 1980-1982
- 49 Explanation of Cataloging System and description of models and years of production

- 50 Old Iron parts lists
- 51 Typed introduction for a book of photographs taken between 1919-1925 at the GE flatiron plant Ontario
- 52 A. L. Palmer letter to W. H. Demler, Dec. 23, 1953 [transparencies are somewhere in the Compact Storage room]
- 53 Floor plan for house at 556 E. "E" St. Ontario drawn by E.T. Casler, Mr. Denton's uncle by marriage and foreman of Hotpoint's toolroom from 1909-1918.
- 54 Ontario Record typed copies of headlines from 1907 and one from the Ontario Observer Feb. 17, 1900
- 55 Kiwanis "Legion of Honor" certificated presented to Bryce Denton undated.
- 56 Misc. letters and articles
- 57 Loose Papers undated and papers concerning clean-up of GE property After the plant closed.

Small box containing 8mm film of award presented to A. C. Sanger, sister of H. P. Richardson

Box 19

Folder – Mechanical Drawings

- 1 Iron parts, Carton Boxes, Cords, Labels – 1907-1940
- 2 Mechanical Drawing of Machinery Parts – 1949-1951
- 3 Parapack Specification Sheet Abbreviations
- 4 Schedules – 1923-1924
- 5 Calrod Winding Specification Sheet – 1931
- 6 Mechanical Drawings of Iron Parts: heating Unit Assembly; Disc Stove Assembly; Cords, Plugs and Cartons – 1931
- 7 Mechanical Drawings of Iron Parts – 1905-1952
- 8 Bills of Material – 1909-1916

Box 20

Folder – Mechanical Drawings

- 1 Iron Parts – Ontario – 1937-39
- 2 Iron Parts and carton – Bridgeport – 1933-1938
- 3 U-spring – 1931-1932
- 4 Iron Parts – 1921-1931

- 5 Iron Parts – 1905-1915
- 6 Irons – 1923-1927

Box 21

Folder – Mechanical Drawings

- 1 Steam Brush – 1955
- 2 Tank Heater – 1959
- 3 Safety Fill Valve for F60 Iron – 1957
- 4 F61 Valve & Cam – 1957, 1958
- 5 Revised F43 Thermostat – 1955-1957
- 6 Misc. – 1955

Box 22

Folder – Mechanical Drawings

- 1 Cost Steam Iron – 1964
- 2 Thermostat with Horizontal Movement - 1964
- 3 Proposed 2 added angle drilled holes – 1965
- 4 Pressure Control Valve
- 5 Push Button Thermostat – 1958
- 6 OW-650-10v (6001) Low Cost Steam Iron – 1962, 1964
- 7 Low Cost F70 Steam Iron - 1962
- 8 Low Cost Manual Spray Iron – 1964
- 9 Misc. Improvements, Revisions – 1964
- 10 Manual Spray Iron – 1962
- 11 Spray Iron-Deeper Tank-Lower Thermostat – 1963
- 12 Wrinkle Light/O.W. 650-9l & OW 650-9M – 1961-1963
- 13 Low Cost Sprayer & Spray Iron – 1963

Box 23

Folder – Mechanical Drawings

- 1 F101 Spray Iron – 1962-1963
- 2 Simplified Spray Iron – 1961
- 3 Manual spray Iron (Diaphragm type) – 1963-1964
- 4 F70 Wet Steam Iron #5 – 1956
- 5 F70 Wet Steam Iron #1,2,3 – 1956
- 6 F71 Spray Iron Prelim – 1956-1959

7 F70 Wet Steam Iron #4 – 1955-1957

Box 24

Folder – Mechanical Drawings

- 1 Iron & Kitchen Drawings – 1950-1951
- 2 Iron Drawings – 1940-1942
- 3 Pressure Cooker, Percolator Styling Sketches – 1944
- 4 Hotplate Styling Sketches – 1942-1943
- 5 Steam Iron Styling Sketches – 1944-1948
- 6 Flatiron Styling Sketches – 1943-1947
- 7 Iron Drawings – 1947-1949

Box 25

Folder – Engineering Dept. Standard parts List – 1921-1931

- 1 Immersion Heater; Curling Iron; Soldering Irons; Mica Washers; Disc Stoves; Cord and Plug
- 2 “Engineering Records, A Brief Explanation of What They are and How They are Used.

Box 26 – Guests and Callers at the Hotpoint/GE Plant – 1912-1914

Box 27 – Folder 1 – Drawing of Hotpoint Electric Co. – 1913

Folder 2 – Aerial photograph of Hotpoint Plant

Box 28 - Oversized scrapbook circa 1911 of ads for Hotpoint products (El Tosto Etc.)

Box 29 - Mechanical Drawings and Part Records – 31 folders of drawings of Parts, irons, nameplates for appliances and process specifications – 1905-1938

Box 30 - Misc. items:

1. Charles Albert Coffin Award presented to Bryce Denton
In 1977 “for outstanding initiative and effort contributing to the progress of the company”. Coffin was the first president of GE in 1894. 12 employees are selected annually for this honor.
2. Wooden binder, “GE Quarter Century Club Album”, no pages
3. 20 glass slides of plant/production
4. 16mm film, “GE Ontario Works Training Film”
5. Wooden paddle “Christmas Greetings 1929” signed by employees and bunnies on the reverse

Box 31 - 6 folders of Print Requisitions-1962-1966-some sheets reproduced