

Peter Gray Corporation Collection

Cambridge Historical Commission
831 Massachusetts Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dates 1894-1998, 1920s-1966 (bulk)

Extent 15 linear feet

Access Collection is available for research; CHC rules of use apply

Processing and finding aid completed by Molly Alexander, Aurore Eaton, Gavin Kleespies. Finding aid reformatted and updated by Megan Schwenke, January 2013.

Provenance and Collection Description

Michael P. Kinchla of the National Products Corporation gave this collection to the Cambridge Historical Commission in February 1998. The 43 editions of *The Graylite* were gifted to the Commission in October 2012 by Cynthia L. Jones in memory of her grandfather, Peter Gray & Sons company engineer Clarence Kelsea.

The collection is composed of the business records of the Peter Gray Company and Corporation and its subsidiaries from 1894 to 1998: Barbour Stockwell Co., Grayton Industries, Inc., National Products Corporation, and Peerless Manufacturing Corporation. Contents include financial records, patents, and photographs of products, and demonstrate the growth of a small family owned company over the course of a century. Peter Gray Co. was a prominent Cambridge employer, as well as an inventor and manufacturer of a wide variety of products that made important contributions to the railroad, defense, and energy industries.

Historical Sketch

Peter Gray was born in Scotland in 1839. He apprenticed as a sheet metal worker and practiced his trade in London and New Brunswick before arriving in Boston in 1866. In 1878, he founded the Gray & Ripley Company with partner R.A. Ripley, located at 12 Marshall Street in Boston. Gray & Ripley manufactured lanterns, railroad and otherwise, other tinwear as well. By 1900, the company was renamed to Peter Gray & Sons after Gray's son George M. joined the business in 1885, with son Mason H. following in 1894. The company relocated to 88 Union Street in Boston in 1903. Gray died in 1906, and by 1907, two additional sons, James T. and Peter had also joined the company. Peter Gray & Sons, Inc., now incorporated, purchased land at 3rd and Binney Streets in the Kendall Square area of Cambridge that same year, and in 1909 a multi-structure plant was built there. The company continued to make railroad lanterns in addition to a wide variety of sheet metal products for industrial machinery and household appliances; it was the leading manufacturer of stamped metal products for railroad use by the 1920s.

The company, now Peter Gray Corporation, expanded in 1930, and produced specialty stampings for a wide variety of products, including hot water bottles, electric heater parts, tool boxes, traffic signals and safe boxes, serving the diverse industries in Cambridge and Boston. From the early to mid-1960s it participated in the Industrial Readiness Program for the Department of Defense, manufacturing parts for United States Navy Terrier Missiles. At the close of the 1960s, Peter Gray Corporation was known as a sheet metal manufacturer, whose products were utilized in jet aircraft production, atomic energy, and medicine.

By 1983, the company included Peter Gray Corporation, Barbour Stockwell Co., National Products Corp., Amesbury Metal Products Corp., Erikson-Hedlund Stamponic Co., and Scientific Research Corp, and brought in sales of \$3,000,000 per annum in metal stamping work. The company downsized in 1993, and moved operation to Andover, Massachusetts. The Binney Street building in Kendall Square was destroyed to widen the street. Peter Gray Corporation still operates in Andover, but no longer manufactures products for sale under its own name—the company was succeeded by the Tonon Group, Inc. in 1991, and in 1998 it became a subsidiary of the Westwood Corporation.

Subsidiaries of Peter Gray Corporation with Acquisition Dates

Peerless Manufacturing Corporation	1951
National Products Corporation	1957
Barbour Stockwell Company (with 4 subsidiaries)	1959
Blanchard Instrument Company	1923
United Hammer Company	1923
Broadway Iron Foundry	1928
Beaudry & Company	1929
Grayton Corporation	1960

Arrangement Note

The inventory for this collection is very detailed, and arranged alphabetically by company name, with sub-categories. The boxes are arranged per the folder list included below.

Location Note

This collection is stored in both the hallway closet (boxes 1, 2, 3, 8, 9) and the Commission Library (boxes 4-7).

Folder List

Box 1

- History of Peter Gray / Kendall Square
- Peter Gray Corporation – Third & Binney Street property – 1907-1909
- Peter Gray Corporation – Misc. Correspondence – 1946-1998
- Peter Gray Corporation – product info.
- Peter Gray Corporation – appraisals – 1925, 1929, 1937, 1945
- Price List, Stock Items, R.T. (three ring binder)

The Graylite, monthly issues date intermittently from 1919-1924

Bulletins (printed advertising circulars):

- 1 Jennings self-recording test
 - 2 micro slide cabinet
 - 3 platform or stable lantern
 - 6 police bullseye lantern
 - 7 conductor's lantern
 - 8 candy case cooler
 - 10 new part catalogs
 - 11 lift bridge lantern
 - 13 feaster foot accelerator
 - 16 sand hods
 - 17 lantern testing
 - 18 improved top draft for switch and signal lanterns
 - 31 long time burners
 - 33 marker and classification lanterns
 - 34 oil cans – water coolers
 - 35 acet. Sig. And Gray train order, recent lantern specialties
 - 37 bridge, abutment, pole, and pier lantern
 - 38 confectioners line
 - 39 long time chimney burner
 - 40 Williams lantern
 - 41 sheet metal work
 - 42-3 daylight electric signal lantern
 - 42-4 (42-5) junior daylight electric lantern
 - 43 locomotive cab lamps
 - 44 standard tinware
 - 45 electric water gauge lamp
 - 46 fire proof wool containers
 - 47 highway crossing light
 - 48 Corado long time burner
 - 49 Locomotive cab lamps
 - 50 milk inspectors outfit
- sheet metal specialties
metal display stands
humidifier flyers
- American Railroad Association specs on lanterns
AT & T company – specifications
Beck with heater specs
Specs. Boston and Maine Railroad
Western Union specifications
Westinghouse specs., electric and manufacturing co.
Semaphore lantern specs.
New York Central Lines Railroads specifications
New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad Co. specs.
Drawbridge lantern specs.

Box 2

Signal Lights: A collectors reference to railroad signal lamps and highway warning devices by David Dreimiller, 1990. Spiral bound book.

Photographs of displays of products

Photographs of inside of factory

Photographs of outside of factory

Photographs of logos for printing

Numbered photographs (negatives):

 Peter Gray negatives 1-9 (1832)

 Peter Gray negatives 10-19 (1832)

 Peter Gray negatives 20-29 (1832)

 Peter Gray negatives 30-39 (1832)

 Peter Gray negatives 40-49 (1832)

 Peter Gray negatives 50-59 (1832)

Peter Gray negatives not numbered (1832)

Photo orders / spec.

Peter Gray & Sons site plan by Roy R. Burnham. Dated 9/17/20

File cards – Peter Gray & Sons – products

Williams Lantern #2 of 4, for testing color perception

Williams Lantern #3 of 4, for testing color perception

Williams Lantern #4 of 4, for testing color perception

Bound book, leather cover, black and white photos of products

Box 3

Product photos:

 Peter Gray - photos A, B, C, D

 Peter Gray 2a, 2b (photos)

 Peter Gray photos 3a, b, and c

 Peter Gray photos 4a, 4b

 Peter Gray photos 6a, b, and c

 Peter Gray photos 7a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, and i

 Peter Gray photos 8e

 Peter Gray photos 9a, b, c, d, and e

 Peter Gray photos 10a, b, c, d, e, f, h, i, and j

 Peter Gray photos 11a, b, d, e, f, and g

 Peter Gray photos 12a, b, and c

 Peter Gray photos 13b, 13c

 Peter Gray photos 14a, b, c, d, e, f, g, i, j, and k

 Peter Gray photos 15

 Peter Gray photos 16c, d, g, h, and I

 Peter Gray photos 17a, b, c, d, h, i, j, k, l, n, o, p and s

 Peter Gray photos 18a, b, c, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n

 Peter Gray photos 19a, b, c, e, f, g, and h

 Peter Gray photos 20a, b, and c

 Peter Gray photos 21a, 21b

Peter Gray photos 22a, 22b
Peter Gray photos 23b, c, d, e, and f
Peter Gray photos 24a, b, c, d, e, f, g and h
Peter Gray photos 25h
Peter Gray photos 26a, 26b
Peter Gray photos 31b, c, d, e, f, g, h, and I
Peter Gray photos 32a, b, c, d and e
Peter Gray photos 33a, b and c
Peter Gray photos 34a, b, c, d, and g
Peter Gray photos 35a, b, c, and d
Peter Gray photos 36a, b, c, and d
Peter Gray photos 37a, b, e, g, and h

Box 4

Peter Gray Lanterns
Peter Gray Lanterns
Peter Gray Lanterns
Peter Gray – Lanterns
Peter Gray – Electric Lanterns

Box 5

One original page (?)
Photocopies of original envelopes for glass plates
Glass plate negatives:
Sample creel (?) see photocopy, Feb. 7, 1927, Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 1
Table end protector (small), Feb. 5, 1927, Peter Gray collection, glass negative 2
Diamond Union stamp, Wles (?), time clock case, Feb. 5, 1927, Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 3
Miniature electric locomotive NY, NH & HRR, Jan. 20, 1927, time 20 sec. Stop #32, cloudy day 2pm., Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 4
Miniature electric locomotive NY, NH & HRR, Jan. 20, 1927, time 30 sec. Stop #32, cloudy day 2pm., Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 5
Lantern cone, Nov. 1926, Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 6
Seat for valve – Lovejoy Mfg. Co., Nov. 1926, PS and J Aug. 5- 1914, Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 7
May 8, 1926, Federal Reserve Bank Box, Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 8
Document box, May 8, 1926, Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 9
Switch lantern (Maine Central), November 1926, DNG F2353, Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 10A
Switch lantern (Maine Central), November 1926, DNG F2353, Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 10B
Bank statement box (closed), Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 12
Two Limophore lanterns with outside projector unit lens ring, lens, and joint, July 26, 1926, Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 13
Bank statement box (open), Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 14

Piercing die, American Bosch Magnet Corp., condenser supporting base, B/P FP-95348 & d4c, July 28, 1926, Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 15
Table end protector (one piece design), American Electrical Works, Peter Gray and Sons, Drag. F-3431, US stop 64-12 sec., glass neg. 16
Press for book binding, Ginn & Co., November 1926, Peter Gray and Co., glass neg. 17
“L” Lamination die, 1926, Peter Gray, glass neg. 18
Table end protector (large), Feb. 5, 1927, “ice other neg.”, Peter Gray collection, neg. 19
“L” Lamination Die, 1926, Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 20
Model storm warning lantern, 1926, Peter Gray and Sons Inc., glass neg. 21
Model storm warning lantern, 1926, Peter Gray and Sons Inc. (collection), glass neg. 22
Cremation urn, August 30, 1926, Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 23
Base, American Bosch Corp., B/P FP- 95959, Aug. 19, 1926, Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 24
Punching Die, American Bosch Magnets Corp., B/P FP- 95959, August 19, 1926, Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 25
Base, American Bosch Magnet Corp., Aug. 19, 1926, Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 26
Not labeled, railroad lantern, Peter Gray collection, glass neg. 27
Can for Disinfectant, NE Tel. & Tel. Co., July 26, 1926, DNG H- 3067

Box 6

Oversize photographs and printed images, 72, different sizes, black and white; includes images of Peter Gray Corporation buildings, machinery, and products, and products of other companies; and one advertising broadsheet for Slater Valves.

Box 7

Oversize photographs, 35, different sizes, black and white; includes images of Peter Gray Corporation products.

Box 8

Barbour Stockwell Company – company history
Barbour Stockwell Company – financial reports
Barbour Stockwell Company – tax documents – 1 of 5 – federal (1928-1957)
Barbour Stockwell Company – tax documents – 2 of 5 – federal (1943-1951)
Barbour Stockwell Company – tax documents – 3 of 5 – federal (1918-1945)
Barbour Stockwell Company – tax documents – 4 of 5 – state (1900-1934)
Barbour Stockwell Company – tax documents – 5 of 5 – state (1936-1958)
Barbour Stockwell Company – misc. documents
Barbour Stockwell Company – beandry – patents, etc.
Barbour Stockwell Company – Ephriam J. Scott patents
Barbour Stockwell Company – ice cream freezing machine
Barbour Stockwell Company – correspondence – 1990s
Blanchard Instrument Company

Daggett Chocolate Company
Grayton Industries, Inc. and Grayton Corporation
National Products Corporation – inventions – 1 of 2
National Products Corporation – tax documents – 1950-1966
National Products Corporation – inventions – 2 of 2
Bound book of Barbour Stockwell stock certificates (1935-)
Bound book of Barbour Stockwell stock certificates (1893-)
Bound book of Barbour Stockwell stock certificates (1924-)

Box 9

Illustrated Guide to Peter Gray Railroad Hardware by Joseph F. Farrell, Jr., 1994.
Spiral bound book.
Peter Gray Corporation – insurance documents – (1933-1941)
Peter Gray Corporation – Third Street Building
Peter Gray Corporation – Industrial Readiness Planning Program
Peter Gray Corporation – Binney Street Building
Peter Gray Corporation – building inspection drawings – 1939-1940
Peter Gray Corporation – misc. correspondence, building information, etc. – 1944-1957
Peter Gray – lantern patents – 1894
Peter Gray Corporation – Giblin-Erdon position indicator
Peerless Manufacturing Corporation – 1 of 2 – business documents (1958-1969)
Peerless Manufacturing Corporation – 2 of 2 – business documents (1967-1969)
Peerless Manufacturing Corporation – correspondence and agreements (1955-1971)
Peerless Manufacturing Company – excise tax documents (1965-1967)
Peerless Manufacturing Company – inventions
Scientific Research Corporation

Additional Oversize Box

Peter Gray collection: “Original Appraisal of Peter Gray and Sons Inc. at East Cambridge, Mass.” 1920

Related Materials

History of Massachusetts Industries by Orra L. Stone, c.1930.

Illustrated Guide to Peter Gray Railroad Hardware by Joseph F. Farrell, Jr., c. 1994.

Cambridge Historical Commission. “Peter Gray Company” folder, filed under “Commerce and Industry”

Return to CHC Collections home:

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

