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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title: Virginia "Jimmie" Booth collection
Identifier: NMAH.AC.0729
Date: 1936 - 1998
Extent: 3 Cubic feet (6 boxes, 3 oversize folders)
Creator: Booth, Virginia
Language: English
Summary: Papers relating to Virginia "Jimmie" Booth's career as a buyer for Lord and Taylor, where she worked for Dorothy Shaver. Papers include correspondence; photographs; original drawings by designer Clare Potter; printed material including articles, magazine advertising and catalogs; a scrapbook of clippings and memorabilia.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information
The collection was donated by Virginia "Jimmie" Booth, in May 2000.

Related Materials
Materials in the Archives Center
Henry Booth Collection, 1948-1974, AC0726
Dorothy Shaver Papers, circa 1922-1959, AC0631

Processing Information
Processed by Anne Jones (volunteer), 2003.

Preferred Citation
Virginia "Jimmie" Booth Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions
The collection is open for research use.
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

Virginia Wagoner Booth, known as Jimmie Booth, studied printing and engineering at Syracuse University. An engineer with Pratt & Whitney during World War II, she entered the fashion world as a bridal consultant at G. Fox in Hartford in 1945.

In 1952 Dorothy Shaver, of Lord & Taylor, hired Booth for the Hartford store and asked her to develop and manage The Country Clothes Shop in the 5th Avenue store in New York. There, Booth collaborated with and promoted such American designers as Clare Potter, Bonnie Cashin, and Claire McCardell. Booth also worked extensively with European designers.

Married to Bob Booth of Hillandale Weavers, Jimmie promoted the use of both American and European hand-loomed fabrics by her designers. She frequently modeled the fashions herself. Her casual, yet elegant, style is the epitome of “the American Look” still popular today.

In 1998, Jimmie Booth, Dorothy Shaver, and other creators of The American Look were saluted in the exhibition, “Designing Women: American Style 1940-1960” at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford.

In addition to her design work, Booth was a violinist with the Hartford Symphony in the 1940s, and later became the chef at the Brooklyn, Connecticut, Golden Lamb Buttery, which she and her husband, Bob, owned and operated.

Scope and Contents

The Virginia “Jimmie” Booth Collection, 1936-1998, focuses primarily on Booth’s career as a buyer for Lord & Taylor. The collection includes correspondence, photographs, drawings, clippings, and a scrapbook, and is arranged into seven series.

Series 1: Personal Papers, Photos, and Memorabilia, 1936-1998, includes materials dating from Booth’s college days and recent years.


Series 3: Lord & Taylor Country Clothes Shop, 1952-1960s, contains photographs of the store, advertising, news articles, original illustrations and catalogues.

Series 4: Irish Materials, 1950s-1960s, is made up of articles and photographs of the weavers at work.

Series 6: American Designers, 1948, 1951-1957, n.d. The bulk of this series consists of a large number of original sketches by Clare Potter, including fabric swatches. There is also a large scrapbook of Potter's featuring articles and advertisements.

Series 7: Miscellaneous, 1962, consists of an issue of the trade publication, The Ambassador.

Arrangement

Collection is organized into seven series:

Series 1: Personal Papers, Photos, and Memorabilia, 1936-1998
Series 3: Lord & Taylor Country Clothes Shop, 1952-1960s
Series 4: Irish Materials, 1950s-1960s
Series 7: Miscellaneous, 1962

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:
  Costume design

Types of Materials:
  Correspondence -- 20th century
  Design drawings
  Photographs -- 1940-1970
  Scrapbooks -- 20th century

Names:
  Davies, Donald
  Lord & Taylor
  McCardell, Claire
  Potter, Clare
Container Listing

Series 1: Personal Papers, Photos, and Memorabilia, 1936 - 1998

Box 1, Folder 1    College-related materials and correspondence, 1999 January 28, 1944 January 26, 1944 September 14, 1947 April, 1944 September 26, undated

Box 1, Folder 2    Syracuse University publications, 1942 February 1, undated

Box 1, Folder 3    Souvenir theatre programs, 1930s

Box 1, Folder 4    Horse show programs, 1953

Box 1, Folder 5    Photographs of Jimmie and Robert Booth and wedding announcement, 1956 November 1, undated

Box 1, Folder 6    Newspaper articles, 1951 June 14, 1956 August 16, undated

Box 1, Folder 7    Miscellaneous photographs of Jimmie, 1958, undated

Box 1, Folder 8    Photographs of Jimmie modeling, undated

Box 2, Folder 4    Photographs of Jimmie modeling, undated

Box 1, Folder 9    Glamour magazine, 1959 July

Box 1, Folder 10   Biography of Jimmie done as school project, 1997

Box 1, Folder 11   Gallery guide, "Designing Women" show, 1998

Box 1, Folder 12   Photographs: Jimmie at "Designing Women" show, 1998

Box 2, Folder 1    Articles from This Week, 1950 - 1952

Box 2, Folder 2    Article about Jimmie from This Week, 1952 June 15

Box 2, Folder 3    Jimmie in Sligo Ltd. advertisement in Town & Country, 1955 September

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| Box 1, Folder 13 | PhotoMetriC article, *Time* magazine, 1958 June 7 |
| Box 1, Folder 14 | *New England Homestead*, 1949 October |
| Box 1, Folder 15 | Article about Hillandale, undated |
| Box 1, Folder 16 | *Yankee* magazine, 1972 September |
| Box 1, Folder 17 | *Connecticut* magazine, 1972 October |
| Box 1, Folder 18 | Hillandale Handweavers, correspondence, 1969, 1970 November 8, undated |
| Box 1, Folder 19 | Hillandale advertising, undated |
| Box 1, Folder 20 | Hillandale Barn/Golden LambButtery, 1997 May 7, 1975 September 14, undated |

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Series 3: Lord & Taylor Country Clothes Shop, 1952-1960s

Box 1, Folder 21  Country Clothes Shop - interiors, undated
Box 1, Folder 22  Window displays, 1950s
Box 1, Folder 23  Window displays, 1960s
Box 1, Folder 24  Window displays, 1960s
Box 1, Folder 25  Fashion photographs, undated
Box 1, Folder 26  Lord & Taylor advertising, "Pride of Ireland", 1963 October 6
Box 1, Folder 27  News articles about the "Pride of Ireland" campaign, 1963 October 9, 1963 October 4
Box 2, Folder 5  Lord & Taylor/Clare Potter advertisement, 1955 April 15
Box 2, Folder 6  Vogue - Lord & Taylor dress shown, 1952 July
Box 2, Folder 7  Lord & Taylor Christmas catalogue - Country Clothes Shop featured, 1956
Box 2, Folder 8  Lord & Taylor "British Fortnight", 1958

Map-case 3, Drawer 19, Original Dorothy Hood illustrations for advertisements, 1957 - 1958
Folder 1-3

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Series 4: Irish Materials, 1950s-1960s

Box 1, Folder 28  
*Time* magazine, 1963

Box 1, Folder 29  
*Ireland* magazine, 1960s

Box 1, Folder 30  
*Telefood Magazine*, Fine Foods from Ireland issue, 1966 September  
*Cara: the travel magazine of Aer Lingus-Irish Airlines*, Volume 2, Number 1, 1969 January-March  
*Village Life in Ireland*, Syracuse University Alumni Association, Inc., 1999 April 18-26  
Irish edition catalog from Scottish Lion Import Shop, 1998 Fall/1999 Winter  
*Sports Illustrated*, 1958 August 25  
*Northeast: the Hartford Courant*, 1988 September 11  
*Queen*, 1965 December 1

Box 2, Folder 9  
Photographs - clothing manufacturing, Shannon, Ireland [Probably Sligo, Ltd.], undated

Box 2, Folder 10  
Photographs - clothing manufacturing, Ireland, undated

Box 2, Folder 11  
Photographs - Edward Doughty & Sons (Drogheda, Ltd.) handweavers, Donegal, undated

Box 2, Folder 12  
Photographs - handweavers, Enniskerry, County Wicklow, undated

Box 2, Folder 13  
Photographs - Irish linen workers, undated

Box 3, Folder 1  
Photographs - Irish craftsmen, undated

Box 3, Folder 2  
Photographs - Irish women in Woolshop, Irish village, undated

Box 3, Folder 3  
Photographs - Irish scenes: Blarney Castle, County Cork, and James Joyce's Tower, Dublin, undated

Box 3, Folder 4  
News articles about Irish crafts, 1960s

Box 3, Folder 5  
News articles about Ireland - general, 1960s

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Box 3, Folder 20 Claire McCardell: article in *Life* magazine, page 103, 1948 June 7

Box 4, Folder 1 Clare Potter: sketches - resort, 1951 - 1952

Box 4, Folder 2 Clare Potter: sketches - resort and holiday, 1953

Box 4, Folder 3 Clare Potter: sketches, 1954 Fall

Box 4, Folder 4 Clare Potter: Lord & Taylor advertisement, 1955 April 15

Box 4, Folder 5 Clare Potter: news article and Clare Potter obituary from the *New York Times*, 1999 January 11, undated

Box 4, Folder 6 Clare Potter: photographs - Clare Potter and her home, includes Halsman contact sheet, undated

[Fashion portraits of Clare Potter: photographs.]
1 Item (10 x 8 in.)
Halsman, Philippe, Photographer
Contact sheet of 11 exposures on #120 film, with one frame cut out.

When processing is completed, unrestricted research use on site by appointment. Photographs must be handled with cotton gloves unless protected by sleeves.

Silver gelatin on paper.

Names: Potter, Clare

Topic: Costume design

Genre/Form: Contact sheets

Photographs -- 1950-2000 -- Black-and-white photoprints
-- Silver gelatin

Box 6 Clare Potter: scrapbook of articles and advertisements, 1955 - 1957

Box 4, Folder 7 Phelps Leather Goods (William and Elizabeth Phelps), 1944 - 1948, 1989, 1956 May 27

Box 4, Folder 8 Other American designers, 2000 February 5, 1959 - 1964

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Box 3, Folder 6  Subil Conally: article in *Victoria* magazine, 1997 March
Box 3, Folder 7  Donald Davies: advertising and promotion, 1965, 1967, undated
Box 3, Folder 8  Donald Davies: fabric swatches, undated
Box 3, Folder 9  Donald Davies: photographs of Davies' designs, 1963 September 20
Box 3, Folder 10 Davies shopping bag and photograph and drawing of store, undated
Box 3, Folder 11 Donald Davies: advertisements in American newspapers, 1966 - 1968
Box 3, Folder 12 Donald Davies: articles in British newspapers, 1968 May 27, 1966 September 23
Box 3, Folder 13 Donald Davies: featured in magazines, 1962, 1968, undated
Box 3, Folder 14 Donald Davies: management consultants report, 1955
Box 5, Folder 1  Donald Davies: photograph of estate, Enmskerry, undated
Box 3, Folder 15 Donald Davies: miscellaneous photographs of Davies and others, 1958, undated
Box 3, Folder 16 Countess Von Eckermann and weavers, Ripsa, Sweden, undated
Box 3, Folder 17 Countess Von Eckermann: photographs of Von Eckermann designs, undated
Box 3, Folder 18 Countess Von Eckermann: newspaper articles, 1972 November 29, 1962 December 17
Box 3, Folder 19 Photographs of models in Irish fashions, undated

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Series 7: Miscellaneous, 1962

Box 4, Folder 9  
*The Ambassador*, British trade publication, number 9, 1962

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