

The Susan M. E. Glendening Patent Model Collection

In 1790 the U.S. Patent office was created. From 1790 until 1880 inventors were required to submit a model of their inventions along with their application. America was the only country with this requirement. The models are a physical history of the innovations that shaped the world. Many are still in use or are the origin of products we use today. Besides the stories they tell, the models are compelling as an exhibit in that they are works of art. Many were made by professional model makers.

This outstanding collection, offered for exhibition, is comprised of 250 models and has taken thirty years to establish. It is exceptional for four reasons: it contains models by famous inventors, models by a significant number of women inventors, models that demonstrate the history of patents, and models that are rare.

Many of the models have been on exhibit at several museums and have been featured in numerous magazines and television shows. For example: the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York City.

Famous Inventors

The collection contains models by well known inventors, such as Thomas Edison's patent model for the filaments of light bulbs.

Women Inventors

The collection contains a large number of models for patents issued to women. Patents by women were rare because women were generally uninformed about patent law. They were taught to be subservient and willingly handed over their creations to men. In other cases, their ideas and inventions were stolen outright.

The History of Patents

- Before 1836 models were given no numbers and inventors submitted drawings of any size and often in color.
- After July 13, 1836 patents were given numbers.
- In 1842 patents for designs were allowed.
- In 1870, the drawing size requirement was established at 8 ½ by 11 inches.
- On December 15, 1836 and September 24, 1877 there were fires at the patent office and many models were lost. Some models were salvaged and others reproduced with much difficulty and at great expense.

This collection contains examples of all of the above history. Of special interest is model number 95 which is the earliest numbered model found complete with model, papers, and tag.

Rare Patent Models

- The collection contains a model that is unusual because it is both functional and larger than the cubic foot requirement.
- Most inventions were the subject of many patents documenting improvements and variations. This collection has the model for which there is only one patent.
- Husbands and wives rarely shared a patent and only a few husbands and wives had patents issued to both of them individually. The collection has the only known examples of these.



Thomas Edison's Carbonizer for the Filaments of Light bulbs October 18, 1881



Washing Machine by Caroline F. Fleming of Belleville, Illinois November 17, 1868

Following are some other examples of models in the collection. These are of interest because, in some form, they are still in use today.



Windmill 1881



Stop Attachment for Skate 1885
This brake design is still in use today on Rollerblades



Bicycle 1879



Apparatus for Physical Culture 1873
The origin of today's strength training equipment



Safety Pin 1879
Perhaps the smallest model ever found

Individuals or Organizations Interested in Helping to Establish a Museum to Protect These Models
or Interested in Exhibiting Them Please Contact:

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