

# **Alexander Industries collection**

## **Mss.01248**

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History Colorado. Stephen H. Hart Research Center  
1200 Broadway  
Denver, Colorado, 80203  
303-866-2305  
[cosearch@state.co.us](mailto:cosearch@state.co.us)

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	History Colorado. Stephen H. Hart Research Center
<b>Creator - Photographer</b>	de Vries, John, Col.
<b>Title</b>	Alexander Industries collection
<b>Date</b>	1918-1997
<b>Extent</b>	3.75 Linear feet
<b>General Physical Description note</b>	The majority of this collection is copies of original documents.
<b>Location note</b>	The photograph and moving image series is stored in Ph.00006 in the Photography collection.
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Graphic materials [Box]</b>	.75 lf
<b>Collection [Box]</b>	3 lf
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>The Alexander Industries Collection is significant because it illustrates the rise of two industries-motion picture and technology-which have had a profound effect on the development of the United States. Alexander Industries affected Colorado Springs economy immensely by being the largest employer in the city as well as employing a unique and effective style of management which endeared them to their employees and customers. This collection includes legal documents for Alexander Industries, correspondence, newspaper clippings, photographs, moving images, and marketing materials for the company. Printed materials include newspapers and magazine articles about the company. Also</p>

included in the collection are Colonel John deVries research notes, correspondence, and drafts of his book *Alexander Eaglerock: a History of Alexander Aircraft Company* In his work, deVries' highlights the Alexander brothers' childhood and young adult life through entrepreneurial ventures and their first interest in film and planes. The majority of deVries' work focuses on developments made by Alexander Aircraft Co. and the popularity of the company.

**Preferred Citation note**

Cite as: Alexander Industries Collection, Mss.01248, History Colorado

## Alexander Industries

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### Alexander Aircraft and Film Company

1904	J. Don and Don M. Alexander make first "projected ad" in Keokuk, Iowa as children.
1918-1919	Alexander brothers start film advertising company in Spokane, Washington.
1923	Alexander brothers move from Spokane to Englewood, Colorado.
1924	Alexander brothers organized as a Colorado Company. In 1928, they become organized as a Delaware Company under the name of Alexander Industries.
1925	J. Don decides film salesmen should cover their territories in airplanes. Alexander Aircraft Co. organized as a subsidiary of Alexander Industries.
1926	Production of Eaglerock biplane begins. Alexander Industries now consists of a motion picture and aircraft division.
1927	Decision to move to Colorado Springs is announced.
1928	April 16: Charles Lindbergh visits Alexander in Denver April 20: Fire at Englewood facility kills 11. April 23: Alexander Industries begins move to Colorado Springs.
1929	Alexander brothers face manslaughter charges in relation to the 1928 fire in Englewood. Charges are dropped and Alexander Industries are fined \$1,000.
1932	August: Alexander Aircraft files for bankruptcy in Denver.
1940s	J. Don buys vermiculite mine and finds Alexite.

1950-1954	Alexander Film Co. produces 2,500 commercials and 25,000 trailers annually. Alexander Industries declines as television takes over.
1955	May 6: J. Don Alexander dies and business is sold to Harold Kaye.
1957	Keith Munroe and partners buy company from Kaye.
1960	Alexander Film Co. wins award at International Film Festival in Venice for Chevrolet commercial. Julian Pollack buys Alexander Industries.
1963	Cotland S. Dietler buys Alexander Industries. Dietler soon sells company to Motion Picture Advertising of New Orleans.
1970	J. Don elected to Colorado Aviation Hall of Fame.
1971	February 10: Don M. Alexander dies.

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Alexander Industries chronicles Colorado's largest employers throughout the mid-twentieth century, as well as the unique and effective management employed by the two Alexander brothers. The Alexander story documents an important period in U.S. history: a period which marks the burgeoning of airplane technology, the advent of moving pictures, and the trials and tribulations that companies underwent during the depression and World War II.

The Alexander brothers Julian Don (1888-1955) and Don Miller (1907-1971) conceived of screen advertising long before its time. As boys in Keokok, Iowa, the Alexanders resurrected an old French stereopticon projector, suspended bed sheets across the street and projected the signs of local shopkeepers interspersed with scenic slides on to the sheets. This was the first step in the Alexanders' career in screen advertising.

In 1919 while living in Spokane, Washington and operating a small appliance and repair shop, the brothers renewed their interest in the film business. Movies were becoming big business and the Alexanders realized the advertising potential of large screen motion pictures. In that same year, they founded the Alexander Film Company.

Their first year of business netted the brothers \$2.50. Within the next year Alexander Film Company advertisements had generated business in theatres all over the Northwest. This success prompted the Alexanders to pursue the national market.

Within four years the company's market encompassed cities all over the United States. In order to accommodate such a rapid market expansion, the brothers sought out a central location. In 1923 the Alexanders acquired property from the National Film Company of Englewood, Colorado. Several railroads serviced the Englewood area, which enabled the Alexanders to distribute their films efficiently.

Although Englewood appeared to be an ideal location, many salesmen complained about the amount of time it took them to cover their immense territories. J. Don rectified this problem by enlisting airplanes as their form of transportation. After receiving his pilot's license, he set out to design and create several planes intended for the company's use only. However, the speed and functional design of the biplane called "The Eaglerock" fueled interest in the private sector. The Alexanders began accepting orders and within a couple of years Alexander Aircraft was the second largest producer of airplanes in the world. The success of the Eaglerock spurred the Alexanders to design another model called "The Bullet" the Bullet was the first model in the United States to have retractable landing gear. By 1928 Alexander Aircraft had outgrown its Englewood location and, the company acquired land in Colorado Springs with the intention of relocating.

A devastating fire at the Englewood plant killed 11 employees on April 20, 1928 expediting the relocation to Colorado Springs. The cause of the fire is unknown, but former employees speculated that it was caused by filming equipment or arson. By April 24, 1928 the company found housing in temporary buildings in Colorado Springs until moving to their permanent location at 3200 North Nevada.

Despite the devastating effect of the fire, Alexander Industries still managed to maintain a high rate of production. By 1929 Alexander Aircraft manufactured a plane every hour. However, stock market crash of 1929 brought on the demise of Alexander Aircraft, and by 1932 the aircraft division was defunct.

In order to maintain the financial security of Alexander Industries and Alexander employees after the dissolution of the aircraft company, J. Don began diversifying their business ventures. World War II prompted the demand for a mineral called vermiculite, which was used primarily as a lightweight aggregate in building construction. J. Don bought a mine and founded a subsidiary of Alexander Film Co. called Alexite. Alexite lasted only a couple years.

In the meantime the film sector of the company flourished. Throughout the 1940's and 1950's the Alexander Film Company had offices in New York, Detroit, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Alexander's clients consisted of some of the most prominent companies in the United States: Pontiac, Ford, Chevrolet, Oldsmobile, Maytag, Seven Up, Frigidaire, and HotPoint. During peak production times the service department sent out over 150,000 feet of film a day to be viewed by an estimated 50,000,000 people every week.

As the company developed and succeeded, the employees were reimbursed for their hard work. The Alexanders instituted a progressive pension and bonus program as well as giving out Christmas turkeys and Easter hams. These generous benefits created a familial bond between management and employees.

The Alexander Film Company began to decline as home televisions undermined many small town movie theatres. Business decreased exponentially. The company began to enter the television commercial field but never succeeded because it was not affiliated with labor unions. Alexander commercials became blacklisted and the management did not make the transition to a union company until the early 1960's. Times got tough and many benefits were extracted from the company's budget, including the pension plan.

J. Don's death on May 6, 1955 essentially marked the end of the Alexander Film Company. The Alexander family sold the company to Harold Kaye of New York City with Don M. retaining presidency. In 1957 the company was sold to Keith Munroe. Munroe assumed the presidency while Don M. became Chairman of the Board. Despite organizing with labor unions and attempting to revive their commercial

production department, the company was still saddled with financial problems. The film company changed hands several times throughout the 1960's and did have some success in the advertising world, evidenced by their award winning Chevrolet commercial at the International Film Festival in Venice (1960).

J. Don's death in 1955 marked the end of Alexander Film as it was known in the 1940s and 50s. Don M. passed away on February 10, 1971.

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## Scope and Contents note

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This collection contains information on the Alexander Film Co., Alexander Aircraft Co., Alexite, and Alexander Industries. The majority of material in this collection and in the series for Colonel John deVries focuses on Alexander Aircraft Co. ranging from 1918-1997.

This collection contains legal documents, correspondence, newspaper clippings, marketing materials, photographs, and moving image magnetic tapes for the company. Printed materials include newspapers and magazine articles about the company. Also included in the collection are Colonel John deVries' research notes, correspondence, photographs, and drafts of his book *Alexander Eaglerock: a History of Alexander Aircraft Company*. In his work, deVries highlights the Alexander brothers' childhood and young adult life through entrepreneurial ventures and their first interest in film and planes. The majority of deVries' work focuses on developments made by Alexander Aircraft Co. and the popularity of the company.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

History Colorado. Stephen H. Hart Research Center

### Provenance

This collection was donated over six years to History Colorado through several donors. Known donors of the collection are: Leland Feitz, the public relations director for Alexander Industries; Stan Oliner; E. Riley; J. Allen Smith; D.K. Heller; Leo Freed, Alexander Film Co.; and Colonel John deVries, who wrote *Alexander Eaglerock: a History of Alexander Aircraft Company* in the collection.

### Processing Information note



## Related Materials

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### Other related collections

History Colorado also holds the Eugene O. Reinhardt photographs collection (Ph.00343) which documents the Alexander Aircraft Company.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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### Corporate Name(s)

- Alexander Aircraft Company.
- Alexander Aircraft Company. -- Photographs
- Alexander Film Co.
- Alexander Film Co. -- Photographs
- Alexander Industries. -- Photographs

### Genre(s)

- Affidavits
- Agreements
- Annual reports, Corporate
- Articles of incorporation
- Audiotapes.
- Books.
- Certificates
- Correspondence.
- Magazines
- Microfilm.
- Newspaper clippings.

## Geographic Name(s)

- Colorado Springs (Colo.).
- Englewood (Colo.)

## Personal Name(s)

- Alexander, Don M., 1893-1972
- Alexander, Don M., 1893-1972 -- Photographs
- Alexander, J. Don, 1885-1955
- Alexander, J. Don, 1885-1955 -- Photographs
- de Vries, John, Col.

## Subject(s)

- Actors--Photographs
- Airplanes--Photographs
- Airplanes.
- Airports--Photographs
- Motion picture industry--Photographs
- Motion picture industry.
- Motion picture production & direction--Photographs

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## Accession number

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ACC# 88.465, 90.130.1-.2, 89.655, 89.0167.1-.2, 89.582, 89.553, 89.582.1-.2, 93.233

## Collection Inventory

### Corporate 1923-1994

FF1 Articles of Incorporation 1923, 1925

FF2 Certificates of Incorporation 1935, 1937, 1948, 1957

FF3 Affidavit 1935, 1943, 1949, 1957

FF4 Corporate Certificates 1944-1966

FF5 Certificate of Trade Name for Alexite Feb. 13, 1953

FF6 Merger Agreement with Film Productions, Inc. Jan. 10, 1957

FF7 Annual Reports 1925-1928

FF8 Annual Reports 1929-1933

FF9 Annual Reports 1934-1938

FF10 Annual Reports 1939-1944

FF11 Annual Reports 1945-1953

**Corporate Printed Material**

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FF12 Annual Reports 1954-1966

FF13 Sales Training Course Undated

FF14 Correspondence from J. Don Alexander May 23, 1933

FF15 Correspondence to members closing Alexander Film Co. [1960]

FF16 Correspondence to Julian Don Alexander II July 14, 1994

FF17 Miscellaneous Items Undated

**Corporate Printed Material 1923-1997**

FF18 Englewood Explosion 1928

FF19 Alexander Industries, Inc. book for investors 1928

FF20 Alexander Merchandiser 1950-1952

FF21 Alexander Merchandiser 1953-1960

FF22 Alexander Industries 1923, 1929, 1964, 1969, 1970

FF23 The Cheyenne Edition Feb. 7, 1997

FF24 The Colorado Prospector Undated

Alexander Film Co.

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FF25 J. Don Alexander Biography Undated

FF26 John H. Alexander Newspaper Clipping Undated

**Alexander Film Co. 1923-[1990]**

FF27 History of Film Co. Undated

FF28 Administration Directory Undated

FF29 Film Rental Contract 1923

FF30 Dividend Notice 1954

FF31 Price Lists [1988-1990]

FF32 Logo and Business Cards 1989, Undated

FF33 Film Processing Undated

FF34 Brochures for Larry Heller 1985

FF35 Biography and Articles of Larry Heller 1949-1977

FF36 Award of Merit for Helen Baker Undated

FF37 Film Advertisements 1945, 1950, Undated

**Colonel John deVries**

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FF38 Colorado Native of the Month, Eugene Reinhardt Jan. 1983

FF39 Auction Pamphlets 1985-1986

FF40 The Animator 1946-1947

FF41 The Animator 1951-1953

FF42 The Animator 1954-1958

FF43 The Animator 1960

FF44 On Parade Undated

FF45 Newspaper Clippings 1947-1989, Undated

FF46 Correspondence 1941, 1963

**Colonel John deVries 1973-1990**

FF83 Research Notebooks Undated

FF84 Material for Book Appendices Undated

FF85 Notes on Gene Reinhardt Undated

FF86 Proctor W. Nichols 1981

Colonel John deVries

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FF87 Epps Material 1963-1978

FF88 Surviving Alexander Aircraft 1981

FF89 Antique Aircraft 1980

FF90 Alexander Eaglerock 1990

FF91 Notes "Dealers" became "Distributors" Undated

FF92 Alexander Chronology Undated

**Processing Information note**

Removed from yellow index card box during processing in April 2015.

**Scope and Contents note**

Date range for Alexander Industries ranges from 1907-Jan. 1929.

FF93 Alexander Chronology Undated

**Processing Information note**

Removed from yellow index card box during processing in April 2015.

**Scope and Contents note**

Date range for Alexander Industries ranges from Feb. 1929-1937.

FF94 Personal Notes Undated

Colonel John deVries

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FF95 Book draft and printed material 1973-1985

FF96 Pikes Peak Eaglerock Chapter 1979

FF97 Draft of "The Forgotten Heritage" 1984

FF98 "Alexander Eaglerock" notes and photo caption lists 1976-1980

FF99 Binder on Alexander Book Undated

**Processing Information note**

For housing purposes the pages were removed from a binder during processing in April 2015.

FF100 *The History of the Alexander Aircraft Co., Eaglerock* Undated

**Processing Information note**

For housing purposes the pages were removed from a binder during processing in April 2015.

FF101 *Alexander Book* with changes, 3rd draft Undated

FF102 *Eaglerock!* Pre-Publication Draft, copy #4 Undated

FF103 *Alexander Eaglerock* 1985

FF104 Outline of "King of the Hills" Undated

FF105 "King of the Hills" Don Alexander, Jr. Comments 1977



Correspondence

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FF106 *King of the Hills* first draft Nov. 1976

FF107 *King of the Hills* second draft Undated

**Correspondence 1976-1984**

FF108 Interviews for Book 1976-1981

FF109 Eugene W. Matson 1978-1984

FF110 Al Mooney 1982

FF111 Aero Publishers, Inc. 1978-1982

FF112 Century One Press 1984

FF113 Surviving Alexander Aircraft 1980-1981

FF114 Historic Aviation 1979-1984

FF115 Victor Hansen 1980

FF116 General 1981, Undated

**Alexander Aircraft Co. 1921-1993**

**Printed Material**

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FF47 Don P. Alexander's Pilot Log Book 1927-1929

FF48 J. Don Alexander's Pilot's License [Dec. 1930]

FF49 Factory Notes 1928, 1976

FF50 Alexander Bullet 1930

FF51 Drawing and Specification of Eaglerock Biplane Undated

FF52 Promotional Material 1925-1927

FF53 Promotional Material 1929-1930

FF54 Al Mooney 1926-1989

FF55 Leland Feitz [1932], 1942, 1949

FF56 Wayman Dunlop 1985

**Printed Material 1921-1993**

FF57 Colorado Aviation Historical Society 1983

FF58 Magazine "Aviation" 1921-1929

FF59 Catalogue of Nicholas-Beazley Airplane Co. 1925

Printed Material

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FF60 Alexander Flying Manual 1927

FF61 "The Alexander Aircraft" 1928-1929

FF62 Handsprings for Hamburgers 1929

FF63 "The Black Hills Engineer" 1929

FF64 "Antique Airplane News" 1963-1964

FF65 Aviation Pioneers, Gazette Telegraph Oct. 11, 1970

FF66 "Interceptor" on Reginald Sinclair 1972

FF67 "Sport Aviation" on Eaglerock Biplane 1973

FF68 "The Vintage Airplane" 1979

FF69 "AOPA Pilot" on Alexander Bullet 1981

FF70 "Westerly Flyer" on Pilot Fred Wahl 1981

FF71 Plane Brochures 1982

FF72 "The Windsock" 1982

FF73 "Rocky Mountain News" on Alexander Aircraft Dec. 16, 1993

## Correspondence

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FF74 The Comet Aircraft Engine Instruction Book Undated

FF75 Airplane Catalog Undated

FF76 "Sport Flying" on Al Mooney Undated

FF77 J.L. Schroeder Price List 1926

FF78 Lincoln Sport Plane Price Lists Undated

### **Correspondence 1925-1950**

FF79 L.D. Leininger 1925-1928

FF80 Department of Commerce 1925-1926

FF81 Department of Commerce for Aircraft Licensing and Modifications [Includes photos] 1933-1939

FF82 Department of Commerce 1940-1950

### **Audiotapes 1988-1989**

FF117 James L. Bates April 18, 1989

#### **Scope and Contents note**

Discusses his service with Alexander Film Co.

## Reunion

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FF118 Tom Kirk June 6, 1989

FF119 Leland Feitz Aug. 17, 1988

### **Scope and Contents note**

Leland Feitz was director of public relations for Alexander Industries.

FF120 AFCO Reunion and Tour of Colorado Springs Facility 1989

### **Reunion 1978-1989**

FF121 General [1979-1989]

FF122 Reunion Program [1989]

FF123 Correspondence 1978, 1989

FF124 RSVP 1989

FF125 RSVP 1989

FF126 RSVP 1989

FF127 RSVP 1989

Civil Aeronautics Administration Aircraft Mechanics Inc., Eaglerock and Wright Microfilm Undated

**Photographs & moving image**

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**Photographs & moving image circa 1918-1997 0.75 Linear feet (425 photographs and 2 magnetic tapes in 2 boxes)**

**Scope and Contents note**

This series contains 425 photographs and 2 VHS tapes documenting Alexander Industries, circa 1918-1997. The photographs depict Alexander Film Co. buildings; personnel including J. Don Alexander, Don Alexander, Jr., Ed Reinhardt, and others; airplanes, hangers, and factories; and copy prints of Alexander Industries advertisements. The bulk of the photos are prints and copy prints collected and taken by Col. John A. deVries as research for his 1985 book, *Alexander Eaglerock: a History of Alexander Aircraft Company*, published by Century One Press (Colo. Springs, Colo.). Photographs of note include images of Lawrence (Larry) Heller (1905-1983), an actor for Alexander Industries, and his artwork that was used for set designs and animation. The collection also includes photographs depicting Alexander Industries clipped from newspapers and magazines. The moving image material in this series includes a VHS copy of an Alexander Film Co. promotional film shot circa 1947-1949 and an 8 min. VHS tape of an Alexander Film & Video Services promotional video produced in 1989.

FF1 Alexander Film Co. building, Englewood, Colo. circa 1923-1928

FF2 Alexander Film and Video building, possibly Colorado Springs, Colo. circa 1990-1997

FF3 Personnel from Alexander Industries circa 1953-1958

FF4 Larry Heller (1905-1983) on set at Alexander Film Co. circa 1935-1960

FF5-6 Artwork by Larry Heller (1905-1983) circa 1930-1960

FF7 Images of Alexander Industries clipped from newspapers and magazines circa 1950-1955

Photographs & moving image

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FF8 John deVries' photo research for Alexander Eaglerock publication- Alexander Electric Company store, Spokane Wash. circa 1918-1919

FF9 John deVries' photo research for Alexander Eaglerock publication- Alexander Industries circa 1950-1954

FF10 John deVries' photo research for Alexander Eaglerock publication- Alexander Film Co. circa 1921-1939

FF11 John deVries' photo research for Alexander Eaglerock publication- Alexander Film Co. car commercial circa 1960-1965

FF12-14 John deVries' photo research for Alexander Eaglerock publication- factory interiors, airplanes, and parts circa 1925-1982

FF15 John deVries' photo research for Alexander Eaglerock publication- factory and hanger exteriors circa 1925-1932

FF16-18 John deVries' photo research for Alexander Eaglerock publication- Alexander Industries pilots and personnel circa 1925-1980

FF19-26 John deVries' photo research for Alexander Eaglerock publication- airplanes circa 1925-1985

FF27 John deVries' photo research for Alexander Eaglerock publication- airplanes in flight circa 1925-1932

FF28 John deVries' photo research for Alexander Eaglerock publication- copies of advertisements and press articles circa 1921-1935

**Photographs & moving image**

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Alexander Film Co. copy of promotional film on VHS tape circa 1947-1949

Alexander Film and Video Services promotional video on VHS tape 1989