

## The Electronics Corporation of America Collection

Cambridge Historical Commission  
831 Massachusetts Ave.  
Cambridge, MA 02139

**Collection ID:** CHC006

**Dates:** 1953-1986

**Extent:** ½ linear foot, 2 oversize boxes

**Access:** Collection is available for research: CHC rules of use apply

**Prepared by:** Jillian Silverberg, 2013, updated by Meta Partenheimer February 2017

**Acquisition:** Date: September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013

**Donated by:** Miriam Wallie

### Provenance

Miriam Wallie, former employee of the Electronics Corporation of America, donated the collection to the Cambridge Historical Commission September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

### Historical Sketch

In 1936, Boston University alumni and former professor of engineering, Arthur Metcalf, founded the Electronics Corporation of America. Stemming from his interest in aeronautical engineering, Metcalf sought to create a company that focused on serving two basic industrial markets. The first ECA market was focused on the continuous requirement for power, reflecting the continual occurrence of industrial expansion. The second ECA market was concerned with the expansion, modernization, and automation of production facilities on a worldwide basis. Additionally, the ECA also featured a Military and Aerospace division, one that performed research and technological development for America's military and space programs. Although very successful throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the Military and Aerospace division of the ECA was discontinued by 1974.

While the ECA originated in Waltham, in 1955, the company establishing new research headquarters on One Memorial Drive in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in a building that had been a warehouse owned by Filene's, an American department store.

Alongside its new headquarters in Cambridge, in the early 1950s, the ECA operated in six other locations within the Cambridge-Boston area and had additional sale offices in major cities throughout the country. Between the remainder of the 1950s through the 1980s, the ECA continued to grow as a corporation. Its Fireye burner management systems were used to monitor and supervise large-scale power stations and industrial boilers. Another product produced by the ECA that proved to be successful was its PHOTOSWITCH line of electronic and photo-electronic controls,

which provided automation for multiple industrial processes and manufacturing activities.

Somewhat of a recluse, Metcalf stayed out of the public spotlight, though he maintained an active relationship with Boston University, becoming Chairman of the Board of Trustees in 1978. In 1986 the ECA was purchased by and become a division of Rockwell International Corporation. That same year, Metcalf was honored by BU with the opening of Metcalf Center for Science and Engineering. Metcalf passed away in 1997.

Related Resources: Cambridge Historical Commission Address Folder: photographs of the building, One Memorial Drive.

### Scope and Content

The collection is composed of annual reports and other documents from 1953-1986, all related to the Electronics Corporation of America. Contents include annual reports detailing a yearly overview of sales and earnings, while also featuring articles discussing the development of new technologies and ECA products. Other contents featured within the collection include photographs, financial records, newspaper clippings, a number of advertising objects, and information related to the declaration of the Metcalf Center at Boston University.

### Box 1

#### Series One: Annual Reports 1954-1979

##### *Folder 1*

|               |      |
|---------------|------|
| Annual Report | 1954 |
| Annual Report | 1955 |
| Annual Report | 1956 |
| Annual Report | 1957 |
| Annual Report | 1958 |
| Annual Report | 1959 |

##### *Folder 2*

|               |      |
|---------------|------|
| Annual Report | 1960 |
| Annual Report | 1961 |
| Annual Report | 1962 |
| Annual Report | 1963 |
| Annual Report | 1964 |

##### *Folder 3*

|               |      |
|---------------|------|
| Annual Report | 1965 |
| Annual Report | 1966 |
| Annual Report | 1967 |
| Annual Report | 1968 |
| Annual Report | 1969 |

*Folder 4*

|               |      |
|---------------|------|
| Annual Report | 1970 |
| Annual Report | 1971 |
| Annual Report | 1972 |
| Annual Report | 1973 |
| Annual Report | 1974 |

*Folder 5*

|               |      |
|---------------|------|
| Annual Report | 1975 |
| Annual Report | 1976 |
| Annual Report | 1977 |
| Annual Report | 1978 |
| Annual Report | 1979 |

*Folder 6*

|               |      |
|---------------|------|
| Annual Report | 1980 |
| Annual Report | 1981 |
| Annual Report | 1982 |
| Annual Report | 1983 |
| Annual Report | 1984 |
| Annual Report | 1985 |

*Box 2*

Series Two: Assorted Company Documents

*Folder 1*

|                      |            |
|----------------------|------------|
| Arthur G. B. Metcalf | 1964, 1984 |
|----------------------|------------|

*Folder 2*

|                          |      |
|--------------------------|------|
| Monthly Corporate Report | 1975 |
|--------------------------|------|

*Folder 3*

|                              |      |
|------------------------------|------|
| Photoswitch Products Catalog | 1977 |
|------------------------------|------|

*Folder 4*

|                     |           |
|---------------------|-----------|
| ECA Company notices | 1972-1986 |
|---------------------|-----------|

*Folder 5*

|                               |            |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| Group Insurance Plan Booklets | 1980, 1982 |
|-------------------------------|------------|

Series Three: Photographs of 77 Broadway, corner of 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Cambridge MA

*Folder 1*

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| Photograph #1: Exterior, back-view                     | 1950s, undated |
| Photograph #2: Exterior, front and side from the right | 1950s, undated |
| Photograph #3: Exterior, front and side from the left  | 1950s, undated |

Series Four: Related Materials Related to the ECA

*Folder 1*

|                         |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| Newspaper articles: ECA | 1955, 1980-86 |
|-------------------------|---------------|

*Folder 2*

|                           |      |
|---------------------------|------|
| Metcalf Center Dedication | 1986 |
|---------------------------|------|

Series Five: ECA Advertising Objects (Photograph copies)

Photograph 1: Ashtray  
Photograph 2: ECA pins  
Photograph 3: ECA/Photoswitch Park Avenue pocket knives (closed)  
Photograph 4: ECA/Photoswitch Park Avenue pocket knives (open)  
Photograph 5: ECA Sheaffer pens in cases  
Photograph 6: ECA pocket knives with case  
Photograph 7: Photoswitch/ECA potato peeler with box (upright)  
Photograph 8: Photoswitch/ECA potato peeler with box (side view)

Box 3

ECA pins  
ECA/Photoswitch Park Avenue pocket knives  
ECA/ Sheaffer pens  
ECA/pocket knives with case  
Photoswitch/ECA potato peeler with box

Box 4

Series Five: ECA Advertising Objects

Ashtray

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<http://www.cambridgema.gov/historic/researchaids/archivalcollections>