

Collection #  
M 1465  
OM 0737

**PREST-O-LITE AND LINDE COMPANIES  
COLLECTION, 1911–1969**

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## **COLLECTION INFORMATION**

**VOLUME OF COLLECTION:** 4 Manuscript boxes; 1 box black and white photographs; 1 oversize folder; 1 flat file folder

**COLLECTION DATES:** 1911–1969

**PROVENANCE:** Robert W. Badger, Greenwood, Indiana, April, 2016

**RESTRICTIONS:** None

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**ALTERNATE FORMATS:**

**RELATED HOLDINGS:**

**ACCESSION NUMBER:** 2016.0116

**NOTES:**

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

Prest-O-Lite was started in 1904 by Carl G. Fisher, James Allison, and P.C. Avery as the Concentrated Acetylene Company. It is credited for producing the first effective automobile headlights. The lights contained acetylene gas cannisters that were used to produce power.

Avery withdrew from the partnership in 1906, and Fisher and Allison changed the name to Prest-O-Lite. The process of producing the gas-filled cylinders was dangerous, and there were often explosions. The first two Prest-o-Lite buildings were located near the downtown Indianapolis area, so Allison and Fisher decided to build a plant on 16<sup>th</sup> Street near the racetrack in Speedway in 1912. Two years later, the company acquired the Pumpelly Battery Company and began manufacturing batteries.

Fisher and Allison sold the business to Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation in 1917, which produced batteries at the facilities until 1927 when it was then sold to the Electric Auto-Lite Company. Union Carbide also acquired the German-based Linde Company, producers of oxy-acetylene gases and cannisters which were also being produced at the Speedway facility. Batteries continued to be made at the Speedway facility until it ceased production in 1947. The Linde Company continued producing gases and containers at the Speedway facility into the 1960s.

### Sources:

*Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994.

“The Prest-O-Lite Story: Union Carbide Corporation, Linde Division,” n.d.  
[www.firstsuperspeedway.com/sites/default/files/Prest-O-Lite.pdf](http://www.firstsuperspeedway.com/sites/default/files/Prest-O-Lite.pdf)

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains materials for both the Prest-O-Lite and the Linde Companies.

Prest-O-Lite items include early correspondence from owners Carl G. Fisher and James Allison pertaining to the company's business acquisitions, finances, and customer relations, 1911–1919. There is also significant items pertaining to advertising and public relations items as well as product catalogs and newsletters, 1920–1956.

Among the items specifically related to the Linde Company are catalogs; public relations correspondence and newspaper clippings; company publications including the monthly *Inner Cone* which highlighted advances and product news, 1929–1938; and photographs, particularly from the 1959 fatal explosion.

There are also materials relating to the company's war efforts including War Department Publications, 1943, and photographs of the "E" Award presentation, 4 February 1944.

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