

GC 1342
Ralph Hamlin (1880 – 1974) Collection

Span Dates:

ca. 1894 – 1976, undated

Extent:

13.28 linear ft. (9 legal boxes; 1 letter box; 2 storage boxes; 8 ov boxes; 1 bundle)

Language:

English

Abstract:

A collection of papers, personal and professional, belonging to Ralph Cunningham Hamlin (1880 – 1974), who was a pioneer Los Angeles automobile dealer and racing enthusiast.

Conditions Governing Use:

Permission to publish, quote or reproduce must be secured from the repository and the copyright holder

Conditions Governing Access:

Research is by appointment only

Preferred Citation:

Ralph Hamlin Collection, Seaver Center for Western History Research, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History

Related Holdings:

GC1264 Stutz Automobile Scrapbook, ca.1913-1919
GC1337 Automotive Literature Collection
GC1344 Nash Motors Company Records, 1890-1938
GC1361 Darling Motor Company Records, 1916-1917
GC1362 Charles E. Duryea and J. Frank Duryea Papers, 1894-1944
GC1375 Los Angeles Motor Car Company Business Records, 1908-1912
GC1377 Greater Los Angeles New Car Dealers Association Historical Records, 1905-1980s
GC1382 Don Lee Scrapbooks, 1916-1925
P-62 Eddie O'Donnell Collection, ca. 1913-1920
P-115 Ralph Hamlin Collection (photographs)

P-194 Photograph Album of Automobile Camping Trip, ca. 1914
P-246 Automobile in Southern California Project
P-278 Automotive Photograph Collection
NHMLAC History Department's Material Culture Collection

Biographical Note:

Ralph Cunningham Hamlin was a pioneer Los Angeles automobile dealer, born October 17, 1880 in San Francisco, California. In 1887 his family settled in Los Angeles during the land boom. Hamlin opened up a bicycle business in 1896. In 1901 he purchased an Orient, an early model motorcycle. He competed in races throughout Southern California for the sport as well as to promote sales in his business. He sold motorcycles, Orient Buckboards, Lozier, and Scripps-Booth automobiles.

Hamlin operated an automobile dealership by 1901 at 1806 South Main Street, Los Angeles. In 1905 Hamlin became the Southern California distributor for Franklin air-cooled cars, manufactured by the H.H. Franklin Mfg. Co. of Syracuse, New York. His original Franklin dealership was located at 1040 So. Flower Street in Los Angeles. He also acquired a dealership in Hollywood at 5766 Hollywood Boulevard; he also had a Glendale branch selling Franklins under the "Ralph Hamlin" company name. By about 1926 he was also selling in San Diego. When the Franklin was discontinued in 1932, he went on to sell Graham automobiles. He was instrumental in the creation of the Los Angeles Motor Car Dealers Association about 1909.

A close friend to Hamlin was Henry Workman Keller (who served on the board and as President of the Automobile Club of Southern California.) Keller is pictured in some of the photographs. Hamlin credited Keller with helping him to bring auto racing to the city of Santa Monica called the Santa Monica Road Race. Hamlin competed in the first 1909 race driving a Franklin.

Hamlin's association with the Los Angeles County Museum included the loan of his 1908 Franklin automobile in the new Hall of Transportation which opened on April 16, 1944. (The Hall closed in 1974.) Hamlin passed away in Los Angeles on July 5, 1974 at the age of 93.

Scope and Content Note:

A collection of papers, personal and professional, belonging to Ralph Cunningham Hamlin. Clippings; scrapbooks; and papers relating to automotive manufacturers and the H.H. Franklin Club. Business and legal records including correspondence, investment records, and financial records for Hamlin's three corporate entities: Franklin Motors, Inc., Ralph Hamlin Motors, Inc., and Ralph Hamlin, Inc., as well as his earliest bicycle enterprise. Also taped interviews and 143 pages of interviews transcribed.

With a few exceptions, photographs have been moved to a separate photograph collection P-115 (Ralph Hamlin Photograph Collection).

In addition to Hamlin's papers, the Museum received Franklin automobiles and racing trophies that are in the History Department's Material Culture collection.

The collection is organized into nine series:

- Series 1. Personal Papers, ca. 1896 – 1975, undated. .42 linear ft.
- Series 2. Scrapbooks, ca. 1894 – 1930, [1890s]. 5.5 linear ft.
- Series 3. Ephemeral materials, 1903 – 1956, undated. .42 linear ft.
- Series 4. Clippings, 1900 – 1974, undated. .42 linear ft.
- Series 5. Publications, 1895 – 1974. .83 linear ft.
- Series 6. H.H. Franklin Club, 1952 – 1976, undated. .42 linear ft.
- Series 7. Catalogs and manuals, 1905 – 1951, undated. 1.75 linear ft.
- Series 8. Business and legal records, 1894 – 1950. 5.1 linear ft.
- Series 9. Taped interviews and transcriptions, 1967, undated. .42 linear feet

Collection Contents:

Series 1. Personal Papers, ca. 1896 – 1975, undated. .42 linear ft.

This series contains personal papers which include correspondence; membership cards and certificates; driver licenses; business cards; and manuscripts. Several personal items were added by donor (Hamlin's daughter) pertaining to Hamlin's membership in the Automobile Club of Southern California since the year 1903. Series 1 is housed in Box 1; oversize certificates are found in Boxes 13ov and 14ov.

This series is arranged alphabetically by format or subject.

Series 2. Scrapbooks, ca. 1894 – 1930, [1890s]. 5.5 linear ft.

This series includes four scrapbooks pertain to early cycling activities in America. Oversized scrapbooks contain newspaper clippings from southern California papers for publicity, promotion and advertisements for Franklin automobiles and automotive events. Series 2 is housed as follows:

Box 2

Box 14ov: advertising [1920-1925]

Box 15ov: 1913-17

Box 16ov: 1919-20

Box 17ov: advertising, 1920; publicity, [1920-1925]; McCormach Low Gear Test [for Franklin], 1915; and one small book labeled Franklin Automobile Company

Box 18ov: publicity [1925-1930]; advertising [1926-1927]

Box 20ov: 1905-1918

Series 3. Ephemeral materials, 1903 – 1956, undated. .42 linear ft.

This series contains ephemera including mementos of his friends and associates, notably a personal, inscribed copy of *Southern California Club Members in Cartoon: a Green Book*, by Al Dutton, published in 1922. Series 3 is housed in Box 3.

This series is arranged alphabetically by format.

Series 4. Clippings, 1900 – 1974, undated. .42 linear ft.

The clippings pertain to Hamlin's career and the topic of automobiles. Series 4 is housed in Box 4; an oversized clipping is housed in oversize Box 13ov.

This series is arranged chronologically.

Series 5. Publications, 1895 – 1974. .83 linear ft.

This series contains various publications, many of which contain articles on Hamlin; *Franklin Camel News*, self-published; also a bound set of *Wheeling, an Up to Date Cycling Paper*, for the year 1899. Series 5 is housed in Boxes 5 and 6.

This series is arranged alphabetically by title.

Series 6. H.H. Franklin Club, 1952 – 1976, undated. .42 linear ft.

This series contains correspondence, publications and other related matter for the club. The club was formed in 1951 at Los Angeles to promote a historical record of the automobile. Series 6 is housed in Box 7.

This series is arranged alphabetically by format.

Series 7. Catalogs and manuals, 1905 – 1951, undated. 1.75 linear ft.

This series contains advertisements, catalogs, manuals and other items published by automobile manufacturers, including the Franklin, Graham, Cord, and Airomobile. Series 7 is housed in Box 8 and 9; oversized items are housed in oversize Box 13ov.

This is series is arranged alphabetically by format.

Series 8. Business and legal records, 1894 – 1950. 5.1 linear ft.

This series contains business and legal records including correspondence, investment records, and financial records for Hamlin's three corporate entities: Franklin Motors, Inc., Ralph Hamlin Motors, Inc., and Ralph Hamlin, Inc., as well as his earliest bicycle enterprise. (Franklin Motors, Inc. was changed to Ralph Hamlin Motors, Inc. on 3/22/1933.) Oil investment records include the Timber Canyon Oil Corporation which Hamlin was a board member, and the Franklin Oil Company, which he presided. Series 8 is housed in Box 10 and oversize storage boxes 11ov; 12ov and a bundle in 14ov-1.

<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title for Series 8</u>	<u>Box - Folder</u>
	Appraisal, Ralph Hamlin, Inc., 1925	10 – 1
	Correspondence to Ralph Hamlin, 1923	10 – 1 A
	Correspondence to Ralph Hamlin, Inc. 1930	10 – 2
	Papers, Ralph Hamlin, Inc. – Real Estate Records, 1916 – 1942	10 – 3
	Papers, Ralph Hamlin, Inc., 1937	10 – 4

Papers, Ralph Hamlin, Inc., 1938 – 1946	10 – 5
Papers, Ralph Hamlin, Inc., 1939 – 1940	10 – 6
Correspondence from 20 th Century Manufacturing Co., 1901	11ov – 1
Expense Ledger, 1900 – 1903	11ov – 2
Expense Ledger, 1909 – 1915	11ov – 3
Financial Audit Reports, Ralph C. Hamlin (as an individual), 1938 – 1950	11ov – 4
[Financial Records of Ralph Hamlin], 1897	11ov – 5
[Financial Records of Ralph Hamlin], 1913 – 1946	11ov – 6
Advertisement – Franklin Motors, Inc., undated	11ov – 6A
Booklet, Holiday Promotion, published by Franklin Motors, Inc., 1922	11ov – 7
Correspondence, Franklin Motors, Inc., 10/30/1929 to 3/25/1932	11ov – 8
Correspondence, Franklin Motors, Inc., 1930	11ov – 9
Papers, Franklin Motors, Inc., 1934	11ov – 10
Stock Journal and Ledger, 1926 – 1942	11ov – 10A
Certificate of Membership from National Automotive Dealers Association, Ralph Hamlin Motors, Inc., 1935	11ov – 10B
Dealer Bulletin, Ralph Hamlin Motors, Inc., 1940	11ov – 11
Financial Audit Reports, Ralph Hamlin Motors, Inc., 1937 – 1939	11ov – 12
Financial Audit Reports, Ralph Hamlin Motors, Inc., 1940 – 1949	11ov – 13
Financial Statements, Ralph Hamlin Motors, Inc., 1940 – 1946	11ov – 14
Financial Statements, Ralph Hamlin Motors, Inc., 1946 – 1949	11ov – 15
Financial Statements, Ralph Hamlin Motors, Inc., 1947– 1950	11ov – 16
Letter, Promotional, Ralph Hamlin Motors, Inc., 1937	11ov – 17
Papers, Ralph Hamlin Motors, Inc., 1938 – 1942	11ov – 18
Financial and Banking Records, Ralph Hamlin Motors, Inc., and Ralph Hamlin, Inc.	12ov – 1
Timber Canyon Oil Corporation Records, 1920 – 1947 (dissolved 11/25/1947)	12ov – 2
Timber Canyon Oil Corporation Stock Certificates, 1919 – 1942	12ov – 3
Timber Canyon Oil Corporation Organization Minutes, 8/15/1918 to 11/1946	12ov – 4
Timber Canyon Oil Corporation, Papers, 1947 – 1948	12ov – 5
Franklin Oil Co. of California, Prospectus, 1921	12ov – 6
Book – <i>Mechanics' Pocket Memoranda</i> , by the International Correspondence Schools, Scranton, PA: The Colliery Engineer School, 1900.	12ov – 7
Book – <i>Caskell's Compendium of Forms</i> , by Loomis T. Palmer, Chicago: Fort Dearborn Publishing Co., 1894.	12ov – 8
Ledger (cash journal), March, 1905 – October, 1912	14ov – 1

Series 9. Taped interviews and transcriptions, 1967, undated. .42 linear feet

This series contains interviews with Hamlin conducted by NHM History curator Jim Zordich recorded on ten (10) Scotch magnetic tapes. The interviews were transcribed; the 143

transcribed pages are handwritten and undated. Also one (1) tape of an interview by Ralph Story in 1967 for the KNXT *Ralph Story's Los Angeles* show (digitized in February 2023). Series 9 is housed in Box 19ov.