



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to The California Shop Records

NMAH.AC.0572

Vanessa Broussard-Simmons

August 1997

Archives Center, National Museum of American History
P.O. Box 37012
Suite 1100, MRC 601
Washington, D.C. 20013-7012
archivescenter@si.edu
<https://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	3
Container Listing	4

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	The California Shop Records
Date:	1938-1942
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.0572
Creator:	California Shop. Kemp, Helen Misch, 1894-1948 (store owner/manager) Kemp, Barbara
Extent:	1 Cubic foot (2 boxes)
Language:	English .
Summary:	The records of the California Shop, a shop specializing in West Coast decorative arts located in New York City, New York.
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.

Related Materials

Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Collections relating to women in business and fashion industry
Estelle Ellis Collection (AC0423)
Brownie Wise Papers (AC0509)
Dorothy Shaver Papers (AC0631)
NW Ayer Advertising Agency Records (AC0059)
Division of Costume Audiovisual Collection (AC0801)
Warshaw Collection of Business Americana (AC0060)
Ming-Ju Sun Garfinckel's Fashion Drawings (AC0897)
Carolyn and Donald Grepke Paper Doll Collection (AC752)
Virginia "Jimmie" Booth Collection (AC0729)
Joseph Magnin Poster Collection (AC0355)

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

Collection is open for research.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

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

Helen Misch Kemp opened the California Shop on November 15, 1938 at 677 Madison Avenue in New York City. Kemp was born April 22, 1894 in New York to Moses and Jennie Misch but had moved to California in 1936 where she worked in the women's clothing trade. Some time later she moved back to New York and noticed a distinction between the clothing and merchandise created in California as opposed to what was being offered in New York. California was also gaining a reputation in the fashion industry for its women designers who were combining chic styles, comfort, and unique colors for the American female market. Armed with a keen eye for fashion and shrewd business sense Kemp opened her shop to provide California craftsmanship to an eastern market. Kemp took annual trips to California to select what she considered was the best for her customers. While the California Shop sold mostly women's clothing it also offered products such as preserves, copper household utensils, cookware, trays, wastebaskets, spice jars, wall pockets, flower containers, pottery, and jewelry. On October 15, 1940, the shop moved to 674 Madison Avenue, where it occupied a larger space. Kemp closed her shop in 1942 due to war time difficulties in getting merchandise from California. Helen Kemp died on February 13, 1948, at the age of fifty-four.

Scope and Contents

Collection consists of a bound volume used as both a log of visitors to the shop and a scrapbook containing newspaper clippings, ephemera, magazine articles, announcements, and invitations to fashion shows. The first few pages of the volume are the guest book. The remaining pages were used as the scrapbook and is in reverse chronological order. There are also loose pages from the volume and its wooden covers, with a portion of a map of the Audencia of Guadalajara used as the cover illustration. Of particular interest are the typewritten manuscripts documenting Kemp's ideas for starting the California Shop. In addition, there are photographs of the shop, possibly in 1941, and Helen Kemp.

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

Places:

- 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, California Shop and Helen Kemp (photocopy), circa 1941
Box 1, Folder 3	Guestbook/scrapbook, 1938-11-1939-06
Box 1, Folder 4	Guestbook/scrapbook, 1939-07-1941-09
Box 1, Folder 5	Guestbook/scrapbook, 1940-07-1942-02
Box 1, Folder 6	Guestbook/scrapbook, 1939-09-1940-07
Box 1, Folder 7	Guestbook/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