



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Women in Industry Photographs and Advertisements

NMAH.AC.1446

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2018

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Women in Industry Photographs and Advertisements
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.1446
Date:	1890-1948
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 former accession numbers from the Division of Work and Industry. These photographs have the number 2012.0094 and are cataloged from .01-.32. They were collected 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 1986.0586 as well as 1989.0746.

Related Materials

Materials in the Archives Center

Warsaw Collection of Business Americana Subject Categories: Women (AC0060) Rosie the Riveter Health and Safety Records (AC0621) Jantzen Knitting Mills Collection (AC0233)

Processing Information

Collection processed by Justine Thomas, 2018.

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: Photographs includes 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: Advertisements includes 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, 1890-1948

Box 1, Folder 1	Women in Clothing Industry, 1890-1902
Box 1, Folder 2	Women in Factories/General, 1945, undated
Box 1, Folder 3	Women in Science, Math, and Technology, 1930-1948 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 4	Women Operating Heavy Machinery, (bulk 1914-1948) Contains photographs dated 1981.
Box 2, Folder 1	Women in Clothing Industry, undated
Box 2, Folder 2	Women in Technology, undated

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Series 2: Advertisements, 1927-1946

Box 1, Folder 5

Advertisements, 1927-1946

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