Guide to the DuPont Nylon Collection

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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Creator: DuPont (E. I.) de Nemours & Company.
Title: DuPont Nylon Collection
Dates: 1939-1977
Quantity: 1 cubic foot, 4 boxes
Abstract: Promotional booklets and pamphlets, 1940-1963, regarding nylon; catalogues on the industrial use of nylon; 25th anniversary book on nylon; photographs, and a variety of other documents. Includes memo to DuPont employees concerning the company’s wartime involvement in the development of the atomic bomb.
Language: Collection text is in English.

Administrative Information

Provenance Information
Transferred from the Division of Physical Sciences (now the Division of Medicine and Science) on April 5, 1983.

Processing Information

Preferred Citation

Restrictions on Access
The collection is open for research.

Ownership & Literary Rights
Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning intellectual property rights. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Biographical Note
The E.I. DuPont De Nemours and Company was founded on July 19, 1802, by Eleuthere Irenee DuPont on Brandywine Creek for the purpose of manufacturing gunpowder. In 1804 the first DuPont powder went
on public sale. In 1902 a new corporation was formed by three great grandsons of the founder, to more effectively compete with the changing technical field and the expanding scale and complexity of business.

During the twentieth century the corporation moved into the research and manufacture of thousands of products and processes, and consequently developed and expanded within many markets. Synthetic fibers is one of a family of products of the Du Pont Corporation. In 1930, Dr. Wallace H. Carothers, working with Dr. J.W. Hill in Du Pont's Fundamental Research Laboratory at Wilmington, produced the first synthetic fiber forming "superpolymer." This was the forerunner of nylon.

In 1938, the development of nylon was announced. It's first use was in brush bristles. Hosiery filaments were developed in 1939, and offered commercially in 1940. In 1941, nylon was applied to the molding industry. From 1942 to 1944, nylon production was allocated completely to war uses. The best known outgrowth of the company's research progress, nylon is one of the most important developments in Du Pont's long history. It was the result of the chemical industry's first large scale fundamental research program. And it proved to be the first of a whole family of synthetics for consumer consumption. The product was bought into commercial production at a new plant in Seaford, Delaware.

No other major chemical development had the spontaneous reception accorded to nylon. It not only changed the hosiery market but was soon developed into a multiplicity of textile applications including: tooth brushes, hair brushes, household brushes, tennis racquet strings, catheters, surgical sutures, fishing leader material, musical strings, wire insulation, self lubricating bearings for machinery, umbrellas, undergarments, shower curtains, parachutes, and rope.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of promotional booklets and pamphlets, 1940-1963, regarding nylon; catalogues on the industrial use of nylon; a 25th anniversary book on nylon; World War II Christmas card of the Nylon Division of Du Pont; pamphlets describing the wartime uses of nylon; technical reprints, a cartoon and a plant magazine about the Martinsville, Virginia nylon plant, 1941-1946; an employee handbook, Dupont Nylon Division, circa 1940; newscloppings and historical material for the Chattanooga plant, 1948; news clippings, initial production orders for nylon and typescript on uses and manufacture of nylon at Seaford plant, 1939-1947; publications concerning Delrin Acetal Resins; and photographs of machines for making nylon plastics of the Washington Works, 1947, with a letter from 1977 explaining this material.

Arrangement

Collection materials are divided into three series.

**Series 1: Nylon Production, 1939-1948**

Subseries 1.1: Seaford, Delaware Plant, 1939-1940

Subseries 1.2: Martinsville, Virginia, 1941-1946

Subseries 1.3: Chattanooga, Tennessee Plant, 1948

Subseries 1.4: Nylon in War, circa 1942-1945

Subseries 1.5: Photographs, 1940-1977
Series 2: Publications, 1940-1963

Subseries 2.1: DuPont Public Relations Department, 1940-1963


Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:
  Chemistry
  Electric insulators and insulation--Nylon
  Gunpowder
  Nylon
  Textile fibers, Synthetic
  World War, 1939-1945--Economic & industrial aspects--United States

Types of Materials:
  Bulletins
  Clippings--20th century
  Memorandums
  Photographs--20th century

Names:
  DuPont, Eleuthere Irenee
Container Listing

Series 1: Nylon Production, 1939-1977 (bulk 1939-1948)

Subseries 1.1: Seaford, Delaware Plant, 1939-1940

Box 1, Folder 1  Supplement to *The Star*, Wilmington, Delaware, re: DuPont's new nylon plant at Seaford, 1939 December 10
Box 1, Folder 2  Front section of *The Star*, Wilmington, Delaware, "Nylon Production Starts at New Seaford Plant Friday." 1939 December 10
Box 1, Folder 3  Typescript, "The Uses and Manufacture of Nylon" undated
Box 1, Folder 4  Summary Sheet, Nylon Yarn Manufacturing Code No. 1001, 1939 December 27
Box 1, Folder 5  "Employees Handbook, Nylon Division", for DuPont's Seaford, Delaware plant, 1940
Box 1, Folder 6  "Production Order No. 1" for nylon yarn produced at Seaford, Delaware, 1939 December 6

Subseries 1.2: Martinsville, Virginia Plant, 1941-1946

Box 1, Folder 7  Cartoon, "Our Boardinghouse," illustrates use of phrase "hotter'n a crate of hijacked nylons." 1945 May 23
Box 1, Folder 8  *Martinsville Daily Bulletin* DuPont's new nylon plant in Martinsville, Virginia, 1941 November 3
Box 1, Folder 9  Clipping from *Martinsville Daily Bulletin*, photo of 30,000 women lined up to buy nylons in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1946 June 15
Box 1, Folder 10  Front section of *Martinsville Daily Bulletin*, DuPont's plans to double size of Martinsville plant, 1944 February 29
Box 1, Folder 11  "The Blender," published by and for DuPont employees of Martinsville, Virginia plant. Anniversary issue, 1942 November

Subseries 1.3: Chattanooga, Tennessee Plant, 1948

Box 1, Folder 12  Front section of Chattanooga Daily Times, opening of DuPont's third nylon plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1948 July 14
Box 1, Folder 13  Front section of Chattanooga *News Free Press* opening of DuPont's new nylon plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1948 July 13

Box 1, Folder 14  Pamphlet, "DuPont in Tennessee 1916-1948" Short history of DuPont's two Tennessee plants, in Old Hickory and Chattanooga, 1948

Box 1, Folder 15  Typescript, "Plant Visitation" talk used on tour of DuPont's Chattanooga, Tennessee nylon plant, 1948 November 11

Box 1, Folder 16  Typescript, "Outline of History and Organization, DuPont Company, Rayon Department, Nylon Division, Chattanooga Plant" 1948 March 22 to 1948 April 30

Subseries 1.4: Nylon in War, circa 1942-1945

Box 1, Folder 17  Memo from Nylon Division of Martinsville, Va. plant, souvenir piece of nylon "flak" fabric, 1945 July 20

Box 1, Folder 18  Program for ceremony presenting Army-Navy production Award to DuPont's Martinsville, Virginia plant, 1942 December 3

Box 1, Folder 19  Memo to employees of Martinsville, Virginia, plant re: uses of current nylon production, 1945 January 1

Box 1, Folder 20  Memo from Nylon Division of Martinsville, Virginia plant, souvenir piece of nylon poncho fabric, 1945 April 9

Box 1, Folder 21  Plant War Effort Bulletin No. 96, Martinsville, Virginia, souvenir nylon shoe laces, 1944 July 18

Box 1, Folder 22  Memo from DuPont's Executive Offices to all employees, re: DuPont's connection with development of atomic bomb., 1945 August 24

Box 1, Folder 23  Typescript, "Nylon in the War" prepared to accompany display of nylon articles in factory Conference Room, 1944 July 10

Box 1, Folder 24  Reprint, re: military uses of nylon, published by War production Drive Committee, undated

Box 1, Folder 25  Christmas card, printed by Nylon Division of DuPont, front illustration is a cartoon., circa 1940s

Subseries 1.5: Photographs, 1940-1977

Box 1, Folder 26  Photographs of nylon plastics machinery and DuPont's Washington Works, ca. 1940. Included is letter from donor, Frank Edlin, dated Feb. 3, 1977, explaining the photos.
Series 2: Publications, 1940-1963

Subseries 2.1: Dupont Public Relations Department

Box 2, Folder 1  "DuPont Nylon Molding Powder" published by DuPont's Polychemicals Department. Catalog of industrial uses for nylon molding powder., 1952

Box 2, Folder 2  DuPont Nylon Molding Powder" published by DuPont's Plastics Department. Catalog of industrial uses for nylon molding powder., 1948

Box 2, Folder 3  Booklet, "The Story of Nylon" written by Cooper, Wells & Co. through the cooperation of DuPont., 1941

Box 2, Folder 4  Booklet "Nylon Textile Fibers in Industry" published by Dupont, 1947

Box 2, Folder 5  Booklet, "Nylon - The First 25 Years" published by Dupont, 1963

Box 2, Folder 6  Booklet, "About DuPont Nylon", published by Nylon Division, Rayon Dept. of DuPont, 1946

Box 2, Folder 7  Booklet, "Basic nylon information for the people who tell the public," published by Nylon Division of Dupont, 1945

Box 2, Folder 8  "The DuPont Magazine", 140th anniversary issue, 1942 August to 1942 October

Box 2, Folder 9  Booklet, "Nylon -- Versatile product of Dupont Chemistry," published by DuPont, 1941

Box 2, Folder 10 Typescript, questions and answers about nylon, 1940 January 17

Box 2, Folder 11 Booklet, "20,000 People Tell Us - Nylon Gives You Something Extra." Published by Nylon Division of DuPont, undated

Box 3, Folder 12 Book, "25 Years of Nylon", published by Textile Fibers Department of DuPont, 1952

Box 3, Folder 13 Catalog, "Antron, a new kind of nylon from DuPont," published by Textile Fibers Department of DuPont, 1963

Subseries 2.2: Technical reprints, news clippings and magazine articles about nylon

Box 2, Folder 14  Reprint from Industrial and Engineering Chemistry, "Development of Nylon" by E.K. Bolton., 1942 January

Box 2, Folder 15  Clipping, from Greensboro, North Carolina newspaper, article about sale of nylon hose., circa 1945

Box 2, Folder 16  Reprint from Textile World "Nylon -- a Triumph of Research" by Don Wharton., 1940 January
Box 2, Folder 17  Typescript, excerpts from NBC News radio broadcast by Robert St. John, re: Wallace Carothers and a story about a WWII paratrooper., 1944 December 22
Box 2, Folder 18  Reprint, Chemical Engineering News "Synthetic Fibers"1941 June 25
Box 2, Folder 19  Clipping, from unknown magazine, nylon scarcity during World War II, undated
Box 2, Folder 20  Reprint from Industrial Engineering, Chemistry, "Nylon as a Textile Fiber" by G.P. Hoff., 1940 December
Box 3, Folder 21  Front section of the Greensboro Record, July 8, 1944, article "Nylon Queen Has Time of Young Life."
Box 3, Folder 22  Colliers, "Sheer Magic" about DuPont's Seaford, Delaware nylon plant., 1940 April 13
Box 3, Folder 23  Fortune, "Nylon and 50,000 Mad Women" and "Nylon -- It challenges silk's last stronghold and brews a textile revolution"1940 July
Series 3: Delrin Acetal Resin, 1957-1962

Box 4, Folder 1  Acetal Resins" by Russell B. Atkin, Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1962

Box 4, Folder 2  Design Digest Bearings of Delrin acetal resin" Published by the Polychemicals Department of DuPont Co., 1960 February

Box 4, Folder 3  Delrin acetal resin published by the Polychemicals Department of DuPont Co., 1957 June