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Smithsonian Libraries Digitizes E.F. Caldwell and Co. Archives

The Metropolitan New York Library Council has given the Smithsonian Institution Libraries a \$10,000 grant to digitize one of the Libraries' most popular archives—the E.F. Caldwell and Co. collection. Caldwell and Co. was America's premier producer of lighting and other metal objects during the turn of the 20th century through the 1940s. The archives are located in the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum Library in New York City. This massive digitization project will feature a database of over 35,000 Caldwell photos and drawings (www.sil.si.edu/DigitalCollections/Caldwell).

Caldwell and Co. became part of the fabric of American history during the early and mid-1900s. Notable clients of Caldwell lighting fixtures included the Rockefellers, the Carnegies and the Roosevelts, and the company was also commissioned for famous landmarks such as the Grand Central Terminal, Radio City Music Hall and the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City. Caldwell manufactured unique and intricate lighting fixtures in its Manhattan factory, such as chandeliers, electrified lamps and wall sconces, which were then shipped to prominent residences all over the United States.

The digitization of the Caldwell archives will bring unprecedented access to this vast collection. Before this project, researchers faced great challenges using the collection due to the fragility of physical archives, the archives' location in New York City and the difficulty of searching through unidentified pieces in the collection. In February 2009, Web site visitors will be able to search through 25,000 photographs organized by account numbers, view more than 300 examples of Caldwell lighting fixtures in distinguished New York City buildings and read a historical essay about the company.

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