

ALEXANDRA POTTS PAPERS

1929-1967

LIM College

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New York, NY 10017

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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Alexandra Potts

Title: Alexandra Potts Papers

Dates: 1929-1967

Abstract:

Quantity:

Call Phrase: Alexandra Potts

Biographical Note

Alexandra Potts was born as Alexandra Elizabeth Soundstrom in Newark, New Jersey on November 24, 1902. Her parents were Arvid B. Soundstrom and Marquiette Nichols Soundstrom. She married Dr. Hugh E. Potts and together they had one daughter, named Alexandra Elizabeth. Potts intended to pursue a music career as a violinist, but after a taxi accident to her hand she decided to pursue a career in business. Although some dates are conflicted in her writing, her career begins in approximately 1926 working for Thomas B. Lamb as a Design Researcher. Mr. Lamb was an Industrial Artist and Textile Designer. After this she worked as an Office Manager to Eugene Szepesi, who was an Industrial Engineer and Efficiency Expert. Ms. Potts begins her career in retail in 1930 when she joins Lord & Taylor. During the course of her career she conducts many surveys of consumer's shopping habits and the first one she did was for Lord & Taylor in 1930 for a Christmas Shop. In 1937, she begins working for *Bride's Magazine* as the Director of Merchandising, Research and Promotion. During her time at Lord & Taylor, Potts begins to think about starting her own business. She originally planned on having a partner, Ruth Harrington. It is unclear if the business comes to fruition at this point in time. Potts leaves *Brides Magazine* to work for Joseph Horne Co. in 1947. The Joseph Horne Co. was a department store in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She was the Director of Research and Public Relations for two years. According to her professional biography, she published and edited *The Consumer and You* from 1950 to 1952. It reported on the consumers shopping habits and trend reporting for retailers and manufacturers. From 1951 to 1953, Potts begins working at *Modern Bride* magazine as the Director of Merchandise and Promotion. In 1952, she begins working at *Baby Talk* magazine as the Director of Merchandising and Promotion.

She stays with *Baby Talk* until 1955. The dates of her working at *Modern Bride* and *Baby Talk* magazine overlap, but it seems that she worked at both places based on looking at some of her contracts with employers. After working at *Baby Talk* she goes to work for Harold H. Jaeger in 1956. Harold H. Jaeger was a market development company. While there she did research for the Can Manufacturers Institute, Inc. According to one memo, she might have also worked on the magazine *House Beautiful* while at Jaeger. She works there for one year. After this Potts seems to concentrate on her own business called "Alexandra Potts Research and Promotion." She completes many of her consumer studies for Neiman Marcus.

During the course of her career, she became known as the expert in the bridal field. While at *Bride's*, she developed bridal business clinics. They taught the retailers how to improve their bridal business and talk about new trends in the bridal market. She also was one the first people in the industry to conduct research on the wedding industry. She accomplished this by taking surveys of consumers across the United States. One of main clients was Neiman Marcus. Neiman Marcus is a department store that has its headquarters in Dallas, Texas. She did bridal consumer surveys for them, but also conducted research on potential new locations for them in the Dallas area and Houston, Texas. As a result of these surveys, Mr. Stanley Marcus would recommend her to others. She probably continued to do market research till she retired.

Potts was on the advisory board for the Laboratory Institute of Merchandising starting in 1944. She also guest lectured at the school from time to time. She was on the advisory board throughout her career and even after she retired. The last known date of her involvement was 1980.

Scope and Content Note

The Alexandra Potts Papers document her business career with some brief facts on her personal life. The materials date from 1929-1967. The bulk of the records are related to her research for Neiman Marcus and her business correspondence.

The types of materials contained in the papers are reports, correspondence, notes, blank forms, photographs, surveys, newspaper clippings and maps.

Arrangement

The Alexandra Potts Papers were left at the college by Potts according to Adrian Marcuse. From the organization of the files when they were given to the archives, it seems Potts organized her files alphabetically and by subject. In order to make sense of the papers, the papers were reorganized into subjects based on her filing system. Some papers were found loose with the files and were given file names based on her file naming examples. Files given names are indicated in the finding aid by an asterisk. Most of the file names have remained the way Potts intended unless they were

confusing or unreadable. If they have been changed, the original name is in parenthesis. The subjects were arranged into series.

Series I – Alexandra Potts Research and Promotion

Series II – Neiman Marcus

Series III – Lord & Taylor

Series IV – Jones

Series V – Jaeger

Series VI – Joseph Horne Co.

Series VII – Magazines

Series VIII – Pittsburgh

Series VIX – Other Business and Research

Series X – Correspondence

Series XI – Personal

Restrictions

There are no restrictions to access.

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216 E. 45th St., 14th Floor.
New York, NY 10017

Access Points

Subject Names:

Gray, Helen
Jaeger, Harold H.
Lamb, Tom
Marcus, Stanley, 1905-
Morin, Dorothy Liebes
Oyen, Penelope
Potts, Alexandra

Subject Organizations:

Alexandra Potts Research and Promotion
American Kennel Club
Bride's magazine
Chamber of Commerce of Pittsburg
Harold H. Jaeger
Interiors
Jones
Joseph Horne Company
J. Walter Thompson Company
Leeds Perfume
Lord & Taylor
Modern Bride magazine
Museum of the City of New York
National Home Fashions League
Neiman-Marcus
Pittsburgh Opera (P.A.)
Pittsburgh Orchestra
Polk Market Service

Subject Topics:

Babies
Bridal shops
Brides
Department stores
Fashion merchandising
Marketing research
Periodicals
Surveys

Subject Places:

Dallas (Tex.)
Houston (Tex.)
New York (N.Y.)
Pittsburgh (Pa.)

Container List**Series I – Alexandra Potts Research and Promotion, 1942-1957, undated**

This series contains materials on Alexandra Potts' company. The types of material in this series are resumes, correspondence, press releases, newspaper clippings, lists, and photographs.

| | | |
|--|-------|--|
| Personal – Alexandra Potts | Box 1 | Folder 1 – 1942, undated |
| Alex Potts Releases | Box 1 | Folder 2 – 1948-1949, undated |
| Alex Potts Publicity | Box 1 | Folder 3 – 1948-1949, undated |
| Lawhead Press | Box 1 | Folder 4 – 1949-1950 |
| Professional Biography | Box 1 | Folder 5 – Undated |
| Photographs | Box 1 | Folder 6 – Undated |
| Store and Buying Office List | Box 1 | Folder 7 – 1952-1953, 1957, undated |
| Store Lists (Lists) | Box 1 | Folder 8 – 1952, undated |
| Manufacturers and Press Lists (MFGs, Press, etc.) | Box 1 | Folder 9 – 1953, undated |
| Store Credit Lists for Sept. 1953 | Box 1 | Folder 10 – 1953, undated |
| Press Lists, Buyers Lists | Box 1 | Folder 11 – 1954-1955, undated |
| Advertising Agencies and Personal Lists | Box 1 | Folder 12 – Undated |

Series II – Neiman Marcus, 1945-1967, undated

This series contains materials related to Potts research for Neiman Marcus. In addition to the final reports, there are much of her original research notes included. The types of materials included are reports, notes, maps, advertisements, and correspondence.

| | | |
|--|-------|--|
| Retail Bridal Market Survey Report with Post War Suggestions | Box 2 | Folder 1 – 1945 |
| Consumer Panel Report - Community of Dallas, TX – April & May 1950 | Box 2 | Folder 2 – 1950 |
| Neiman Marcus Survey | Box 2 | Folder 3 – 1950-1951, 1957, undated |
| Consumer Panel Report - Community of Dallas, TX on “Christmas Shopping” 1950 | Box 2 | Folder 4 – 1950 |
| Consumer Retail Study Made of the City of Houston and Its Surrounding Shopping Areas – July, August 1957 | Box 2 | Folder 5 – 1957 |
| Shopping Center Information | Box 2 | Folder 6 – 1957, undated |
| Press Information | Box 2 | Folder 7 – 1957, undated |
| Shopper Agreements – Neiman Marcus Houston Study | Box 2 | Folder 8 – 1957, undated |
| Feb. 1958 – Information – TX | Box 2 | Folder 9 – 1957 |
| Club Women Interviews | Box 2 | Folder 10 – Undated |
| Store Information and Ratings | Box 2 | Folder 11 – Undated |
| Baker Reports | Box 2 | Folder 12 – Undated |
| Rough Drafts | Box 2 | Folder 13 – Undated |
| Consumer Retail Study - Dallas/Ft. Worth | Box 2 | Folder 14 – 1958 |

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|---|-------|--------------------------------|
| Education Information - Schools, Colleges – Dallas 1958 | Box 3 | Folder 1 – 1958, undated |
| Fort Worth Store Information Etc. 1958 | Box 3 | Folder 2 – 1958, undated |
| Neiman Marcus 1958 | Box 3 | Folder 3 – 1958-1959, undated |
| Store Information and Observations – Dallas, 1958 Memos Ad | Box 3 | Folder 4 – 1958, undated |
| Chamber of Commerce Information – Dallas, TX | Box 3 | Folder 5 – 1958, undated |
| Neiman Marcus Information 1958 | Box 3 | Folder 6 – 1958, undated |
| Press Information etc. Dallas, Texas Survey 1958 | Box 3 | Folder 7 – 1958, undated |
| Research for Neiman Marcus Survey (Neiman Marcuse) | Box 3 | Folder 8 – Undated |
| Women’s Clubs and Organizations | Box 3 | Folder 9 – 1958, undated |
| Consumer Retail Study of Dallas and Suburban Areas – January/February 1963 | Box 3 | Folder 10 – 1963 |
| Expense Receipts – Neiman’s 1963 | Box 3 | Folder 11 – 1963, undated |
| Interviewers – Adult Group | Box 3 | Folder 12 – 1962-1963, undated |
| Interviewers – College Group | Box 4 | Folder 1 – 1963, undated |
| Research (Unlabeled) | Box 4 | Folder 2 – Undated |
| 1959 Neiman Marcus Bride Shop | Box 4 | Folder 3 – 1957-1959, undated |
| Neiman Marcus Bride Shop Proposal – 1958 | Box 4 | Folder 4 – 1958-1960, undated |
| Neiman Marcus Presentation - 1965 Training Program | Box 4 | Folder 5 – 1963-1967, undated |
| Sample of Typical Consumer Panel Report | Box 4 | Folder 6 – Undated |

Series III – Lord & Taylor, 1929-1949, undated

This series contains materials Potts used or created during her time and Lord & Taylor. The types of materials included are reports, lists, charts, and correspondence.

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|---|-------|---|
| Lord & Taylor Charts for sales records, order blanks, etc. | Box 4 | Folder 7 – 1929-1931, 1937- 1938, 1946-1949, undated |
| Report on Suggestions for Lord & Taylor Christmas Shop | Box 4 | Folder 8 – 1930 |
| Merchandising Ideas | Box 4 | Folder 9 – 1940, 1945, undated |

Series IV – Jones

This series includes material relating to the Jones department store, which was located in West Virginia. Based on the materials contained, Potts was consulting on their 50th Anniversary celebration. The types of materials included are correspondence, newspaper clippings, reports, and notes.

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|---------------------|-------|---|
| Jones Anniversary | Box 4 | Folder 10 – 1934, 1949-1950, Undated |
| Jones Fashion Shows | Box 4 | Folder 11 – 1949-1950, undated |

Series V – Jaeger, 1946-1957, undated

Series V contains materials submitted to Jaeger by Potts and materials related to her work while at Jaeger. The kinds of materials contained in this series are reports, correspondence, brochures, and notes.

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|---------------------------|-------|--------------------------------|
| Jaeger | Box 5 | Folder 1 – 1946, 1956, undated |
| Memos to H.H. Jaeger 1956 | Box 5 | Folder 2 – 1956 -1957, undated |

Series VI – Joseph Horne Co., 1948-1948, undated

This series includes items from Potts' tenure at the Joseph Horne Co. The types of materials contained in this series are correspondence, reports, and a packaging sample.

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|-------------------------|-------|--------------------------|
| Package Designing | Box 5 | Folder 3 – 1946, undated |
| Men's Department Survey | Box 5 | Folder 4 – 1948, undated |

Series VII – Magazines – 1945 – 1964, undated

Series VII contains material associated with Potts' involvement with the magazines she worked for. It also has ideas for new magazines. The kinds of items included are correspondence, reports, photographs, and brochures.

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|--|-------|--------------------------------|
| Nellie Custis Promotion - Washington – Winter 1951 | Box 5 | Folder 5 – 1951 |
| Modern Bride Letters - Agreements – 1958-1959 | Box 5 | Folder 6 – 1958-1959, undated |
| Helen Gray Editor – Modern Correspondence – 1959-1960 | Box 5 | Folder 7 – 1959-1960, undated |
| Modern Bride Budgets – 1961- 62-63 | Box 5 | Folder 8 – 1961-1963, undated |
| A. Potts 1965 Planning and Promotion | Box 5 | Folder 9 – 1962, 1964, undated |

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|--|-------|---------------------------------|
| Notes for Store Meetings, Fashion Shows, etc. | Box 5 | Folder 10 – 1944, undated |
| Photos | Box 5 | Folder 11 – 1945, 1949, undated |
| Magazine Ideas | Box 6 | Folder 1 – 1948, 1954-1955 |
| Ziff Davis Magazine Surveys | Box 6 | Folder 2 – 1949-1950, undated |

Series VIII – Pittsburgh, 1939-1950, undated

Potts was involved with several community organizations while she live in Pittsburgh and this series contains the material related to these activities. It is unclear if she was paid for these jobs or if she was volunteering. Arvid B. Soundstrom was Potts' brother, who was also a musician. The kinds of materials included are correspondence, brochures, lists, reports, photographs, programs, notes and applications.

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|-------------------------------------|-------|--|
| Look Magazine | Box 6 | Folder 3 – 1950 |
| Ketchum | Box 6 | Folder 4 – 1950, undated |
| Promotion with Opera - Lohengrin | Box 6 | Folder 5 – 1947-1948, undated |
| Arvid B. Soundstrom Award | Box 6 | Folder 6 – 1947-1949, undated |
| Reg. Pittsburgh Opera Board | Box 6 | Folder 7 – 1949-1950 |
| Junior Board | Box 6 | Folder 8 – 1948-1949, undated |
| Pittsburgh Symphony | Box 6 | Folder 9 – 1939, 1946-1950, undated |
| Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce | Box 6 | Folder 10 – 1949, undated |
| Pittsburgh Lists (Lists) | Box 6 | Folder 11 – Undated |

Series VIX – Other Business and Research, 1939-1958, undated

This series contains materials related to other individual projects or research Potts worked on. The types of items included in this series are correspondence, photographs, newspaper clippings, receipts, newsletters, photographs, brochures, and reports.

| | | |
|---|-------|---------------------------------|
| Reprints on Philosophy | Box 6 | Folder 12 – 1939, undated |
| Report – New York Retail Stores Bridal Shops & Market April 1939 | Box 6 | Folder 13 – 1939, undated |
| Photographs | Box 6 | Folder 14 – 1944, undated |
| Libby Glass Antiques | Box 6 | Folder 15 – 1951, undated |
| Junior League Reports and Information | Box 6 | Folder 16 – 1955, 1957, undated |
| Manuscripts Receipts – 1956 | Box 6 | Folder 17 – 1956, undated |
| Jewelry Stores | Box 7 | Folder 1 – 1957, undated |
| National Home Fashions League, Inc.* | Box 7 | Folder 2 – 1957 |
| Museum of the City of New York* | Box 7 | Folder 3 – 1957-1958 |

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|------------------------|-------|----------------------|
| Leeds Perfume* | Box 7 | Folder 4 – 1957-1958 |
| Pellon* | Box 7 | Folder 5 – Undated |
| Polk Market Service | | |
| Planning with Industry | Box 7 | Folder 6 – Undated |
| Newspaper Clippings | Box | Folder 1 - 1957 |

Series X – Correspondence, 1943-1957, undated

The bulk of this series contains mostly correspondence and is mostly related to Potts' business career.

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|----------------------------|-------|--|
| Industry on Parade* | Box 7 | Folder 7 – 1957 |
| Interiors* | Box 7 | Folder 8 – 1950, 1956 |
| J-General | Box 7 | Folder 9 – 1955-1956, undated |
| K-General | Box 7 | Folder 10 – 1949, 1956 |
| L-General | Box 7 | Folder 11 – 1951, 1956-1957 |
| Lamb, Mr. Tom | Box 7 | Folder 12 – 1947, 1950 |
| M-General | Box 7 | Folder 13 – 1943, 1949, 1955-1956, undated |
| Morin, Mrs. Dorothy Liebes | Box 7 | Folder 14 – 1949-1950 |
| N-General | Box 7 | Folder 15 – 1956 |
| William Pahlman Associates | Box 7 | Folder 16 – 1955-1956 |
| Oyen, Penelope* | Box 7 | Folder 17 – 1957, undated |
| J. Walter Thompson* | Box 7 | Folder 18 – 1949-1950, 1957 |

Series XI – Personal, 1957, undated

The items in this series relate to Potts' personal life. The series contains a certificate, sheet music, and a script.

| | | |
|------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| American Kennel Club* | Box 7 | Folder 19 – 1957 |
| Xmas Christmas Pageant | Box 7 | Folder 20 – Undated |