



John R. Johnson and Wallace Hume Carothers correspondence 1842

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Summary Information

Repository:	Manuscripts and Archives
Creator - crp:	Johnson, John R. (John Raven), 1900-1988
Creator - crp:	Carothers, Wallace Hume, 1896-1937
Title:	John R. Johnson and Wallace Hume Carothers correspondence
ID:	1842
Date [inclusive]:	1926-1936
Physical Description:	0.5 Linear Feet
Physical Description:	39 items.
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	John Raven Johnson (1900-1988) was a professor of chemistry at Cornell University from 1930 until his retirement in 1965. He also served as a consultant to E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company from 1937 until 1951, where he worked for the Organic Chemicals Department. Wallace Hume Carothers (1896-1937) was a chemist and inventor of Neoprene artificial rubber and Nylon synthetic fiber. He worked as a chemist in E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company's Fundamental Research Program from 1928 until his death in 1937. This collection consists of correspondence between Johnson and Carothers, who were close friends as well as colleagues. The letters are both professional and personal in nature. Several letters discuss laboratory research work in polymer chemistry and the role of the catalyst.

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Biographical Note

Wallace Hume Carothers (1896-1937) was a chemist and inventor of Neoprene artificial rubber and Nylon synthetic fiber. He worked as a chemist in E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company's Fundamental Research Program from 1928 until his death in 1937. Carothers was educated in the public schools of Des Moines, Iowa; he received his bachelor's degree at Tarkio College in Missouri and a doctorate in organic chemistry at the University of Illinois. In 1926, he was appointed instructor of organic chemistry

at Harvard University. Two years later, Carothers was selected to head the research unit in organic chemistry at the DuPont Company.

At DuPont, Carothers' work focused on polymerization and the ways in which polymers structurally analogous to cellulose and silk could be prepared. In early 1930, the chemists in Carothers' laboratory produced neoprene (synthetic rubber) and the first laboratory-synthesized fiber. In 1934, still working on polymerization theory, Carothers produced the first polyamide fiber which was later to become known as Nylon. During the next two years, Carothers suffered frequent bouts of depression. On April 29, 1937, three weeks after the basic Nylon patent application was filed, he committed suicide.

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Biographical Note

John Raven Johnson (1900-1988) was a professor of chemistry at Cornell University from 1930 until his retirement in 1965. He also served as a consultant to E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company from 1937 until 1951, where he worked for the Organic Chemicals Department.

Johnson received his Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Illinois, where he studied with Professor Roger Adams. At Illinois, Johnson became a close friend of Wallace Carothers, who in 1928 joined the Chemical Department of the DuPont Company, where he headed the Organic Chemistry Section that developed Nylon.

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Scope and Contents

The correspondence is both professional and personal in nature. Letters describe Carothers' early months working for the DuPont Company and the ease with which he made the transition from academic life at Harvard University to the business world. In 1934 to 1935, Carothers described the research that he was doing in polymer chemistry which would eventually lead to the development of Nylon. In many of these letters, Carothers and Johnson speculate about the role of the catalyst.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Revision Description

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Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research.

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Related Materials

Related Materials

Wallace Hume Carothers papers (Accession 1896), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Oral history project notes on Wallace Hume Carothers (Accession 1985), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Oral history interviews on Wallace Carothers (Accession 1994.311), Audiovisual Collections and Digital Initiatives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Wallace Hume Carothers correspondence (Accession 2255), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Wallace Hume Carothers photographs (Accession 2001.224), Audiovisual Collections and Digital Initiatives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Wallace Hume Carothers letters to Frances Gelvin Spencer (Accession 2435), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Wallace Hume Carothers material on Nylon (Accession 2726), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Chemistry, Organic
- Industrial chemists
- Nylon
- Polymerization
- Correspondence.
- Textile fibers, Synthetic
- E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company. Experimental Station