



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

John Burbidge and Cile Bellefleur-Burbidge
Wedding Design Collection, 1951-2006

NMAH.AC.0562

Catherine Keen

1997 November

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	John Burbidge and Cile Bellefleur-Burbidge Wedding Design Collection
Date:	1951-2006
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.0562
Creator:	Bellefleur-Burbidge, Cile (Creator) Priscilla of Boston. Burbidge, John (costume designer) (Creator)
Extent:	1.6 Cubic feet (3 boxes)
Language:	English .
Summary:	Includes Burbidge's design drawings for wedding gowns while employed by the Priscilla of Boston firm, and scrapbooks documenting Cile Bellefleur-Burbidge's wedding cakes.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Burbidge. The design drawings were donated in 1997 and the scrapbooks were donated in 2007.

Related Materials

Materials at the National Museum of American History

The Division of Home and Community Life has a collection of several Priscilla of Boston wedding gowns.

Processing Information

Processed by Catherine Keen, archivist, November 1997; revised by Vanessa Broussard Simmons, archivist, November 2010.

Preferred Citation

John and Cile Bellefleur-Burbidge Wedding Design Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Biographical / Historical

John Burbidge was a creative and prolific fashion designer for the Priscilla of Boston wedding gown company from the late 1940s to 1985. Burbidge, born in 1922, went to work for the Priscilla of Boston firm in 1948, after graduating from the New England School of Art and Design and serving for three years in the Army during World War II. He started out operating a button machine and gradually worked his way up to designing. His technique involved clipping photographs of models from magazines, laying tracing paper over the cut-out, and tracing the figure, onto which he added his design. After creating, in his words, "hundreds" of sketches and doodles, he would work out the details in muslin. Eventually he achieved status as Priscilla Kidder's favorite designer and was known for his use of certain features, such as bows, bustled backs, puffed sleeves and "star" bodices. The high point in his career with Priscilla of Boston was in 1971 when he designed the wedding dress worn by President Nixon's daughter Tricia at her White House wedding. The design had a strong influence on wedding fashion, though the design used was never duplicated by the company. Since leaving Priscilla of Boston, Burbidge has made a second career designing and creating dolls in elegant historic costume, while Burbidge's wife, Cile Bellefleur-Burbidge, designs and creates elegant and elaborate wedding cakes.

Scope and Contents

Includes Burbidge's design drawings for wedding gowns while employed by the Priscilla of Boston firm, and two scrapbooks documenting Cile Bellefleur-Burbidge's wedding cakes. Also included are two books written by Cile Burbidge on cake decorating.

Arrangement

The collection is divided into three series.

Series 1: Wedding Gown Design Drawings and Materials Relating to John Burbidge, 1968-1985

Series 2: Wedding Cake Scrapbooks,

Series 3: Books,

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Costume design -- 1970-1990
- Costume designers
- Fashion design -- 1970-1990
- Wedding cakes
- Wedding costume -- 1970-1990

Types of Materials:

- Design drawings
- Interviews
- Scrapbooks -- 20th century
- Sound recordings

Container Listing

Series 1: Design Sketches

Scope and Contents: Series 1, consists almost entirely of design sketches John Burbidge made for wedding gowns manufactured by Priscilla of Boston between the years 1968 and 1985. The sketches are in pencil or color pencil, and occasionally, ink. Following the sketches, there are packets of photographs of dolls in historic costume which Burbidge designed and created.

Also included are tapes and a transcript of a 1998 oral history interview of the Burbidges conducted by Claudia Kidwell, Priscilla Wood and Catherine Keen.

The design sketches have been arranged, as much as possible; in chronological order, but for several reasons this was difficult or impossible to do with certainty. John Burbidge did not date his designs, though most have design numbers on the sketches. Some sketches have two numbers on them, and to add further complication, many design numbers were re-used in later years. Further complicating the organization, the company did not consistently use certain numbered "series" for the same design lines.

For example, during one year the 1500 series would be used for gowns in the Priscilla Boutique line, another year series 1600 might be used. Dating was done by comparison with advertising tear sheets and publicity photographs found in the Priscilla of Boston Collection, (ACNMAH #557) and with the illustrated seasonal style books which also are found in the Priscilla of Boston Collection. After lengthy research, only a portion of the designs were dated. These are indicated in this finding aid by italics and/or bold lettering for design numbers. Numbers which are italicized indicate designs which were dated by comparison with tear sheets or publicity photographs in the Priscilla of Boston Collection. Numbers which are in bold lettering indicate designs which were dated by comparison with illustrations in the style books located in the Priscilla of Boston Collection.

Those which are italicized and in bold lettering indicate designs which were dated by comparison with design descriptions in the style books located in the Priscilla of Boston Collection. Those which appear in neither bold lettering nor italics, but which were put into folders with specific dates were put there because they had been clipped or stapled together by Burbidge and were assumed to be from the same time period as those they were attached to. Design lines are specified, when possible, after 1976, when the style books first appear in the Priscilla of Boston Collection. Order that is not numerical was used in cases in which Burbidge had some sketches stapled together. As much as possible, sketches were kept in his order.

Box 1, Folder 1	Sketches for designs , 1968 Notes: Includes numbers 903, 904, 907, 911, 913-915, 917, 920.
Box 1, Folder 2	Sketches for designs, 1971 Notes: Includes series 8000, Bridesmaid, numbers 8000 -8010, 8012-8014, 8016, 8018, 8020, 8022, 8024, 8025
Box 1, Folder 3	Sketches for designs, 1971 Notes: Includes series 1900, Priscilla Boutique, numbers 1900-B, 1902-B
Box 1, Folder 4	Two sketches done for Tricia Nixon, 1971

Image(s): Two sketches done for Tricia Nixon. One (which is annotated "Triss") is an early design for Tricia Nixon's wedding gown. The other can be seen worn by Tricia Nixon in a newspaper photograph

Notes: One (which is annotated "Triss") is an early design for Tricia Nixon's wedding gown. The other can be seen worn by Tricia Nixon in a newspaper photograph

Box 1, Folder 5

Sketches for Spring/Summer Designs, 1974

Notes: Includes series 500, 1500, 5000. (numbers 506, 507, 560 and 1501 matches photographs in the Priscilla of Boston Papers.) Numbers include 504, 506, 507, 508, 510, 512, 560, 1500, 1501, 1502, 1503, 1508, 1509, 1510, 5001, 5003, 5007, 5008, 5009, 5011, 5025, 5037, 5038

Box 1, Folder 6

Sketches for Fall/Winter , 1974

Notes: Includes designs, series 700, 1700. Includes numbers 700, 701, 704, 1705, 1706, 1703, 1707, 1708

Box 1, Folder 7

Sketches for designs, 1974

Notes: Includes Series 6000. Numbers include 6020, 6021, 6022, 6023, 6025, 6025, (number is repeated but design is different), 6026, 6026, 6027, 6028, 6029, 6032, 6033, 6034, 6035, 6036, 6037, 6038, 6039, 6040, 6041, 6000-6002,6004, 6005, 6007, 6009, 6010, 6013, 6015, 6016, 6017, 6018, 6019, 6034,6035, 6005, 6006, 6008, 6012, 6013, 6002, 6003, 6005, 6001, 6000, 6002, 6005,6006, 6006, 6007, 6009, 6010, 6011

Box 1, Folder 8

Sketches for "Capsule" designs, 1976

Notes: Includes series 6000. Includes designs 6001, 6003, 6004, 6006, 6008, 6009

Box 1, Folder 9

Sketches for Spring/Summer designs, 1977

Notes: Includes series 900, 1900, 9000. Includes numbers 900, 902, 903, 904, 906, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916 (2), 1917, 1918, 1919, 1935 (2), 1936, 1937, 9001, 9002, 9003, 9004-9012, 9013 (2), 9014-9016, 9017, 9018, 9019, 9020-9027, 9028, 9029 (2), 9030, 9031, 9032, 9033

Box 1, Folder 10

Sketches for Fall designs, 1978, 1979

Notes: Includes series 500, 1500, 5000. Includes Priscilla design numbers 500, 501, 503, 505, 506, 507, 508, 511, 515, 516; Priscilla Boutique design numbers 1502, 1504, 1510, 1514; and Bridesmaid design numbers 1516, 5000, 5001, 5002, 5003-5006, 5008, 5012, 5013

Box 1, Folder 11

Sketches for spring designs, 1979

Notes: Includes series 600, 1600, 6000. Includes Priscilla design numbers 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606 (2), 607, 608-610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 617; Priscilla Boutique numbers 1612, 1613, 1615, 1616, 1618, 1619; Bridesmaid design numbers 6000, 6001-6004, 6005,

6006, 6007, 6008, 6009, 6010-6016, 6017, 6018-6020, 6022, 6023,
6024, 6026, 6027, 6028, 6029, 6031

Box 1, Folder 12	<p>Sketches for fall designs, 1979</p> <p>Notes: Includes series 700, 1700, 7000. Includes Priscilla design numbers 702, 719; Priscilla Boutique numbers 1702, 1708, 1709, 1710, 1711, 7000; Bridesmaid design numbers 7001, 7002, 7003, 7004, 7005, 7006, 7007</p>
Box 1, Folder 13	<p>Sketches for fall/winter designs, 1980</p> <p>Notes: Includes series 500, 900, 9000. Includes Contemporary Romantic design numbers 901, 902, 903, 904-T, 908 (2), 907, 909, 910, 913-916, 917, 918, 919; Priscilla design numbers 941, 942, 943, 500; Bridesmaid design numbers 9000, 9001, 9003, 9004, 1915B, 9005S, 9006, 9009, 9010, 9011, 9013S, 9014, 9019B/S, 9017, 9020B, 9021B</p>
Box 1, Folder 14	<p>Sketches for summer designs, 1980</p> <p>Image(s): Sketches for summer designs, series 300, 800, 800F. Includes Contemporary Romantic design numbers 801F, 802F, 804F, 805F, 806F, 807F, 808F, 809S, 811F, 813F, 814F, 815A, 816A, 817F, 818F, 819F, 820A 822F, 823S, 824F; Priscilla design numbers 809, 810, 831, 832, 833; Teeny design numbers 320, 321; Bridesmaid design numbers 8000, 8001-8009, 8011 (2), 8012-8014, 8015, 8016, 8024</p> <p>Notes: Includes series 300, 800, 800F. Includes Contemporary Romantic design numbers 801F, 802F, 804F, 805F, 806F, 807F, 808F, 809S, 811F, 813F, 814F, 815A, 816A, 817F, 818F, 819F, 820A 822F, 823S, 824F; Priscilla design numbers 809, 810, 831, 832, 833; Teeny design numbers 320, 321; Bridesmaid design numbers 8000, 8001-8009, 8011 (2), 8012-8014, 8015, 8016, 8024</p>
Box 1, Folder 15	<p>Sketches for spring/summer designs, 1981</p> <p>Notes: Includes series 50R, 500, 1500, 5000. Includes Contemporary Romantic design numbers 50R, 51R (2), 53R, 54R, 55R, 56R, 57R, 58R, 59R, 61R 62R, 63R, 64R, 65R; Priscilla design numbers 1503, 1504; Custom design numbers 500, 502; Bridesmaid design numbers 5000, 5001-5005, 5006, 5007, 5008, 5009, 5010, 5011, 5012, 5014, 5015, 5016, 5017, 5018 B/S, 5019 (5010B), 5023 B/S, 5024 B/S, 5025, 5029, 5031--5033</p>
Box 1, Folder 16	<p>Sketches for winter designs, 1982, 1981</p> <p>Notes: Includes series 600. Includes Priscilla Custom design numbers 601, 602, 605, 608, 616</p>
Box 1, Folder 17	<p>Sketches for 1982 designs</p> <p>Notes: Includes series 8800. Includes design numbers 8800, 8801, 8802, 8803, 8804, 8805, 8806, 8807, 8808, 8809</p>
Box 1, Folder 18	<p>Sketches for Spring/Summer 1982 designs</p> <p>Notes: Includes series 2-R-8-R, 700, 1700, 7000. Includes Contemporary Romantic design numbers 2-R, 6-R, 8-R; Priscilla design numbers 1704, 1707, 1712, 1716, 1728, 1729, 1732, 1733; Custom design</p>

	numbers 701, 703, 706, 715; Bridesmaid design numbers 7003, 7004, 7013, 7015, 7017
Box 1, Folder 19	<p>Sketches for 1982 designs</p> <p>Notes: Includes series 200, 600, 1200, 1600, 6000. Includes Teeny design numbers 219, 221, 220, 222; Contemporary Romantic design numbers 1216, 1221, 1223, 1224, 1225; Custom design numbers 601, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610; Priscilla design numbers 1625-1627, 1628, 1629; Bridesmaid design numbers 6000, 6001, 6002, 6003, 6005, 6006, 6008, 6014B, 6016 B/S, 6018 B/S, 6019 B/S, 6020 B/S, 6021 B/S, 6022 B/S, 6026</p>
Box 1, Folder 20	<p>Sketches for 1982/1983 designs</p> <p>Notes: Includes series 300, 400, 800, 1800, 8000. Includes Teeny design numbers 419, 421, 424; Custom design numbers: 800, 801, 806, 807, 809, 810, 811, 812, 814, 815, 818, 820, 821; Priscilla design numbers 1806, 1808, 1809, 1815, 1817, 1822, 1831; Bridesmaid design numbers 8000, 8001, 8002, 8004, 8005, 8010, 8011, 8017, 8019, 8020, 8021, 8022, 8024, 8031, 8032</p>
Box 1, Folder 21	<p>Sketches for 1983 designs</p> <p>Notes: Includes series 114, 500, 1500, 5000. Includes Teeny design numbers 114, Custom design numbers 500, 505, 512; Priscilla design numbers 1500, 1501, 1502, 1503, 1514; Bridesmaid design numbers 5004, 5001</p>
Box 1, Folder 22	<p>Sketches for 1983 designs</p> <p>Notes: Includes series 60R-73R, 900, 1900, 9000 Includes Contemporary Romantic design numbers 60R, 61R, 62R, 65R, 73R; Custom design numbers 901, 903, 902, 905, 906, 909, 910, 913; Priscilla design numbers 1901, 1914, 1916, 1922, 1924, 1928; Bridesmaid design numbers 9000, 9002, 9003, 9006, 9008, 9010, 9020, 9028</p>
Box 1, Folder 23	<p>Sketches for 1983, 1984 designs</p> <p>Notes: Includes design numbers 600, 601, 603, 604 (2), 606 (2), 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 664, 666, 1600, 1607, 1608, 6000, 6003, 6011, 6013, 6014, 6015, 6016, 6017</p>
Box 1, Folder 24	<p>Sketches for Spring/Summer 1984 designs</p> <p>Notes: Includes series 600, 1600, 6000. Includes design numbers 600, 603, 604, 607; Priscilla design numbers 1605, 1623, 1625, 1626, 1629, 6011, 6012, 6013, 6014; Bridesmaid design numbers 6004</p>
Box 1, Folder 25	<p>Sketches for 1984 designs</p> <p>Notes: Series 1700. Includes design numbers 1700, 1701</p>
Box 1, Folder 26	<p>Sketches for February, March 1985 designs</p> <p>Notes: Includes series 400, 500, 700, 1700, 1800, 7000. Includes design numbers 411, 412, 501, 701, 702, 704, 705, 708, 711, 712, 713, 714,</p>

	715, 766, 804, 1706, 1709, 1714, 1715, 1800, 1803, 1804, 1806, 7002, 7003, 7004, 7008
Box 1, Folder 27	<p>Sketches for 1985 designs</p> <p>Notes: Includes series 800, 1800, 8000. Includes Custom design numbers 802, 803, 806; Priscilla design numbers 1800, 1803, 1805, 1807, 1818; Bridesmaid design nos. 8018, 8019, 8020</p>
Box 1, Folder 28	<p>Sketches for Summer 1985 designs</p> <p>Notes: Includes series 900, 1900, 9000. Includes design numbers 900, 901, 902, 903, 906, 907, 908, 909, 911, 913, 914, 915, 916, 1912, 1928, 1929, 9011, 9013, 9020, 9021</p>
Box 1, Folder 29	<p>Sketches for 1984, 1985 designs</p> <p>Notes: Includes series 200, 700, 800 1800. Includes design numbers 200, 201, 202, 206, 209, 701, 707, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 808, 810, 811, 854, 856, 859, 1801, 1806, 1808, 1809, 1814, 1815 (2), 1818, 1822, 1824</p>
Box 1, Folder 30	<p>Undated sketches, 1980s</p> <p>Notes: Includes design numbers 1-R, 4-R, 13-R, 16-R, 84-R.</p>
Box 1, Folder 31	<p>Undated sketches</p> <p>Notes: Includes design numbers 101, 119, 122, 216, 325, 424</p>
Box 1, Folder 32	<p>Undated sketches</p> <p>Notes: Includes design numbers 500, 502 - 505, 508, 509, 1507, 1509, 1512, 5010, 5016</p>
Box 1, Folder 33	<p>Undated sketches</p> <p>Notes: Includes design numbers 1509, 1512, 1513</p>
Box 1, Folder 34	<p>Undated sketches</p> <p>Notes: Includes design numbers 500, 501, 502, 507, 510, 511, 512, 1504, 1511, 1519</p>
Box 1, Folder 35	<p>Undated sketches</p> <p>Notes: Includes design numbers 600, 603, 604, 605, 606</p>
Box 1, Folder 36	<p>Undated sketches</p> <p>Notes: includes design numbers 700, 701, 703, 705, 706, 709, 716, 717, 721, 1706</p>
Box 1, Folder 37	<p>Undated sketches</p> <p>Notes: Includes design numbers 954, 9004</p>
Box 1, Folder 38	<p>Undated sketches</p> <p>Notes: Includes design numbers 1617, 1624</p>

Box 1, Folder 39	Undated sketches Notes: Includes design numbers 1924, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1953
Box 1, Folder 40	Undated sketches Notes: Includes design numbers 5003, 5005, 5006, 5007(2), 5008, 5009 (2), 5010 (2), 5011 (2), 5014, 5015, 5016, 5017, 5020 (2), 5021, 5028, 5039, 5016, 5017, 5018, 5022, 5023, 5024, 5025, 5026, 5027, 5028, 5030, 5037, 5038
Box 1, Folder 41	Undated sketches Notes: Includes design numbers 5019, 5023, 5024, 615X, 6023, and six other unnumbered designs, but all are sketches for bridesmaid separates
Box 1, Folder 42	28 Undated sketches Notes: Includes design numbers 6000, 6003, 6004, 6008, 6010, 6012, 6014 (3)
Box 1, Folder 43	Undated sketches Notes: Includes design numbers 6000, 6001, 6032, 6033
Box 1, Folder 44	Undated sketch, design numbers 9022
Box 1, Folder 45	Undated, unnumbered sketches
Box 1, Folder 46	Undated, unnumbered sketches
Box 1, Folder 47	Undated, unnumbered sketches, photocopies
Box 1, Folder 48	Four packets of photographs of dolls wearing historic costume, Image(s): Four packets of photographs of dolls wearing historic costume, designed by John Burbidge; an advertisement for a doll and toy show Burbidge participated in, 1996; two articles about Cile Bellefleur-Burbidge's career as designer and maker of wedding cakes Notes: Designed by John Burbidge; an advertisement for a doll and toy show Burbidge participated in, 1996; two articles about Cile Bellefleur-Burbidge's career as designer and maker of wedding cakes

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Series 2: Books, 1983, 1978

2 Items

Scope and Contents: Series 3, Books, 1978; 1983 includes two publications written by Cile Bellefleur-Burbidge.

Box 1, Folder 50	Cake Decorating for Any Occasion, 1978
Box 2, Folder 3	The Fine Art of Cake Decorating, 1983
Box 3	The Fine Art of Cake Decorating, Volume 1
Box 3	The Fine Art of Cake Decorating, Volume 2

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Series 3: Oral History

Box 2, Folder 1	Oral history interview, John and Cile Burbidge, original audio cassettes, 1998
Box 2, Folder 2	Oral history interview, John and Cile Burbidge, reference audio cassettes, 1998
Box 1, Folder 49	Transcript of interview, 1998

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