



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Henry Booth Collection

NMAH.AC.0726

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2007

Archives Center, National Museum of American History

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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Archives Center, National Museum of American History |
| Title: | Henry Booth Collection |
| Date: | 1942 - 1974 |
| Identifier: | NMAH.AC.0726 |
| Creator: | Booth, Henry, 1895-1969 |
| Extent: | 2.5 Cubic feet (7 boxes) |
| Language: | English . |
| Summary: | Papers document Henry Booth's invention, use, and marketing of the PhotoMetriC custom tailoring system. |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

This collection was donated by Henry Booth's son, Robert Booth, in April 2000.

Related Materials

Materials in the Archives Center

Virginia "Jimmie" Booth Collection, 1936-1998 (AC0729). Jimmie Booth is the wife of Robert Booth and she was a buyer for Lord and Taylor.

Materials in the National Museum of American History

The Division of Work and Industry holds a PhotoMetric camera, stand, and measuring harness in the Photographic History collection.

Processing Information

Processed by Jennifer Hecker, August 2000; supervised by Alison Oswald, archivist.

Preferred Citation

Henry Booth Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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

Biographical / Historical

Henry Booth was a textile jobber who invented the PhotoMetriC custom tailoring system in the 1940s, an innovation which temporarily revolutionized a small corner of the custom clothing industry.

Henry Booth (1895-1969), son of a Methodist minister, was born in Canada and raised in England where his grandfather, General William Booth, founded the Salvation Army. In 1911, Henry Booth came to the United States from England on the Lusitania. He worked in the textile industry for a few years; specifically as a manager for John B. Ellison jobbing offices in Portland and Seattle. In 1922 he formed his own firm with Harry Kemp and Robert Walker. By 1929, Booth moved east to New York City in order to pursue his career in the textile industry. He formed Amalgamated Textiles Limited with John and Blake Lawrence. In 1938, Booth met Curt Erwin Forstmann and entered into an agreement whereby Amalgamated Textiles Limited became fabric stylists and sole agents for the Forstmann Woolen Companies.

In the early 1940s, Booth came up with the idea for the PhotoMetriC camera system to be used in the custom tailoring industry. The system consisted of a specially-designed arrangement of nine mirrors. Eight mirrors reflected separate views of the customer and one mirror reflected the customer's name and other information. These angled mirrors allowed a photograph to be taken which showed the customer from the front, back, side, and top. A slide of this photographic measurement would be sent, along with the customer's garment order, to the manufacturer. When the order arrived, the tailor would project the customer's image on a special screen which facilitated the taking of certain physical measurements. With the aid of the PhotoMetriC calculator, the tailor translated the measurements into specifications for a customer-specific garment. When finished, the garment would be mailed directly to the customer's home. According to testimonials in the collection, the garments fit perfectly the first time, every time. The PhotoMetriC system both saved the tailor money and relieved the customer of the inconvenience of having to return to the tailor again and again for time-consuming fittings, alterations, and adjustments.

The camera which supported this invention needed to be virtually foolproof, enabling the average shop clerk to reliably collect the necessary data. To this end, Booth took his idea to the Eastman Kodak Company, where he worked with Dr. Kenneth Mees, Director of Research and Fred Waller, a camera expert. Waller designed the camera; the remainder of the system design was done by Booth. The PhotoMetriC system made its debut in two Richard Bennett stores in New York City on May 17, 1948. It was subsequently licensed to other select retailers such as: The Custom Gentleman (Englewood, NJ); Nathan's (Richmond, VA); The Golden Fleece (Point Pleasant Borough, NJ); and Joseph's (Terre Haute, IN).

Hillandale, a Brooklyn, CT farm which Booth purchased about 1940, was later used to produce hand woven wool fabrics. These fabrics were used extensively by various PhotoMetriC retail outlets. Henry Booth's son, Robert (b. 1924), took over farm operations circa 1960 and opened a retail outlet on the premises which featured a PhotoMetriC fitting room which provided custom tailoring until the mid-1970s. Robert Booth, with his wife, Jimmie, operated the Golden Lamb Buttery Restaurant in Brooklyn, Connecticut. It closed in 2017.

Patents of Henry Booth:

United States Patent: #2,037,192/RE #20,366, "Visible inventory and sales recording device, April 14, 1936

United States Patent: #2,547,367, "Method and apparatus for testing fabrics, April 3, 1951

United States Patent: #2,547,368, "Cloth rack," April 3, 1951

United States Patent: #2,563,451, "Photographic fitting method," August 7, 1951

United States Patent: #2,624,943, "Proportionally balancing garments," January 13, 1953

United States Patent: #2,664,784, "Apparatus for measuring objects by photography," January 5, 1954

United States Patent: #2,688,188, "Apparatus for proportionally balancing garments," September 7, 1954

Scope and Contents

The Henry Booth Collection, 1942-1974, focuses primarily on the PhotoMetriC custom tailoring system. It consists of advertisements, brochures, photographs, glass slides, a 16mm film, correspondence, financial records, meeting minutes, an operating manual, scrapbooks, magazines, and a guest register.

Arrangement

The collection is organized into five series.

Series 1: PhotoMetriC Apparatus Materials, 1948-1965

Series 2: PhotoMetriC Advertising and Press Materials, 1942, 1948

Series 3: PhotoMetriC Retail Materials, 1958-1974

Series 4: PhotoMetriC General Business Materials, 1947-1974

Series 5: Hillandale Handweavers, 1960-1962

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Fashion
- Garment cutting
- Inventions -- 1920-2000 -- United States
- Inventors -- 1940-1990
- PhotoMetric (camera system)
- Photography -- Equipment and supplies
- Tailoring
- advertising -- 20th century

Types of Materials:

- Glass plate negatives
- Pamphlets -- 1950-2000
- Photographs -- Black-and-white photoprints -- 1940-2000
- Photographs -- Glass -- Silver gelatin -- 20th century
- Scrapbooks -- 20th century

Names:

- Amalgamated Textiles Limited.
- Booth, Virginia
- Eastman Kodak Co.
- Hillandale Farms
- Hillandale Handweavers
- PhotoMetric Corporation
- Richard Bennett Associates, Inc.

Container Listing

Series 1: PhotoMetriC Apparatus Materials , 1948 - 1965

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Box 1, Folder 1 | Yonkler, T., Screen for Taking Measurements from Projections, U.S. Patent No. 2,547,425 , 1951 April 3 |
| Box 1, Folder 2 | Booth, H., Photographic Fitting Method, U.S. Patent No. 2,563,451 , 1951 August 7 |
| Box 1, Folder 3 | Waller, F., Method of Photographically Correcting Photographic Images of Objects, U.S. Patent No. 2,644,780 , 1954 January 5 |
| Box 1, Folder 4 | Waller, F., Apparatus for Measuring Objects by Photography, U.S. Patent No. 2,644,784 , 1954 January 5 |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | Science Comes to an Ancient Art report on PhotoMetriC process , 1948 April 20 |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | Diagram of PhotoMetriC room , undated |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | Picture of PhotoMetriC camera , undated |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | PhotoMetriC Operating Manual , 1955 |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | PhotoMetriC measurement photos, 1948, undated |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | PhotoMetriC measurement photos , 1965 |
| Box 7 | PhotoMetriC measurement slides, circa 1950s |

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Series 2: PhotoMetriC Advertising and Press Materials , 1942, 1948

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Box 1, Folder 6 | Time, 1948 June 7 |
| Box 4, Folder 2 | Life, 1948 June 7 |
| Box 4, Folder 1 | Fortune, 1948 July |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | Popular Science, 1948 August |
| Box 6 | Scrapbook , 1948 |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | PhotoMetriC advertising booklets , undated |
| Box 5, Folder 4 | PhotoMetriC advertising posters , undated |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | Opening announcement for new PhotoMetriC location in New Jersey , undated |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | Advertising photos, undated |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | Copy of film canister and mailing label , 1962 |
| Reel OF 726.1 | Science Comes to an Ancient Art (16mm film), 1942 |

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Series 3: PhotoMetriC Retail Materials , 1958 - 1974

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Box 1, Folder 7 | Copy of instructions for PhotoMetriC order taker/operator, undated |
| Box 1, Folder 7 | PhotoMetriC Alteration Tickets , undated |
| Box 1, Folder 7 | PhotoMetriC lab Assignment of Order Numbers forms , undated |
| Box 1, Folder 7 | PhotoMetriC Work Sheets, undated |
| Box 5, Folder 1 | Order forms for PhotoMetriC garment , undated |
| Box 5, Folder 2 | Order forms for PhotoMetriC garments , undated |
| Box 1, Folder 7 | Postcards for notice of shipment to customer , undated |
| Box 1, Folder 8 | Henry Booth's personal PhotoMetriC garment orders and memos , 1958 - 1969 |
| Box 1, Folder 8 | Photograph of Henry Booth's PhotoMetriC measurement session, undated |
| Box 2, Folder 1 | PhotoMetric price chart , 1968 June 27 |
| Box 2, Folder 1 | PhotoMetriC price chart (revised) , 1968 December |
| Box 2, Folder 1 | PhotoMetriC price chart , 1968 December |
| Box 2, Folder 1 | PhotoMetriC price chart , 1971 January |
| Box 2, Folder 1 | PhotoMetriC style book, Dimensions in Fashion, 1964 |
| Box 2, Folder 1 | PhotoMetriC style book , 1970 |
| Box 2, Folder 2 | PhotoMetriC style book , 1972 |
| Box 2, Folder 2 | PhotoMetriC style book , 1974 |
| Box 2, Folder 3 | Price List Fall , 1974 |
| Box 2, Folder 3 | Photos of Tom James store, probably a PhotoMetriC outlet, circa 1970s |

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Series 4: PhotoMetriC General Business Materials , 1947 - 1974

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Box 2, Folder 5 | Testimonial letters , 1947 - 1948 |
| Box 5 | PhotoMetriC customer opinion scrapbook , 1947 - 1948 |
| Box 2, Folder 4 | PhotoMetriC Corporation memos and financial records , 1962 May- 1969 August |
| Box 2, Folder 5 | PhotoMetriC and YOU booklets , undated |
| Box 2, Folder 5 | What A Retailer Wants To Know About The PhotoMetriC Process brochures , undated |
| Box 4 | Richard Bennett Inc. meeting scrapbook , circa 1953 |
| Box 2, Folder 5 | Resume of the PhotoMetriC Conference, 1963 February 25-26 |
| Box 2, Folder 5 | PhotoMetriC sales meeting packet, 1974 September 21 |

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Series 5: Hillandale Handweavers, 1960 - 1962

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|-----------------|---|
| Box 3, Folder 1 | Connecticut Life, 1960 May |
| Box 3, Folder 1 | Hillandale guest register , 1960 September 26-1962 September 8 |
| Box 2, Folder 6 | Telegrams to Robert Booth , 1960 October 12 |
| Box 3, Folder 2 | American Fabrics, Spring/Summer 1962 |
| Box 3, Folder 2 | Poster version of American Fabrics article , Spring/Summer 1962 |
| Box 5, Folder 3 | Christian Science Monitor page , 1964 December 22 |
| Box 2, Folder 6 | Copies of Christian Science Monitor article, 1964 December 22 |
| Box 2, Folder 6 | Photos of Hillandale/PhotoMetriC dinner, 1964 December |
| Box 2, Folder 6 | Hillandale cloth brand labels and paper tag, undated |

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