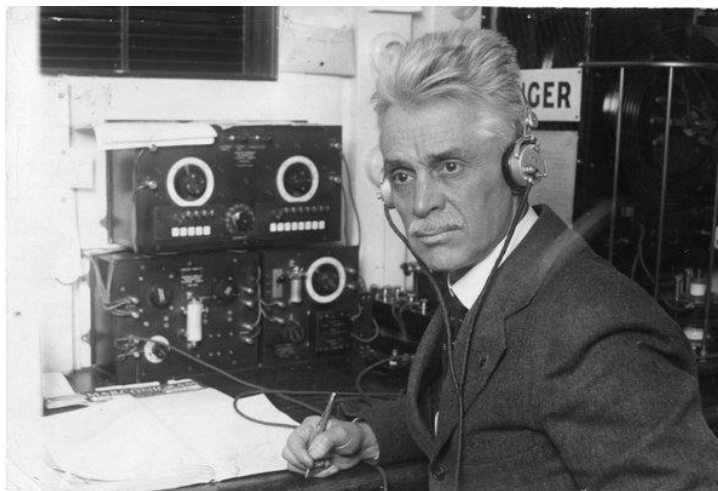




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HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY RECEIVES GRANT TO RESTORE, DIGITIZE FILMS OF HARTFORD INVENTOR HIRAM PERCY MAXIM

Early 20th-century footage highlights Hartford's industrial history, women's history



Hiram Percy Maxim seated in front of a radio. (Hartford History Center)

(Hartford, CT) - The **Hartford History Center** at **Hartford Public Library** has been awarded a grant from the **National Film Preservation Foundation** for the restoration and digitization of a collection of films taken by radio pioneer, inventor and Hartford resident Hiram Percy Maxim in the early 20th century.

The \$18,830 grant will provide for ultrasonic cleaning, a 4K scan, scene to scene color/density correction, insertion of an NFPF logo, 16mm film-out intermediate negative and silent answer print, a 16mm 400' archival can, 16mm 400' reel and creation of a digital access file. Two reels also require redimensioning. The work will be performed by Colorlab of Rockville, Maryland.

“Hiram Percy Maxim was an explorer. Whether inventing new technology such as the Maxim silencer, pioneering the American Radio Relay League, creating airplane parts, yachting or studying astronomy, Maxim was constantly seeking out new frontiers. His work has had lasting benefits, in Hartford and around the world,” said **Jennifer Sharp, archivist at the Hartford History Center**. “By preserving and digitizing this collection of films, we will have access to Hartford industrial history (footage of the Maxim Silencer plant), women’s history (the Hartford Garden Club) and views of Hartford flooded (November 1927) and from the sky. And we can’t wait to share the images of Hartford residents Dr. Thomas and Mrs. Katharine Hepburn diving at Fenwick.”

Maxim was born in Brooklyn, New York. His father, Sir Hiram Stevens Maxim, was an inventor, as was his uncle, Hudson Maxim. Hiram Percy Maxim married Josephine Hamilton, the daughter of a former Maryland governor. They had two children, Hiram Hamilton and Percy.

Maxim first came to Hartford in 1895 to work for the Pope Manufacturing Company. His initial task, accomplished two years later, was the creation of the Columbia electric motor carriage. He continued working as an automobile designer and engineer until the formation of Maxim Silent Firearms Co. in 1908. The Maxim silencer, used to suppress the sound of firearm discharge, was eventually discontinued. Maxim found ways to use the technology to eliminate noise in other ways, such as through ventilating spaces.

Today, Maxim is studied as a result of his hobbies. A Hartford Courant article at the time of Maxim’s death states that in the years preceding passage of the first U.S. radio law in 1912, “his amateur station was in communication over the limit of ranges possible in those early days of radio.” In 1914 Maxim founded the American Radio Relay League, which remains in operation today. Internet searches indicate that Maxim is revered by amateur radio enthusiasts.

Relevant to this project, Maxim also enjoyed motion picture photography. In 1926 he was instrumental in the formation of the Amateur Cinema League, which also exists to this day. An award was named for him following his death.

Hiram Percy Maxim passed away in Colorado, while on a trip to California. The trip was to include astronomical research in Arizona, another of his many hobbies.

Maxim’s wife, Josephine, has a place in Hartford and Connecticut’s history, too. Her accomplishments included being the first Connecticut woman appointed to the Democratic National Convention, serving as a member of the Hartford Board of Education and an executive committee member of the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association and founding the Connecticut League of Women Voters. She is featured in some of the films, including one about the meeting of her garden club. In addition to depicting engineering history, Maxim’s films also provide a glimpse into the lives of Hartford’s society women.

The films feature both Maxim and his wife, along with their family and friends. Hartford is recorded in many ways, including footage of flooding in November 1927 and [the view from the](#)

[city's first air mail plane](#). Reels show young children at the orphan asylum, and ladies touring gardens. Maxim's humor often comes through, with a Friday the 13th reel that plays backward and a scene of Paul Butterworth's "house warming" (the building was on fire). Outside of Hartford, Maxim captured the Hepburn family diving at Fenwick and several trips to locations throughout the United States.

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About Hartford Public Library

With roots dating to 1774, Hartford Public Library remains at the forefront of redefining the urban library experience in the 21st century. With seven locations throughout the city, the library provides education, intellectual enrichment and cultural development for thousands of children, youth and adults every year. Hartford Public Library has also gained local and national recognition for its wide range of new initiatives and partnerships designed to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic city and region, including immigration services, employment assistance and youth leadership training. www.hplct.org.