



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to The California Shop Records

NMAH.AC.0572

Vanessa Broussard Simmons

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Archives Center, National Museum of American History
P.O. Box 37012
Suite 1100, MRC 601
Washington, D.C. 20013-7012
archivescenter@si.edu
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/archives>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Arrangement.....	2
Scope and Contents note.....	2
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	4

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	The California Shop Records
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.0572
Date:	1938-1942.
Extent:	1 Cubic foot
Creator:	California Shop. Kemp, Helen Misch, 1894-1948 (store owner/manager) Kemp, Barbara
Language:	English English
Digital Content:	Image(s): The California Shop Records

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Barbara Kemp

Ownership and Custodial History

Donated by Barbara Kemp, 1997.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Vanessa Broussard Simmons, August 1997.

Preferred Citation

The California Shop Records, 1938-1942, Archives Center, National Museum of American History. Gift of Barbara Kemp.

Restrictions

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Biographical / Historical

Helen Misch Kemp, the owner of the California Shop, was born April 22, 1894 in New York to Moses and Jennie Misch. In 1936, Ms. Kemp moved to California where she was worked in the women's clothing trade. Having lived in New York all her life, she began to notice a distinction in the merchandise created in California. Upon her return to New York she opened the California Shop on November 15, 1938 at 677 Madison Avenue. Kemp's intention was to provide merchandise from California craftsmen to the eastern market. California at this time was gaining a reputation for dressing the American woman. Designers from the area, who were mostly women, were known for combining chic styles with a sense of comfort, a unique blend of colors and a fine attention to detail in their ladies apparel. Kemp took annual trips to California to select the best of the western market for her customers. The California Shop sold mostly women's clothing but also offered products such as preserves, copper household utensils, cookware, trays, wastebaskets, spice jars, wall pockets, flower containers, pottery and jewelry. The shop quickly gained a wide audience, and on October 15, 1940 it moved to 674 Madison Avenue, where it occupied a larger space. Kemp closed the shop in 1942 due to the difficulties in getting merchandise from California because of the war. Helen Kemp died on February 13, 1948 at the age of 54.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of photographs, typewritten manuscripts and a book that was used as both a visitors log for the shop and a scrapbook containing newspaper and magazine clippings, announcements and invitations to fashion shows. The manuscripts document Kemp's ideas relating to why she started the California Shop. Photographs document the shop, possibly in 1941. There are also the loose pages from the California Shop's guest/scrapbook. The first few pages consist of the guest book. The remaining pages contain clippings and ephemera in reverse chronological order, left in the order that Kemp maintained them. Also includes the wooden bookends of the guestbook, with a portion of a map of the Audencia of Guadalajara used as a cover illustration.

Arrangement

Materials are arranged as a single series.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Women -- Employment
Women -- History -- 1930-1940 -- New York
Women in business -- 1930-1940
advertising -- 1930-1940 -- California
advertising -- Clothing and dress -- 1930-1940
advertising -- Clothing trade -- 1930-1940
advertising -- Fashion -- 1930-1940

Types of Materials:

Clippings -- 1930-1950

Photographs -- Black-and-white photoprints -- Silver gelatin -- 1930-1940

Scrapbooks -- 20th century

Geographic Names:

California -- Fashion -- 1930-1940

New York (N.Y.) -- Fashion -- 1930-1940

Container Listing

Box 1, Folder 1	Typewritten Manuscripts, 1938-1941
Box 1, Folder 2	Photographs of the California Shop and Photocopy of Photograph of Helen Kemp, circa 1941
Box 1, Folder 3	Guestbook, 1938-11-1939-06
Box 1, Folder 4	Guestbook, 1939-07-1941-09
Box 1, Folder 5	Scrapbook, 1940-07-1942-02
Box 1, Folder 6	Scrapbook, 1939-09-1940-07
Box 1, Folder 7	Scrapbook, 1938-11-1939-09
Box 2, Folder 1	Front cover of Guestbook/Scrapbook, 1938-1942
Box 2, Folder 2	Rear cover of Guestbook/Scrapbook, 1938-1942