

Aluminium Heritage

Pierre Meynard¹ and Olivier Lambert²

1. President

2. Scientific Coordinator

Institute for the history of aluminium, Clichy, France

Corresponding author: p.meynard@hystalu.org

Abstract

The history of Aluminium is a valuable mirror of changes in many areas, including technology, business, social habits and culture. The Institute for the history of aluminium (IHA) builds up a body of knowledge on those changes by bringing together specialists from several disciplines at the crossroads of industry and social studies. In parallel, the Institute coordinates and supports initiatives to protect and enhance the value of the Aluminium industry's heritage. Finally, it disseminates its work through an active policy of publications and events. For that purpose, the Institute advises companies in the aluminium sector on the conservation and use of their historical archives ; manages its own iconographic archives (approximately 50 000 photos) ; preserves three collections : the Jean-Plateau- IHA collection of objects illustrating the evolution of aluminium's various uses (25 000 19th and 20th century pieces) and the J.A Gregoire Automobile Collection illustrating the pioneering work of Gregoire to improve the use of aluminium in cars, and the collection of the aluchromiste R. Van Loo; strive to make the public aware of the history of a material which is not well-known : publishes reference works, such as company, industrial site or organization histories (Aluminium de Grèce, European Aluminium), participation to international events such as the XIXth World Economic History Congress; provides documentary resources technical and historical expertise and loans of objects for temporary exhibitions ; provides to researchers a documentary resource center for information retrieval and manages a global internet portal for aluminium heritage.

Keywords: Institute for the history of aluminium, Aluminium Heritage, Aluminium companies' archives, Jean Plateau collection, Gregoire automobile collection.

1. Introduction

The history of aluminium is a valuable mirror of changes in many areas, including technology, business, social habits, and culture. The Institute for the History of Aluminium based in Paris for more than 30 years is a non-profit organization with more than 200 members. It builds up a body of knowledge on those changes by bringing together specialists from several disciplines at the crossroads of industry and social studies (IHA's team of experts is composed of archivists, iconographer, historian) In parallel, the Institute coordinates and supports initiatives to protect and enhance the value of the aluminium industry's heritage [1]. Finally, it disseminates its work through an active policy of publications and events.

For that purpose, the Institute:

- IHA advises companies in the aluminium sector on the conservation and use of their historical archives [2]. It organizes the sorting out, inventory and filing of collections
- IHA manages its own iconographic archives (approximately 50 000 photos) the collection is constantly enriched by donations, bequests, or purchases
- IHA preserves 3 collections:

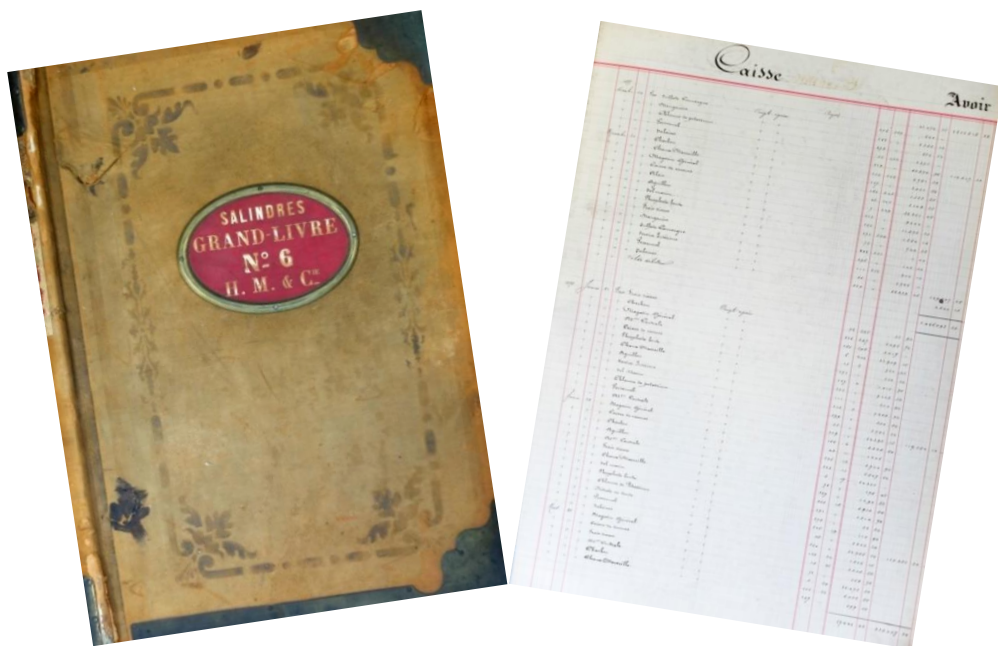


Figure 1. Ledgers of Salindres. IHA Collection.



Figure 2. Aluminium of Greece, Saint-Nicolas plant, general view (1963-1966). © Photographic collection of Aluminium Français.



Figure 3. Aluminium of Greece, view of the city Aspra Spitia (1963-1966).
© Photographic collection of Aluminium Français.

2. Collection Jean Plateau

The first collection is the Jean-Plateau - IHA collection of objects [3] illustrating the evolution of aluminium's various uses (25 000 19th and 20th century pieces). When Jean Plateau retired, the former manager of a major research center of the Pechiney group developed a passion for the collection of aluminium objects dating from 1855 to the present days.

It includes both precious objects in the 19th century such as jewels, opera glasses, fans, table ware, then at the start of the 20th century, everyday objects such as aluminium kitchenware.



Figure 4. Piece of jewellery in aluminium, broach.
© Jean Plateau IHA – Collection (19th century).



**Figure 5. Auto Thermos pressure cooker, die-cast aluminium, wood, plastic.
© Jean Plateau IHA - Collection (around 1926).**



Figure 6. Mickey Mouse moneybox, die-cast aluminium. © Jean Plateau IHA – Collection.

3. Collection Jean-Albert Gregoire

The second collection is the Jean-Albert Grégoire Automobile Collection [4]. From the 1920s to the 1970s, engineer Gregoire built his career as an independent inventor and researcher working for the car industry. In parallel, he built up a collection of vehicles which had incorporated his innovations, as well as other objects linked to the automobile world. This collection, now the property of the Institute for the history of aluminium is witness to the engineer's technical inventiveness. It is an essential tool for understanding his efforts in adapting aluminium to car construction and his pioneering experiments in the field of electric cars. It also bears witness to this precursor's early awareness of road safety and energy conservation issues.

COLLECTION
Grégoire IHA



Figure 7. Grégoire-Sport (1955). Jean-Albert Grégoire – IHA Collection. Photograph of Thierry Renaux © IHA photographic collection.



Figure 8. Prototype CGE-Grégoire (1970-1972). Jean-Albert Grégoire – IHA Collection. Photograph of Thierry Renaux © IHA photographic collection.

4. Collection Raoul Van Loo

The third collection is the collection of the aluchromist Raoul Van Loo: he belongs to a movement of young Belgium artists: the aluchromists who worked in the 1960s on anodized aluminium sheet and seek to renovate the art of the fresco and escape to the easel picture [5].



Figure 9. « Spirit of the sea », Raoul Van Loo. © IHA photographic collection.

5. Other Activities of IHA

- IHA strives to make the public aware of the history of a material which is not well-known by the general public: publishes reference works, such as company, industrial site or organization histories (Aluminium of Greece in 1996; Aluminium passion in 2013; Constellium Neuf-Brisach 50 years of industrial excellence in 2017; the journey of European aluminium 40 years and counting in 2021)
- IHA published 66 issues of Journal for the history of aluminium (twice per year)

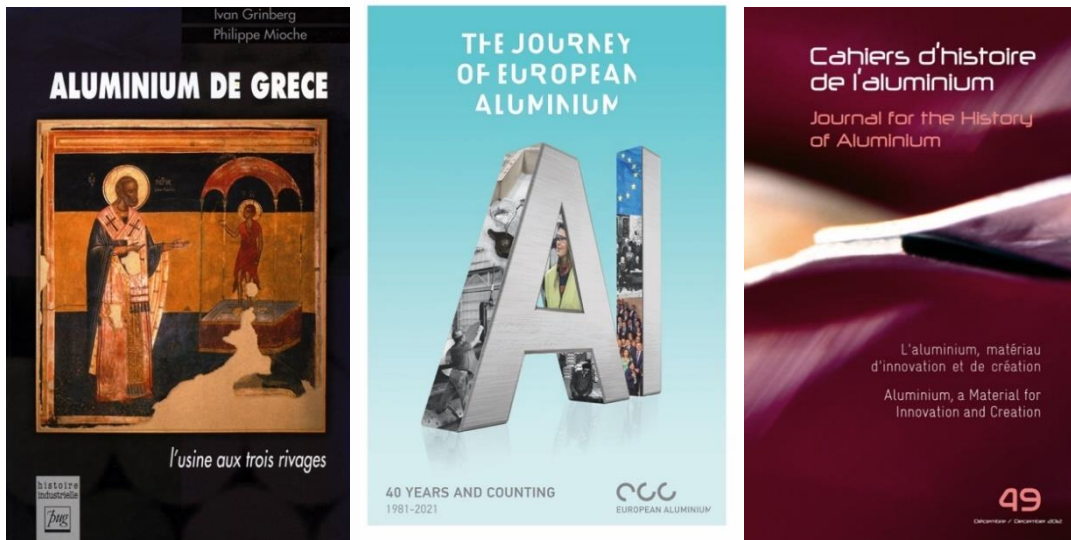


Figure 10. IHA's publications (1996, 2021 and 2012).

- IHA participates to international events such as the 19th World Economic History Congress which took place in Paris last July. The subject was « Aluminium: from the myth of the horn of plenty to the imperatives of the circular economy » (from the 19th to the 21st century) Mobilisation of resources and sustainable development?

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- IHA Provides documentary resources technical and historical expertise and loans of objects for temporary exhibitions (« Aluminium by design, jewelry to jets » Pittsburgh 2001, London, Brussels and Paris 2002-2003; « Amazing aluminium! » Essen 2008; « the hero of the kitchen: how aluminium revolutionized household products » Bauxite Museum, Tourves (France) 2021-2022)

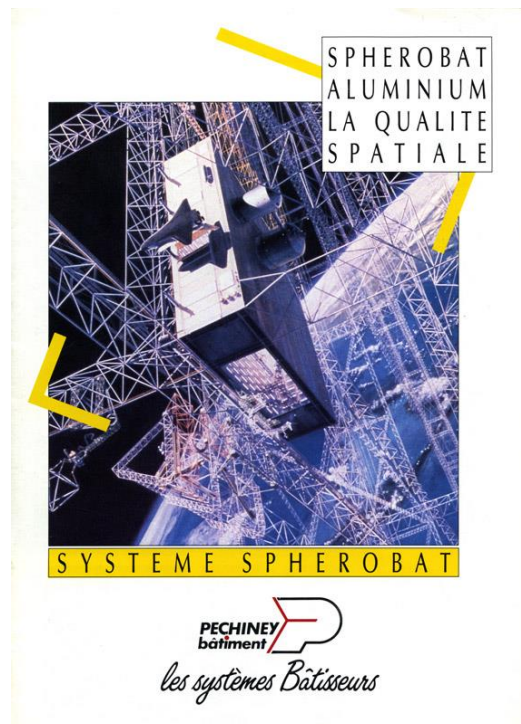


Figure 11. Aluminium Spherobat system (1987). IHA documentary collection.

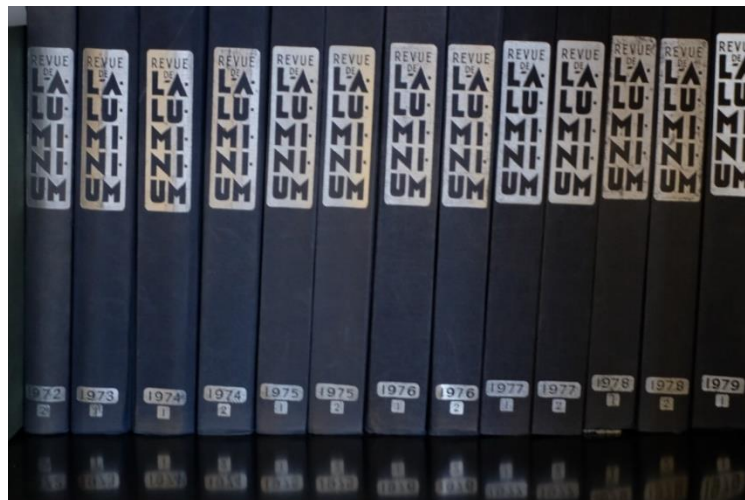


Figure 12. Review of aluminium (1924-1983). IHA documentary collection.



Figure 13. Review of aluminium n°307 (March 1963). IHA documentary collection.



Figure 14. Review of aluminium n°202 (September 1953). IHA documentary collection.



Figure 15. Exhibition « The hero of the kitchen: how aluminium revolutionised household products ». Bauxite Museum, Tourves (France), 2021-2022. © IHA photographic collection.



Figure 16. Exhibitions « Aluminium by design, jewelry to jets » (Pittsburg, 2001) and « Amazing Aluminium » (Essen, Germany, 2008).

- IHA supports Academic research: he is a tool for researchers in providing housing and support: a documentary resources center for information retrieval including more than 10 000 documents (written and oral testimonies, pictures, company newsletters, technical brochures). He is also a player: he participates to CREALU, a 4-year research program devoted to the relationship between aluminium and all forms of creation, and to FRALUBEC, a 3-year research project focused on local development and global strategy of two multinational companies in the aluminium sector in the 20th century.

Aluminium

Du métal de luxe au métal de masse.
Innovation technologique, structurations des marchés et patrimonialisation.

From luxury metal to mass commodity.
Technological innovation, market structuration, and industrial heritage

Université Paris-Sorbonne
Maison de la Recherche
Salle de Conférences (D 035)
6 et 7 décembre 2012
28 rue Serpente
75 006 - PARIS

Comité d'organisation :
Dominique Barjot
Marco Bertilorenzi

CRM
CENTRE ROLAND MOUSNIER

contacts :
marco.bertilorenzi@paris-sorbonne.fr
0133 (0) 42 70 23 86

IHA
Institut pour l'histoire de l'aluminium
Projet ANR "CREALU"
Création et Aluminium
ANR

Figure 17. Research program CREALU.

- IHA manages a global Internet portal for aluminium heritage: creation of www.culturalu.org the first global digital aluminium image library.

CULTURALU Nos ressources numériques ▼ Nous soutenir

IHA Bienvenue sur **histalu.org**
Institut pour l'histoire de l'aluminium

Rechercher sur tout le site 🔍

🏠 L'IHA L'aluminium Centre de ressources Objets et expositions Actualités Recherche Publications

La collection automobile Grégoire-IHA
L'IHA est le propriétaire d'une collection automobile unique de onze véhicules et de trois châssis mis au point par l'ingénieur Jean-Albert Grégoire. La collection est présentée dans l'exposition permanente de la Cité de l'automobile - Musée national - Collection Schlumpf à Mulhouse, et a fait l'objet d'un arrêté de classement au titre des monuments historiques.
[En savoir plus](#)

L'IHA : un centre de ressources et d'expertise sur l'aluminium

- Des collections uniques d'objets, d'images, de ressources documentaires
- Un acteur de la recherche : animation, soutien aux chercheurs, gestion de projets de recherche
- Une expertise reconnue dans la valorisation du patrimoine, l'édition, le conseil et la réalisation d'expositions...

Nos ressources numériques

Bibliothèque de l'Aluminium
CULTURALU

Figure 18. IHA website, www.histalu.org.

The screenshot shows the website 'Bibliothèque de l'aluminium CULTURALU'. The search bar contains 'passion aluminium'. The search results page displays the following information:

Passion Aluminium. Trésors de la Collection Jean Plateau-IHA
 Auteur(s) : Plateau, Jean ; Grinberg, Ivan

↓ Notice du document

Titre / Title: Passion Aluminium. Trésors de la Collection Jean Plateau-IHA = Aluminium Passion. Treasure-trove of the Collection Jean Plateau-IHA

Auteur(s) / Author(s): Plateau Jean, auteur principal ; Grinberg Ivan, auteur principal

Type de document: Ouvrage

Catégorie d'ouvrage: METHODOLOGIE-MUSEOLOGIE-ARCHIVES

Publication: s.l.: Les Editions du Mécène, 2013-09

Description: 189 p. : ill. en coul., couv. ill. en coul.; 31 cm

technique / Physical description

ISBN: 9782358960274

Langue / Language: Français ; Anglais

→ Description

→ Voir aussi

<< Retourner à la recherche

Conditions de consultation: Librement consultable

Lieu(x) de consultation: IHA (exemplaire papier)

Cote du document: IHA-LIV-2 pla 02

Figure 19. Digital aluminium library

6. Conclusion

Aluminium past heritage is the key to its future [6]. For industrial companies, grasping that heritage means drawing on their roots for strength to look ahead. It would be very exciting for us to share our know-how, to broaden our collections and network with all the aluminium people, companies, and organizations. Aluminium heritage preservation deserves an important effort from all of us. But we can help you to do it. IHA opened the way more than 30 years ago. Help the IHA to pursue its unique approach to preserve and enhance aluminium heritage.

Acknowledgements

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7. References

1. Ivan Grinberg. *Aluminium. Light at heart*. Collection Découvertes Gallimard, Gallimard, Paris, 2013, 127 pages.
2. Philippe Mioche, Ivan Grinberg. *Aluminium de Grèce. L'usine aux trois rivages*. Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, Grenoble, 1996, 318 pages.
3. Jean Plateau, Ivan Grinberg. *Aluminium Passion. Treasure-trove of the collection Jean Plateau – IHA*. Éditions du mécène, Paris, 2013, 189 pages
4. Sophie Pehlivanian, The Grégoire – Institute for the History of Aluminium Collection: an original look at the history of the automobile, *Journal for the History of Aluminium*, Institute for the History of Aluminium, n°42-43, December 2009, 7-55.
5. Maurice Victor, Boom sur l'aluchromie, *Revue de l'aluminium*, n°295, February 1962, 200-204.

6. Maurice Laparra, A portrait of aluminium, metal of dream and modernity, *Proceedings of 33rd International ICSOBA Conference*, Dubai, UAE, 29 November – 1 December 2015, Paper KN02, TRAVAUX 44, 29-43.