

Finding Aid to James Loflin's Bally-Midway-Williams Collection, 1980-1997

Summary Information

Title: James Loflin's Bally-Midway-Williams collection

Creator: James Loflin (primary)

ID: 115.94

Date: 1980-1997 (inclusive); 1996-1997 (bulk)

Extent: 4 linear feet

Language: The materials in this collection are in English.

Abstract: James Loflin's Bally-Midway-Williams collection is a compilation of original copies of documents from a collector who retains the records of Bally-Midway-Williams. The bulk of the materials are dated between 1996 and 1997, though some are undated.

Repository:

Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong
One Manhattan Square
Rochester, New York 14607
585.263.2700
library@museumofplay.org

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Use: This collection is open for research use by staff of The Strong and by users of its library and archives. Though the donor has not transferred intellectual property rights (including, but not limited to any copyright, trademark, and associated rights therein) to The Strong, he has given permission for The Strong to make copies in all media for museum, educational, and research purposes.

Custodial History: James Loflin's Bally-Midway-Williams collection was donated to The Strong in January 2015 as a gift from James Loflin. The papers were accessioned by The Strong under Object ID 115.94.

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Controlled Access Terms

Personal Names

- Gomez, George
- Kordek, Steve
- Loflin, James
- Ritchie, Steve

Corporate Names

- Bally Midway Mfg. Co.
- Williams Electronics, Inc.
- WMS Industries, Inc.

Subjects

- Atari Games
- Bally Midway Mfg. Co.
- Electronic games
- NBA Fastbreak (Pinball game)
- Pinball machines
- Pinball machines--History
- Williams Electronics, Inc.
- WMS Industries, Inc.

Historical Note

What we now recognize as pinball evolved in America during the 20th century, with several well-known companies leading the way.

Raymond Moloney founded the Bally Manufacturing Company in 1932 to make pinball games. Along with pinball, Bally fabricated mechanical slot machines and gambling devices. (During World War II, Bally halted production of recreational items and instead made ammunition and airplane parts.) The addition of flippers and bumpers transformed pinball from a gambling machine to a skill game. Bally purchased Midway Manufacturing Co., another amusements manufacturer, in 1969. Midway operated under its own name for another decade, until Bally merged its own pinball division with Midway's to form Bally/Midway Manufacturing in 1981.

In 1943, Harry Williams founded Williams Manufacturing Company in Chicago, Illinois—the American center for pinball production. His company rose to prominence as one of the most important arcade and pinball game manufacturers in the United States after World War II. Williams pinball designers introduced many pinball innovations, including ramps, scoring reels, drop targets, and modern 3-inch flippers. The company was acquired and incorporated several times, resulting in company name changes (becoming Williams Electronics, Inc. in 1974 and WMS Industries in 1987).

In 1988, WMS purchased competitor Bally/Midway. The pinball division of WMS closed in 1999, after more than 50 years of designing and manufacturing electro-mechanical and solid-state pinball machines.

Collection Scope and Content Note

James Loflin's Bally-Midway-Williams collection contains a compilation of documentation from the Bally-Midway-Williams companies, as assembled by a pinball collector. Materials include a 1980 organizational chart from Williams Electronics, Inc., a production chart template [likely also from Williams Electronics, Inc.], a code chart for Bally/Midway projects, a memo from a Williams employee visit to Atari Games, a proposal for the *Star Wars: Episode I* pinball game, and a pinball playfield for NBA Fastbreak. The collection spans from 1980 through 1997, and though several items are undated, they appear to fall within this date range. Additional scope and content information can be found in the "Contents List" section of this finding aid.

James Loflin's Bally-Midway-Williams collection is arranged into two series. The materials are housed in five archival folders, stored in one map case drawer.

Related Materials

The International Center for the History of Electronic Games (ICHEG) holds more than 30 pinball machines from Bally, Midway, and Williams.

System of Arrangement

Series I: Corporate documentation, 1980-1997 and n.d

Series II: Pinball playfield drawing, 1997

Contents List

Series I: Corporate documentation, 1980-1997 and n.d

Scope and Content Note: This series contains an organization chart, a production chart template, a product code chart, a memo, and a game proposal. Of interest may be the information included in the "Proposal for *Star Wars: Episode I* pinball game," which describes an overview of the Williams/Bally Corporation and the pinball industry at large.

Map Case 1,

Drawer 1

- Folder 1 Williams Electronics, Inc. Engineering/Game Design organizational chart, January 2, 1980
- Folder 1 [Unspecified company] Design/Production Cycle chart, n.d. [likely Williams Electronics, Inc.]
- Folder 2 Atari visit memo from Steve Ritchie to Williams staff, May 8, 1996
- Folder 3 Proposal for *Star Wars: Episode I* pinball game, Williams Bally/Midway, 1997
- Folder 4 Code chart for Bally/Midway projects, n.d.

Series II: Pinball playfield drawing, 1997

Scope and Content Note: This series holds a computer-drafted pinball playfield for the game NBA Fastbreak by designer George Gomez for Williams.

- Folder 5 NBA Fastbreak pinball playfield drawing, George Gomez, n.d. [1997]