

A Guide to the Ernest W. Peterkin Papers, 1950-1995

Ernest W. Peterkin Papers 1950-1995

1950-1995

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2008

History

Processed by: Special Collections Staff

Title Statement

A Guide to the Ernest W. Peterkin Papers, 1950-1995

Subtitle: Papers, Ernest W. Peterkin

Collection: MS 1995.1 20C

Publication Statement

Date: © 2008 By The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. All Rights Reserved.

Publisher: John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by Jennifer Sharp, 07/23/2008

Language Usage: Description is in English

Revision Description

2013-11-21 Converted to schema conforming EAD by dtd2schema.vh.xsl.

Descriptive Summary

Manuscript Number

MS 1995.1 20C

Language

English

Abstract

Material collected by shoe historian Ernest W. Peterkin

Creator

Peterkin, Ernest W.

Physical Characteristics

1.2 linear feet.

Location

On site.

Repository

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection is open to research.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

Gift, 1995

Preferred Citation

Ernest W. Peterkin Papers, Manuscript #MS 1995.1 20C, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Biographical/Historical Information

Ernest Wilson Peterkin was born in Enfield Wash, England to American parents. He was raised first in the Boston area, and then Detroit. Peterkin was a graduate of the Lawrence Institute of Technology (in Detroit) and the University of Maryland. During World War II Peterkin served in the Navy and continued as a member of the Navy Reserve until 1980, when he retired as a captain. A 35 year employee of the Naval Research Laboratory, Peterkin retired in 1978 as manager of a project that measured solar activity.

During the 1950s Peterkin became interested in shoemaking, and apprenticed under Frederich Engleke in the 1960s. This new hobby set the stage for a second career as a historian and re-creator of colonial and civil war era military dress and shoes. After retiring, Peterkin pursued his work as a consultant on military history for several organizations.

Peterkin was a fellow of the Company of Military Historians and co-founder of the North-South Skirmish Association, which demonstrates Civil War-era weapons. As part of his involvement with war reenactment groups, he helped plan major battle anniversary programs. Additionally, Peterkin was considered an authority on Civil War monitors. His writings included two books on arms and ships and several articles, and he contributed to other authors' works concerning shoes and military dress. Each year he demonstrated his knowledge of antique footwear at a festival in Westford, VA

Peterkin and his wife Betty were married for 47 years and were the parents of three daughters. He died January 6, 1995 at the age of 74.

Source Consulted: Washington Post, January 10, 1995

Scope and Content

A series within the 20th Century Collections of the Library, the Peterkin Shoe papers have been divided into five subseries: Correspondence, Patterns and Sketches, Photographs, Reference Material, and Research Files.

Correspondence between Peterkin and other members of the military and shoe communities is arranged in chronological order. Prominent in this subseries is the well-documented struggle Peterkin had in order to replicate a pair of shoes for an exhibit at the Smithsonian.

The Patterns and Sketches subseries contains those items created and gathered by Peterkin as he replicated shoes over the years. Folders relate to specific styles from specific time periods. Peterkin's descriptions were retained as much as possible.

While Photographs of shoes and boots can be found throughout the series, those with no associated documentation have been compiled into a separate subseries. Many include handwritten notes from Peterkin, providing additional style and age information for the pictured shoe.

Documentation, primarily secondary source material, acquired by Peterkin over the years comprises the Reference Material subseries. Much of this information has been photocopied. Also found in this section is information provided to Peterkin by fellow shoe enthusiasts Fred Gaede and Al Saguto.

Peterkin's publications, and the work leading up to them, highlight the Research Files subseries. Writings such as the United States Army footwear chronology can be found here.

Index Terms

Persons:

Peterkin, Ernest W.

Gaede, Fred

Saguto, Al

Subjects:

Shoes - History

Boots - history

Military uniforms--Virginia--History

Arrangement

Arranged in series.

Contents List

Peterkin

Correspondence

Box 1

1958-1961

1962

1963

1964-1970

1971-June 1972

July 1972-1975

1977-1979

1980-1985

1986

1990

1991-1992

1993-1994

Patterns and Sketches

Boots

Ankle Boot- ca. 1870 (Craig Nannos Collection)

Assorted

Cavalry Boots (British), 1952

Civil War (boots and shoes)-OVERSIZE

Colonial Williamsburg boot patterns

Hessian Boots

Howe, T., patent

"Livingston" Boot, ca. 1868

Philadelphia boot, ca. 1820-OVERSIZE

Patterns, Saguto, Al

Spurs

Waters, J.W.

Wellington, ca. 1875

Wellington Whole Cut

Shoes

Boys

Buckle, ca. 1680

Confederate

European, 17th century

Fort Independence shoe sketches-OVERSIZE

Fort Ligonier shoes-OVERSIZE

Governor's Landing and Kingsmill, found at, ca. 1660-OVERSIZE

Old ship, ca. late 18th century

Overshoe

Peterkin's shoe last

Shoe upper, Hilton, NC shipwreck

Side seam

Straight

Straight, buckle

Box 2

Extent

(2 folders)

Straight, tie, ca. 1820

Turnshoe

United States Civil War shoe

United States Army shoe

Women's high-heeled shoe

Miscellaneous patterns

Photographs

1964 January

Bootees

Colonial Williamsburg shoes

Shoes by Fred Gaede

Original shoes

USS Pennsylvania

Unlabeled

Reference Material

"The Art and Mystery of the Gentle Craft" (photocopy)

Calligraphy and quill pens

"A Final Report of Archaeological Investigations at Fort Independence"

"The Footwear of Soldiers" (photocopy)

Gaede, Fred, information from

"General Regulations for the Army of the United States" (photocopy)

"How to Make a Shoe" (photocopy)

"Ordinance Notes"

Box 3

"Quartermaster Support of the Army"

"Report on the War of 1812 Uniform Worn by Major John Reid of Tennessee"

Saguto, D.A., information from

Scannel's Catalogue and Price List

Secretary of War and Quartermaster reports, 1877-1888

"A Treatise on Tanning, Currying, and Leather Dressing" (photocopy)

Uniform regulations, ca. 1812

Research Files

"The Federal Army Shoe, 1861-1865"

Jefferson Bootee

Notes from National Archives

The Philadelphia Shoe

"Regulations Prescribing the Uniform for the Southern Department"

Box 4

Shoe x-rays-OVERSIZE

United States Army boot and shoe prices

"The United States Army Bootee, 1861-1865"

Final draft

Preparation for talk

United States Army footwear chronology

Abridged and draft

1781-1823

1824-1846

1846-1864

1865-1970

United States Arsenal and Bootee Establishment on the Schuykill-OVERSIZE

Miscellaneous

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