

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

Title: Victor L. Ochoa Papers

Collection Date(s): circa 1894-1945

Extent and Forms of Material: .50 cubic foot (2 boxes)

Creator: Victor L. Ochoa

Abstract: The papers document Victor L. Ochoa, Mexican American inventor of the Ochoaplane, orinthopter (an aircraft that flies by flapping its wings), a windmill, magnetic brakes, a wrench and a reversible motor. The papers include correspondence, photographs, patents, both U.S. and foreign, drawings and typescripts for a short story, "The Making of an American," and a novel *The Cycle of Life or Professor Mimo Abas: The Wise Man of the Land of Moctezuma*.

Repository: Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. archivescenter@si.edu 202-633-3270 www.americanhistory.si.edu/archives

Collection Number: AC0590

Processing Note: Processed by Alison L. Oswald, archivist, February, 1999.

INFORMATION FOR USERS OF THE COLLECTION

Conditions Governing Access: The collection is open for research use.

Physical Access: Researchers must handle unprotected photographs with gloves.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use: Copyright held by the Smithsonian Institution. Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Reproduction permission from Archives Center: reproduction fees may apply.

Preferred Citation: Title and date of item, Victor L. Ochoa Papers, dates, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, box number X, folder number XX, digital file number XXXXXXXXX

IN-DEPTH INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLECTION

Administrative/Biographical History: Victor Leaton Ochoa (1850-1945?) was born in Ojinaga, Mexico. Ochoa later moved to Presidio del Norte, Texas, (Presidio is on the Rio Grande River)

and became a United States citizen in 1889. Ochoa was the son of Juan Ochoa, a customs collector in Presidio.

Victor Ochoa was a journalist/writer, founding (*El Hispano-American* and *El Correo del Bravo*); a politician (running unsuccessfully in El Paso); a union leader founding (*La Union Occidental Mexicana* to help Mexicans in the United States preserve their language); a revolutionary (opposing the Mexican government of President Porfirio Díaz, the President of Mexico from 1876 to 1880 and from 1884 to 1911); a prisoner, corporate president of the International Airship Company and the Ochoa Tool and Machine Company; miner and inventor. Ochoa was bitterly opposed to the dictatorship of President Porfirio Díaz. He became involved in the fight by Mexican rebels in the early 1890s to overthrow Díaz. Some consider Ochoa to be the originator of the revolt, and Díaz ultimately issued a \$50,000 reward for Ochoa, "dead or alive." Ochoa's participation in Mexican revolutionary activities led to his arrest in 1894 for supplying and hiring Mexican dissidents in El Paso, Texas, thus violating United States neutrality laws. As a result of his illegal actions, a federal warrant was issued for Ochoa's arrest. The Texas Rangers as well as the U.S. Marshal Service sought Ochoa. In October of 1894, Pecos County Sheriff A. J. Royal and Texas Ranger James W. Fulgham arrested Victor Ochoa while rounding up suspected horse thieves. Ochoa was put in the Pecos County Jail and promptly escaped. He was eventually found and returned to El Paso. Ochoa was ultimately sentenced to two years in federal prison at Kings County Penitentiary in Brooklyn. Ochoa was stripped of his United States citizenship, but it was ultimately restored by Theodore Roosevelt in 1906.

Ochoa was as committed to inventing as he was to his revolutionary ideals. He was known to reside in the New York City and the Patterson, New Jersey area in the late 1890s. Ochoa's issued patents list him at New York, New Jersey, and Texas addresses. He also worked with Watson E. Coleman, a solicitor of patents in Washington, D.C. Coleman helped Ochoa file for and obtain patents in other countries such as Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, and Spain. Ochoa's patents include: a magnetic brake (US Patent No. 867,147); a reversible motor (US Patent No. 718,508); a rail magnetic brake (US Patent No. 873,587); a windmill (US Patent No. 1,319,174); and a wrench (US Patent No. 1,417,196 and 1,454,333).

Ochoa had a strong interest in aviation. He created the "Ochoaplane," circa 1908-1911. He designed it with an automobile in mind, and it included collapsible wings so that it could be housed in a garage or barn. He also incorporated the International Airship Company in Patterson, New Jersey, presumably to manufacture his "airships." Ochoa was imprisoned at the United States Penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas on February 18, 1917 and was released on May 1, 1918 upon completion of his sentence. In a September 17, 1917, letter written from Leavenworth, Ochoa asks the Naval Consulting Board to consider the use of metal wings constructed in such a manner that they fold back and over the body of the airship. Ochoa called this his fluttering wing machine. Ochoa's letter is deliberate, and he writes, "There was no desire on my part of abandoning this and three other patents that at this time went to issue. At that time I was taken sick with consumption and my struggle for life then became my sole purpose and then there arose other circumstances, over which I had no control, to prevent my taking them out."

Ochoa married Amanda Cole, granddaughter of Thomas Cole, the American painter, whose most famous painting is *The Last of the Mohicans*. They had one son, Stephen Ochoa. Victor Ochoa returned to Sinaloa, Mexico, in 1936, and it is believed he died there in 1945.

Source: Romo, David Dorado. *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juarez: 1893-1923*. El Paso, Texas: Cinco Puntos Press, 2005.

Scope and Content: The papers document Victor Leaton Ochoa, Mexican American inventor of the Ochoaplane, orinthopter (an aircraft that flies by flapping its wings), a windmill, magnetic brakes, a wrench and a reversible motor. The papers include correspondence, photographs, patents, both United States and foreign, drawings and typescripts for a short story and a novel.

Series 1, Correspondence, 1895-1945, primarily consists of documents exchanged between Ochoa and the United States Patent Office, patent attorneys, the United States Naval Consulting Board and the War Department Board of Ordnance and Fortification about Ochoa's inventions.

Series 2, Financial Materials, 1911, 1912, undated, contains one International Airship Company capital stock certificate from 1911 and several cancelled checks bearing Ochoa's signature. All of the checks were written to A. G. O'Rourke and were drawn on the First National Bank of El Paso, Texas. There is one First Texas Prudential Insurance Company envelope for an insurance policy Ochoa purchased. The policy envelope is undated.

Series 3, Patent Materials, 1901-1925, is divided into four subseries: Subseries 1, Patent Papers, 1922; 1925; Subseries 2, Drawings, undated; Subseries 3, Foreign Patents, 1901-1922; and Subseries 4, United States Patents, 1903-1922. The series contains typescript patent application documents, drawings for patent applications and United States and foreign issued patents to Ochoa. The Great Britain patent (#192,617) for improvements to a wrench was also issued to co-inventor William Conrad Worth.

Series 4, Writings, undated, contains two pieces written by Ochoa. "The Making of An American," is a short story written by Ochoa as related by Pedro Calderon of San Luis Potosi, Mexico. The story is undated, but discusses the "American dream" broadly from the perspective of Calderon who eventually joins the United States Army, fighting during World War I, and Calderon's eventual receipt of United States citizenship. Also included is Ochoa's a novel *The Cycle of Life or Professor Mimo Abas: The Wise Man of the Land of Moctezuma*.

Series 5, Photographs, 1933, undated, consists of black-and-white images of Ochoa and his inventions. The inventions include his "Ochoa Airplane" and pliers.

Series 6, Newspaper Clippings, circa 1894-1912, consists of photocopies of newspaper articles featuring Ochoa.

Series 7, Miscellaneous printing blocks, undated, contains two wood and copper block printing plates bearing the International Airship Company logo.

System of Arrangement: The collection is arranged into seven series.

- Series 1, Correspondence, 1895-1945**
Series 2, Financial materials, 1911, 1912, undated
Series 3, Patent Materials, 1901-1925
 Subseries 1, Patent Papers, 1922; 1925
 Subseries 2, Drawings, undated
 Subseries 3, Foreign Patents, 1901-1922
 Subseries 4, United States Patents, 1903-1922
Series 4, Writings, undated
Series 5, Photographs, 1933, undated
Series 6, Newspaper Clippings, circa 1894-1912
Series 7, Miscellaneous Printing Blocks, undated

Languages: Some materials in Czech, French, German, Japanese, Spanish, Dutch, and Polish.

Acquisition Information: This collection was donated by Elizabeth Victoria Ochoa on May 17, 1997.

Existence and Location of Originals: Record Group 129, Records of the Bureau of Prisons held by the National Archives, Central Plains Division, Kansas City, Missouri (<http://www.archives.gov/central-plains/kansas-city/>), contains a 54 page file on Victor L. Ochoa's imprisonment.

Access Points:

Subject/Topical:

Inventors -- 1890-1960
Aeronautics
Inventions -- 20th century
Airplanes

Geographic:

El Paso (Texas)
Mexico -- 20th century
Texas -- 20th century

Form/Genre:

Correspondence -- 1930-1950
Clippings
Drawings
Patents
Photographs

CONTAINER LISTING

Box	Folder	
1	1	Series 1, Correspondence, 1895-1945
		Series 2, Financial materials, 1911, 1912, undated
	2	International Airship stock certificate, 1911
	3	Cancelled checks, 1922
		Series 4, Patent Materials, 1901-1925
		<u>Subseries 1, Patent Papers, 1922; 1925</u>
2	1	<u>Subseries 2, Drawings, undated</u>
		<u>Subseries 3, Foreign Patents, 1901-1922</u>
1	5	Belgium, #242432 1922
	6	Czechoslovakia, [#15843?] 1922
	7	Czechoslovakia, #15871 1925
	8	France, #159439 1922
	9	France, #551,500 1923
	10	Germany, [#12889?] 1922
	11	Great Britain, #192,617 1922-1923
	12	Japan, 1922
	13	Mexico, #21490 1922
	14	Netherlands, #22003 1922
	15	Poland, [1922?]
	16	Spain, #81642 1922
		<u>Subseries 3, United States Patents, 1903-1922</u>
	17	Reversible Motor, #718,508 1903 January 13
	18	Magnetic Brake, #867,147 1907 September 24
	19	Rail Magnetic Brake, #873,587 1907 December 10
	20	Windmill, #1,319,174 1919 October 21

	21	Wrench, #1,417,196 1922 May 23
	22	Wrench, #1,454,333 1922 March 15
		Series 5, Writings, undated
	23	<i>The Cycle of Life or Professor Mimo Abas</i> (original), undated
	24	<i>The Cycle of Life or Professor Mimo Abas</i> (reference copy), undated
	25	"The Making of an American," undated
	26	Series 6, Photographs, 1933, undated
	27	Series 7, Newspaper Clippings, circa 1894-1912