

Byres H. Gitchell Collection

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Special Collections**

**The Byres H. Gitchell
Collection, 1916-1936**

**Finding Aid created 2010-2011
Jean Green, Head of Special Collections
and
Macarry Pobanz and Elizabeth Grace, Student Assistants**

Biographical Timeline

- Apr. 19, 1881 Born in Horseheads, NY, the son of Hollis M. (a Fire Commissioner and businessman) and Ida (Wales) Gitchell
- 1900 Graduated from Binghamton High School
- 1906 Married Helen Hogan of Emporium, PA
- 1900-1905 Worked in the newspaper field in Binghamton, NY and Cleveland, Ohio
- 1909 First child, Helen, born
- 1905-1912 Secretary for the Chamber of Commerce in Binghamton
- 1907-1912 Secretary and Treasurer for the Industrial Company of Binghamton, NY
- 1913 Second child, Byres Hollis, born
- 1907-1918? Secretary of the American Association of Commercial Executives
- 1909-1910 Superintendent of Dunn & McCarthy
- 1912-1916 Secretary for the Detroit Board of Commerce
- 1916-1917 Assistant to James Couzens, a Director in the National Chamber of Commerce
- Sept. 1917 Assigned to active duty as Captain in Ordnance Reserve Corps
- Jan. 1918 Ordered to report to Office of Secretary of War for duty, later appointed Major Ordnance National Army
- June 1918 Appointed Chief Industrial Relations Department, Bureau of Aircraft Production
- Aug. 1918 Appointed Major, U.S. Army (instead of Major Ordnance National Army)
- Dec. 1918 Honorably discharged to take effect December 1918
- 1919 Served as Labor Manager of the American Men's and Boy's Clothing Manufacturers Association
- 1920 Served as labor manager for the Clothing Manufacturers' Association stating that "the New York manufacturers are asking for such conditions as will permit them to make and sell clothing in competition for other markets. This means that they must lower their labor cost per garment. Otherwise the public will not buy."
- 1921 Served as Labor Manager and Market Chairman for the Employers' Association in New York City
- 1923 Served on a committee to draw up a uniform order blank covering the purchase of women's ready-to-wear. This committee created by the Wholesale and Retail Garment Council and announced by Maxwell Copelof, President of the National Wholesale Women's Wear Association. Other committee members included David Engel, Morris Sprayregen, Horatio Simon, Moris Knobel, John Wilkin, Carl Sadowsky, Dr. Paul H. Nystrom, Lew Han, John Hahn, John Block and Felix Lilienthal.
- 1928 Spoke at a "welcome home" luncheon given Executive Chairman David N. Mosessohn of the Associated Dress Industries of America at the Hotel Astor by the Executive and Advisory Councils of that organization
- 1929 Served as managing director of the Cavendish Trading Corporation

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- 1932 Served on committee in charge of the Quality Campaign sponsored by the National Retail Dry Goods Association. Other members associated with the campaign included W.O. Riordan, I.A. Hirschmann, M.D.C. Crawford, Katherine Casey and Harford Powell. A pamphlet was created to be distributed to retailers nationally to present the means whereby individual stores, through advertising, window and interior displays and other means, may most effectively carry the quality message to the consumer.
- 1933 Served as Deputy National Recovery Association (NRA) Administrator
- 1933-1935 Served as Chairman of the Dress Code Authority
- Jan. 1934 First NRA label under the Dress Code Authority sewn by Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins. Gitchell said the label marked "the beginning of self government in the industry under the NRA." (NYTimes, 23 Jan 1934: 20)
- Apr. 1934 Spoke at dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria for members of the Dress Code Authority. The dinner, held under the auspices of the Retailers Protective Committee of the National Drygoods Association, was in recognition of the harmonious agreement reached between retailers and dress manufacturers on provisions of the dress code affecting the interests of both elements.
- Apr. 1934 Appointed by General Hugh S. Johnson, NRA Administrator, along with Adolf Feldblum, impartial chairman of the dress industry, to a special commission to settle dispute between contractors and jobbers
- Aug. 1934 Presided at meeting of retailers and Dress Code Authority to suggest code changes for improving functioning of the dress code
- 19?? – 1935 Served in various capacities under the Dress Code Authority in New York City
- 1933-? Served as General Manager of Stern Brothers in New York City
- Oct. 1934 Appointed by OPA General Manager, Chester Bowles, as head of retail distribution branch of the Consumer Goods Price Division of the Office of Price Administration. This appointment was part of the program of OPA to staff its operations with experienced business men and to simplify price control.
- After 1935 Served as acting managing director of the Bon March, Seattle (with the Allied Stores Corporation of NY)
- After 1935 Served as assistant to the president of Allied Stores. According to a NYTimes article, he still held this post as of May 1950.
- ? -1943 Served as president of the Golden Rule Department Store of St. Paul, Minn.
- Oct. 1943 Appointed head of the retail distribution branch in the Consumer Goods Price Division of the Office of Price Administration. This branch, formed to deal with retail prices of all products except food, provided link between OPA and retail merchants.
- Jan. 1944 Appointed Acting Director of the Consumer Goods Price Division of the Office of Price Administration. It is possible that he became Director around Sep. 1944. He resigned this post in or around Oct. 1944.

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- May, 1950 Participated in a human relations conference in the field of retailing that was part of the Business Education Week celebration at the City College School of Business and Civic Administration.
- Oct. 1950 Served as Personnel Director for Allied Stores Corporation
- Oct. 1950 Served as Chairman of the American Retail Federation's task committee on manpower.
- Oct. 1950 Spoke at concluding sessions of the store operations conference of the National Association of Music Merchants in the New Yorker Hotel. There he urged retailers to plan immediately to use greater numbers of part-time workers, handicapped persons and women on their personnel staffs to offset diversion of employees to war industries and to producers of civilian goods who are beset by manpower shortages and are willing to pay higher wages than retail stores.
- May, 1970 Dies in Binghamton, NY

Gitchell also contributed an article titled, "The Best Method of Sustaining and Increasing Membership" to the 1920 publication, *Commercial Organizations, Their Function, Operation and Service: a compilation of Material from the Proceedings of the National Association of Commercial Organization Secretaries and its Predecessors, the American Association of Commercial Executives, and the Central Association of Commercial Secretaries.*

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Scope and Contents Note

The Byres H. Gitchell Collection consists of correspondence, newspaper articles, publications and documents largely relating to Gitchell’s service in the United States Department of War and his time as chairman of the Dress Code Authority, under the National Recovery Administration.

Processing Note

This collection was re-organized and described by Jean Green, Head of Special Collections and Macarry Pobanz and Elizabeth Grace, Undergraduate Student Assistants in Special Collections, October 2010 – May 2011.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1

- Folder 1 Correspondence, January 1916-October 1916 and post-Army 1919
- Folder 2 Publications 1918-1936
- *Proclamation of the President of the United States Creating the National War Labor Board*, 1918
 - *The Work of the Wage-Adjustment Boards* by Alexander M. Bing, reprinted for private circulation from *The Journal of Political Economy*, V. XXVII, No. 6, June 1919
 - *Report of the Industrial Conference called by the President*, March 6, 1920
 - *Why This Strike* by Julius Hochman, General Manager, Joint Board, Dressmaker's Union, c1936
- Folder 3 Army Correspondence and Documents, 1917-1918
- Folder 4 Army Documents, 1918-1919
Includes Memorandums of awards and decisions in labor disputes, often with Gitchell serving as arbitrator
Includes Report of the Industrial Service Section, Army Ordnance, c1919
Includes Report on the War Activities of the Industrial Relations Department, Bureau of Aircraft Production, War Department, Washington, c1919
- Folder 5 National Recovery Administration and Dress Code Authority Correspondence and Documents, 1934-1935
- Folder 6 National Recovery Administration and Dress Code Authority Correspondence and Documents, 1934-1935
- Folder 7 National Recovery Administration and Dress Code Authority Documents, 1934
- Folder 8 History of the Code of Fair Competition for the Coat and Suit Industry, 1935

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- Folder 9 National Recovery Administration publications, 1933-1935
Code of Fair Competition pamphlets, 1933-1934
National Coat and Suit Industry Recovery Bard flyer, n.d.
- Folder 10 Correspondence and misc. documents, 1934-1936
Copies of articles from *Women's Wear Daily*, *Evening Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Herald Tribune*, *the N.Y. American* 1934-1936 – includes articles about the first NRA labels under the Dress Code Authority

Box 2 (oversized)

Document: Degree designating Byres H. Gitchell as a delegate to the Seventh Annual Convention of the Southern Commercial Congress to be held in Charleston, South Carolina, Dec. 13-17, 1915 – Issued and signed by the Governor of Michigan, Woodbridge N. Ferris

Document: Appointment of Byres H. Gitchell as Major in the Ordnance Department in the National Army, January 16, 1918

Document (handwritten): Schedule of wages for year 1918

Document: Arsenal Rates, 191? (date has been punched out)

Plaque: Commendation for Meritorious Service Awarded to D.V.R.-gitchell Placement Program for exceptional accomplishments which have contributed to public understanding of the employment capabilities of the physically handicapped...., Awarded by the Committee on Employment of the Physically Handicapped of Dade County, Inc., n.d.

Helpful Definitions

Dress Code Authority authorized the president to institute industry-wide codes intended to eliminate unfair trade practices, reduce unemployment, establish minimum wages and maximum hours, and guarantee the right of labor to bargain collectively.

National Recovery Administration was the the primary New Deal agency established by U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933. The goal was to eliminate "cut-throat competition" by bringing industry, labor and government together to create codes of "fair practices" and set prices. The NRA was created by the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) and allowed industries to get together and write "codes of fair competition." The codes were intended to

reduce "destructive competition" and to help workers by setting minimum wages and maximum weekly hours, as well as minimum prices at which products could be sold. In 1935, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously declared that the NIRA was unconstitutional, ruling that it infringed the separation of powers under the United States Constitution. The NRA quickly stopped operations, but many of its labor provisions reappeared in the National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act), passed later the same year. The long-term result was a surge in the growth and power of unions, which became a core of the New Deal Coalition that dominated national politics for the next three decades. (Source: Wikipedia)