

THE ALEX DOW COLLECTION

Papers, 1909-1947
(Predominantly 1920-1940)

1 Linear Foot

ACCESSION NO. 1010
L. C. Number MS

The papers of Alex Dow were placed in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs by Douglas Dow. They were opened for research in October 1980.

Alex Dow was born in Glasgow, Scotland on 12 April 1862. His formal education came to an end when, at twelve years of age, he went to work as a railroad office messenger. At eighteen he was employed as a clerical worker with the Cunard Steamship Lines in Liverpool, and began spending his spare time in steamship engine rooms.

Dow came to the United States in November 1882 and began working for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. He was later transferred to the B&O Telegraph Company to take charge of some maintenance, construction, and experimental telephone projects. In 1888 he left B&O to go to the Brush Electric Company's Chicago office where he was made District Engineer in 1889. He designed and implemented a lighting system for Chicago's South Park area in 1892.

In July 1893 Dow came to Detroit, having been engaged to design and supervise construction of a public lighting plant for the City. In July 1896 he became Vice-President and General Manager of the Edison Illuminating Company. He and a staff of engineers were responsible for the design and construction of the Delray Power Plants Nos. 1 (1903) and 2 (1907), the Conner Creek Power House (1915), the Marysville Power Plant, and the Trenton Channel Plant. Dow became the President of Edison in 1912, and retired in 1938.

Dow received many awards in his later life. They include an honorary degree of Masters in Engineering from the University of Michigan in 1911, and a Doctor of Engineering from U of M in 1924; honorary memberships in the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (1936), the American Society of Civil Engineers (1937), and the status of Fellow in the American Institute of Electrical Engineers (1913). He was awarded the Edison Medal by the AIEE in 1937.

Dow married Vivienne Kinnersley in Baltimore in 1889, and they had four children. They resided at Brushwood in the Barton Hills area of Ann Arbor until Dow's death in 1942.

Contents

2 manuscript boxes

Series I, Autobiographical materials; Folders 1-16:

Reference materials and autobiographical chapters written by Alex Dow and kept together in a looseleaf notebook. They were apparently written, typed, and compiled about 1940.

Series II, Engineering Societies and Agnes Inglis Correspondence, 1909-1941; Folders 17-40:

A series of correspondence which primarily concerns Mr. Dow's memberships in various engineering societies, and awards and honors given him by those societies. Among the awards is the prestigious Edison Medal, which was given to Dow in January 1937. Also included is correspondence between Mr. Dow and Agnes Inglis in 1913, before she became curator of the Joseph Labadie Collection at The University of Michigan.

Series III, Letterpress Books, 1933-1942, Box 2:

A series of four letterpress volumes containing tissue copies of personal and business correspondence. The letters within are arranged chronologically, but there is an alphabetical index at the end of each volume.

Non-manuscript materials:

Two cassette tape recordings copied from the original recorded discs:

Speech by Alex Dow on CBS Radio on the occasion of Henry Ford's 75th birthday, "Ford at Edison Illuminating Company," 30 July 1938.

Speech by Alex Dow before the Association of Edison Companies about his personal history, 19 January 1940.

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Series I
Autobiographical Notebook
Folders 1-16

These items are reference materials and autobiographical chapters written by Alex Dow. They were kept together in a notebook and were apparently compiled around 1940.

BOX 1

1. Alex Dow Biographical Memorandum, May 1927
2. Comments by Douglas Dow on Cyril and Marjorie Player's "Alex Dow -- The Story of the American Way", 1947
3. State of Michigan Application for Registration to Practice Architecture, Engineering or Surveying, 1920
4. Alex Dow Autobiography: Index of Chapters
5. Alex Dow Autobiography: "A" Prefatory -- Ancestry and Schooling
6. Alex Dow Autobiography: "B" Youth in the Old Country
7. Alex Dow Autobiography: "C" Coming to America -- Railway Days There
8. Alex Dow Autobiography: "D" Electric Utility Work, 1888-1893
9. Alex Dow Autobiography: "E" Coming to Detroit
10. Alex Dow Autobiography: "F" The Edison Connection
11. Alex Dow Autobiography: "G" Sundry Work as a Consultant
12. Alex Dow Autobiography: "H" About Certain Celebrities (Sept 1940)
13. Alex Dow Autobiography: "I" Edison Service, 1896-1902-1912
14. Alex Dow Autobiography: "N" The Happenings in 1902 -- Details
15. Alex Dow Autobiography: "O" "A Personal Philosophy"
16. Talk to General Motors Men's Club, Lunch Meeting, 14 Nov 1940

Series II
Engineering Societies Correspondence, 1909-1941
Folders 17-38

BOX 1 (continued)

17. "Stability in Lighting", Paper, 8 Jan 1909
18. Institute of Electrical Engineers; Correspondence re: Membership, 1910-1911
19. Engineering Societies Correspondence, 1913-1914
20. American Society of Mechanical Engineers; Henry Ford's Membership Application, Nov 1914-Jan 1915
21. Detroit Engineering Society, 1917 and 1923

22. Society of American Military Engineers; Correspondence, 1921-1930
23. Engineering Societies Correspondence, 1924-1926
24. Detroit Engineering Society Dinner for Alex Dow, 4 Dec 1926
25. Detroit Engineering Society Dinner for Alex Dow; Correspondence, Nov-Dec 1926
26. American Society of Mechanical Engineers; Nomination Letters, April-May 1927
27. American Society of Mechanical Engineers; Nomination and Election as President, May 1927-March 1928
28. American Institute of Electrical Engineers; "Report on Standard Definitions", 1927
29. National District Heating Association Dinner for Alex Dow, 29 October 1929
30. Engineering Societies Correspondence, 1929-1934
31. Detroit Engineering Society (Engineering Society of Detroit); Correspondence, 1933-1936
32. Engineering Societies Correspondence, 1936-1937
33. American Society of Mechanical Engineers; Honorary Membership, September 1936
34. American Society of Civil Engineers; Honorary Membership, October 1936-January 1937
35. Edison Medal, December 1936-January 1937
36. Edison Medal Congratulations, December 1936
37. Edison Medal Congratulations, January 1937
38. Engineering Societies Correspondence, 1939-1941
39. Agnes Inglis-Alex Dow Correspondence, 1913
40. Alex Dow memorial issue of The Detroit Edison Synchroscope, 1942

Series III

Letterpress books of personal correspondence and Detroit Edison correspondence, 1933 through 1942. Each volume is indexed.

BOX 2

1. Letterpress book, 1933-October 1936
2. Letterpress book, October 1936-November 1938
3. Letterpress book, December 1938-April 1939
4. Letterpress book, April 1939-March 1942