



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Women in Industry Photographs and Advertisements

NMAH.AC.1446

Justine Thomas

2018

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
Arrangement.....	3
Historical.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	2
Names and Subjects	3
Container Listing	4
Series 1: Photographs, 1890-1981 (bulk 1940s).....	4
Series 2: Advertisements, 1927-1946.....	9

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Women in Industry Photographs and Advertisements
Date:	1890-1979
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.1446
Extent:	1 Cubic foot (2 boxes)
Language:	English .
Summary:	The collection consists of photographs and advertisements related to women working in industry dating from 1890 to 1948.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Found in collections and assembled by curatorial staff.

Provenance

Found in collections and transferred to the Archives Center from the Division of Work and Industry, 2017. Approximately thirty-two photographs have accession numbers from the Division of Work and Industry. These photographs have the number 2012.0094 and are cataloged from .01-.32. They were donated by Helena E. Wright while working as a curator in the Division of Culture and the Arts at the National Museum of American History. Other photographs showing women in industrial sites were added to the collection by the curator Peter Liebhold in the Division of Work and Industry. These photographs have accession numbers 1988.0586 as well as 1989.0746.

Related Materials

Materials in the Archives Center

Warshaw Collection of Business Americana Subject Categories: Women (AC0060)

Rosie the Riveter Health and Safety Records (AC0621)

Jantzen Knitting Mills Collection (AC0233)

Available Formats

Collection scanned in 2021.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Justine Thomas, 2018.

Collection scanned by Noah Stewart, digitization assistant, 2021.

Preferred Citation

Women in Industry Photographs and Advertisements, 1890-1948, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

Unrestricted research access on site by appointment. Unprotected photographs must be handled with gloves.

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.

Historical

This artificially created collection traces the transition of women's work in industry during the twentieth century. Most of the collection materials have a different provenance, but thirty-two photographs were assembled by Helena E. Wright during her years working as a curator in the Division of Culture and the Arts at the National Museum of American History. Other photographs showing women in industrial sites were added to the collection by the curator Peter Liebhold in the Division of Work and Industry. The photographs and advertisements in the complete collection were arranged to exhibit the evolution of women in the workforce. Women's occupations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included work in the clothing industry (i.e. Draper Corporation, B. F. Spinney Co.), factories, and production lines. Despite the low pay, laborious and unsafe working conditions that came with working in these industries, most women felt a sense of empowerment being employed outside the home. Many women welcomed the opportunity to provide an income for their families yet worked long hours in inadequate and dismal settings. During World War I and World War II, men left their industry jobs to serve in the war. In order to serve the war effort, women found more employment opportunities in several types of industries. These included electric companies (i.e. General Electric Co.), aircraft and aerospace engineering businesses (i.e. Glenn L. Martin Co., Goodyear Aircraft Corp.), foundry work (i.e. Osborn Manufacturing Company), steel making (i.e. Timken Roller Bearing Co.), as well as enrollment in engineering training programs (i.e. Curtis-Wright Corporation). These industries provided women with a broader range of employment opportunities, skills, and experiences. Consequently, other companies began creating and marketing products to help improve the lives of women in the workforce. Inventions such as the Willson Saf-t-Bra advertised comfort and protection to women working in various industry occupations.

Scope and Contents

Series 1 consists of photographs that include images of women in industry along with associated documents. Materials are arranged alphabetically by subject. The photographs date from 1890 to 1981, yet the bulk of the materials are from 1930 to 1948. A portion of the materials are undated. There is a notable shortage of material related to women of color. The photographs depict women working in engineering jobs, operating heavy machinery, working with textiles, and handling different types of technology. There are several types of machines and products featured in the collection including pneumatic drills, gas irons, typewriters, rivet guns, compressed air machines, an arbor press, bending roll machines, and light bulbs. Documents that correspond to the photographs discuss an increase in women taking men's jobs in the 1940s while the men were at war. Consequently, photographs from the 1940s in this collection represent the transition of making machinery more applicable to women and enabling them to do "man-sized" jobs. Many of the 1940's photographs depict women enrolling in engineering training programs and physically working with heavy machinery.

Earlier materials from the early 1900s show women sitting in factories next to lighter equipment such as sewing machines and typewriters. There are a variety of companies displayed in the photographs including B. F. Spinney Co., Computing-Bureau Freight Accounts, Curtis Publishing Company, Curtis-Wright Corporation, Deane Works, Draper Corporation, General Electric Co., Glenn L. Martin Co., Goodyear Aircraft Corp.,

Osborn Manufacturing Company, and Timken Roller Bearing Co. A portion of the commercial photographs were taken by companies including Commercial Photo Co., Eastman Kodak Company, Mercury MFG. Co., Novelty Photo Co., Science Service, and Underwood and Underwood.

Series 2 contains advertisements related to women in industry. These advertisements date from 1927 to 1946. The materials in this series promote products and jobs targeting women operating machinery such as safety bars, grinding tools, bending roles, gauges, double-seaming machines, and portable package staplers. There are a variety of companies featured in this series including Acme Staple Co., Ashcroft Gauge Division, Buffalo Forge Company, E.W. Bliss Co., The Sheffield Corporation, and Willson Safety Products.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into two series.

Series 1: Photographs, 1890-1948

Series 2: Advertisements, 1927-1946

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Commercial photography
- Electric engineering -- 20th century
- Factories -- 20th century
- Industrial engineering
- Industry -- U.S.
- Machinery industry
- Manufacturing -- 1920-1930
- Photographs
- Science Service
- Textile industry
- Women -- Employment
- Women employees
- Women in advertising
- Women in technology
- Women iron and steel workers
- Women laborers
- World War, 1939-1945

Types of Materials:

- Advertisements -- 20th century

Preferred Titles:

- Kodak (Brand name)*

Container Listing

Series 1: Photographs, 1890-1981 (bulk 1940s)

Subseries 1.1: Women in Clothing Industry, 1890-1902

Box 1, Folder 1	Women in Clothing Industry, clothes pin room, undated
Box 1, Folder 1	Women in Clothing Industry, four women in clothing industry, four women, Gloucester , Massachusetts, undated
Box 1, Folder 1	Women in Clothing Industry, unidentified woman ironing, undated
Box 1, Folder 1	Women in Clothing Industry, stitching room girls, B.F. Spinney Co., 1902
Box 1, Folder 1	Women in Clothing Industry, Keith Light and high Pressure Gas irons, undated
Box 1, Folder 1	Women in Clothing Industry, National Industrial Union, Garment Workers Union Shop, circa 1900
Box 1, Folder 1	Women in Clothing Industry, New York Garment Workers, circa 1890s
Box 1, Folder 1	Women in Clothing Industry, unidentified man sitting at a sewing machines, undated
Box 1, Folder 1	Women in Clothing Industry, factory floor view, women sitting at sewing machines, male manager standing, undated
Box 1, Folder 1	Women in Clothing Industry, factory floor view, women sitting at sewing machines, undated
Box 2, Folder 1	Women in Clothing Industry, Women on factory floor of [Draper Corporation?], Pawtucket, Rhode Island, undated
Box 2, Folder 1	Women in Clothing Industry, Two women in office at [Draper Corporation?], Pawtucket, Rhode Island, undated

Subseries 1.2: Women in Factories/General, 1919-1979

Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, Women's lunch room, Curtis Publishing Company, undated
Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, Women's rest room, Curtis Publishing Company, undated

Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, Women seated in a an office with male workers at desks, undated
Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, Women in textile factory floor view, [New York City?], undated Image(s): Women in Factories General, Women in textile factory floor view, [New york City?]
Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, Woman welding small thermostats at Westinghouse, New York City, [1940s]
Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, Woman working with a supercharger, 1943
Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, Shop view of women working, undated, undated
Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, Women working in factory [handling produce?], [Reading, Pennsylvania?], 1945, 1945
Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, Women working in factory [handling produce?], [Reading, Pennsylvania?], 1945, 1945
Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, Woman standing among male workers on erecting shop floor at Deane Works , 1918, 1918
Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, Four women standing and working on factory floor, 1919
Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, Women working on motors and fans for 20 millimeter shell booster parts, undated
Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, Woman working at machine for 20 millimeter shell booster parts, undated
Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, Woman working on heated carbon tips, 1942
Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, WPA women operating riveting and eyeleting machines at WPA Women's National Defense Training course at Pierce School, 1940
Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, Josephine Wiss, scissor inspector, Newark, New Jersey, 1979
Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, Instructing fellow trainer in the use of kick-press machine at the Women's National Defense Training course at Pierce School, 1940
Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories General, Instructor and trainee at the Women's National Defense Training course at Pierce School, 1940

Box 1, Folder 2 [Women in Factories General, Woman working at machine which straightens and cards the pins, circa 1947](#)

Subseries 1.3: Women in Science, Math, and Technology, 1930-1948

Box 1, Folder 3 [Women in Science, Math and Technology, Billie Carter in Cornell University Chemical Laboratory, 1948](#)

Box 1, Folder 3 [Women in Science, Math and Technology, Computing Bureau Freight Accounts, 1935-02-15](#)

Box 1, Folder 3 [Women in Science, Math and Technology, Accounting Office at Lamson Company, 1930-10](#)

Box 1, Folder 3 [Women in Science, Math and Technology, Unidentified woman sitting at a typewriter, undated](#)

Box 1, Folder 3 [Women in Science, Math and Technology, Women standing in front of \[mattress springs?\], undated](#)

Box 1, Folder 3 [Women in Science, Math and Technology, Women seated, making light bulbs at General Electric, undated](#)

Box 1, Folder 3 [Women in Science, Math and Technology, College girls enroll for training as engineering "cadettes" at Curtiss-Wright Corporation, 1943](#)

Box 1, Folder 3 [Women in Science, Math and Technology, College girls enroll for training as engineering "cadettes" at Curtiss-Wright Corporation, 1943](#)

Box 1, Folder 3 [Women in Science, Math and Technology, College girls enroll for training as engineering "cadettes" at Curtiss-Wright Corporation, 1943](#)

Box 2, Folder 2 [Women in Science, Math and Technology, Two women seated at main telephone department ticket markers, undated](#)

Box 2, Folder 2 [Women in Science, Math and Technology, Two women seated at main telephone department traffic and cabulance operators, undated](#)

Subseries 1.4: Women Operating Heavy Machinery, 1914-1981

General: Contains photographs dated 1981.

Box 1, Folder 4 [Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Women working in a German ammunition factory, undated](#)

Box 1, Folder 4 [Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Woman driving a truck being loaded with barrels, undated](#)

Box 1, Folder 4	Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Woman operating a forklift, undated
Box 1, Folder 4	Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Woman standing on a work lorry, undated
Box 1, Folder 4	Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Woman holding a pneumatic drill, undated
Box 1, Folder 4	Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Woman operating a stalling machine for 20 millimeter shell booster, 1940s Image(s): Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Woman operating a staling machine for 20 millimeter shell booster
Box 1, Folder 4	Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Virginia Louk operating a machine at [Plym Kraft], 1981
Box 1, Folder 4	Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Woman standing at machine spreading casein glue on veneer sheets, undated
Box 1, Folder 4	Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Instructor explains mysteries of a lathe to women students at WPA training center, Newton, Massachusetts, 1941-02-25
Box 1, Folder 4	Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Moulding machine developed by Osborn Manufacturing, undated
Box 1, Folder 4	Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Woman operating a single spindle bar and tube turning and boring machine, undated
Box 1, Folder 4	Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Woman operating a machine, 1944
Box 1, Folder 4	Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Woman using a rapid heating rivet gun at Goodyear Aircrfat group, 1945
Box 1, Folder 4	Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Woman operating a compressed air tool at Compressed Air Institute, 1942
Box 1, Folder 4	Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Anna Laur shown welding at General Electric Company, 1941
Box 1, Folder 4	Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Woman in English factory opering machinery, undated
Box 1, Folder 4	Women Operating Heavy Machinery, Woman brazing/soldering, undated

Subseries 1.5: Women in Business, 1926, undated

Box 2, Folder 3	Women in Business, Women seated in front of adding machines, undated
-----------------	--

Box 2, Folder 3

Women in Business, Women seated and using Burroughs calculating machines, 1926

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Advertisements, 1927-1946

Box 1, Folder 5

Advertisements, 1927-1946

[Return to Table of Contents](#)