

# Steinmesch, H. May

H. May Steinmesch Papers, 1915 - 1975 (bulk 1915-1950)  
1915-1975



## Title Statement

Steinmesch, H. May A Guide to the H. May Steinmesch Papers, 1915-1975 Ms.2023.122

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## Profile Description

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## Descriptive Summary

### Unit ID

Ms.2023.122

### Unit Date

1915-1975

### Language

Materials are in English.

### Abstract

Henrietta May Steinmesch was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1893. After graduating from the University of Washington in St. Louis, she worked on local governmental and residential projects; during World War II she worked for the Army of Engineers and Air Force, drafting maps and plotting airfields. In 1943, she moved West to California, where she remained until her death in 1979. Materials in the collection consist of watercolors, sketches, block prints, photographs, taped interviews, clippings, and several architectural drawings.

### Creator

Steinmesch, H. May, 1893-1979

### Extent

2.5 Cubic Feet

## Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

# Administrative Information

## Conditions Governing Access

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## Source of Acquisition

Materials were transferred to Special Collections and University Archives in August 2023.

## Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the H. May Steinmesch Papers was completed in May 2024.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], H. May Steinmesch Papers, 1915-1975, Ms2023-122, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

# Biographical / Historical

(Henrietta) May Steinmesch was born on May 9, 1893, to parents Henry Steinmesch and Adelaide Caldwell, in St. Louis, Missouri. She received a B.S. in Architecture from the University of Washington in St. Louis in 1916. Following her graduation, she worked for the St. Louis City Planning Commission until 1923 as a draftsman, designer, and delineator. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s she strung together several jobs, teaching drafting and interior design courses, working for St. Louis firms, and building a small business around private interior design commissions and consultations.

During World War II, Steinmesch worked for the U.S. Army of Engineers and Air Force; her work included plotting airfields and teaching drafting and map-making skills to naval officers. After requesting to be discharged in 1943, she went to work for the Western division of the United Services Organization, where she stayed until 1946, after which, she worked for various firms and agencies in California until her retirement in 1958.

In 1915, while Steinmesch was still at the University of Washington she founded an undergraduate organization for women studying architecture called "La Confrerie Alongive." Later, Steinmesch, along with the other women studying at UW, organized with women in programs at the Universities of Minnesota, Texas, and California. In 1922, the four chapters formed a national organization called Alpha Alpha Gamma, for which Steinmesch served as president from 1928 to 1930. Alpha Alpha Gamma eventually became the Association for Women in Architecture (AWA) in 1948. Although AWA later dissolved as a national organization, its California chapter remains active as a professional organization, now called the Association for Women in Architecture and Design, or AWA+D.

H. May Steinmesch passed away on May 21, 1979.

# Content Description

The Steinmesch papers are comprised of photographs, clippings and printed material related to Alpha Alpha Gamma (later the Association for Women in Architecture), personal artwork, watercolors, sketches, rug patterns and designs, three audiocassette tapes of an oral history interview conducted in 1975, additional biographical documentation, and some limited project drawings for the St. Louis City Planning Commission.

# Keywords

International Archive of Women in Architecture (IAWA)

## Existence and Location of Copies

Some of this collection has been digitized and is available online.

## Rights Statement for Archival Description

The guide to the H. May Steinmesch Papers by Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, is licensed under a CC0 (<https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/public-domain/cc0/>).

## Arrangement

The H. May Steinmesch papers are organized into the three following series: Personal papers, Professional papers, and Project records. Items are arranged chronologically within series and sub-series.

## Description of Subordinate Components

### Personal papers

#### Photographs of H. May Steinmesch

**Unit Date** 1915, 1916, 1950, c. 1966

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

#### Personal and student artwork, landscapes and interiors, St. Louis, Missouri

**Unit Date** 1915

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

#### Personal art, Christmas and greeting card designs

**Unit Date** 1928, undated

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 3 (folder)

#### Birthday card from San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA) colleagues

**Unit Date** 1952

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 4 (folder)

### Biographical information

#### Clippings on Steinmesch, career and projects

**Unit Date** 1915-1916, 1923, 1942-1943

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 5 (folder)

#### Curriculum vitae, California architectural licensing

**Unit Date** 1950s

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 6 (folder)

## **Oral history interview, audio cassette tapes [3]**

**Unit Date** 1975

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 7 (folder)

### **Scope and Contents**

Oral history interviews with Steinmesch, conducted by Dorothy Harrison, over two days in February and April 1975; recorded on three tapes. Harrison was also an active member and former president of AWA.

These tapes have been digitized and transcribed. Please contact Special Collections and University Archives to discuss access options.

## **Professional papers**

### **Association of Women in Architecture**

#### **Alpha Alpha Gamma and Association of Women in Architecture files**

**Unit Date** 1921- 1960

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 8 (folder)

#### **Watercolor designs for the Association of Women in Architecture**

**Unit Date** c. 1948

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 9 (folder)

### **Teaching materials related to University of Washington extension program**

**Unit Date** c. 1920s

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 10 (folder)

#### **Subject file: Clippings on women in architecture**

**Unit Date** 1939, 1973-1977

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 11 (folder)

## **Project files**

#### **St. Louis City Plan Commission, Civic Center Proposal**

**Unit Date** 1922

**oversize** 1 (folder)

#### **St. Louis City Plan Commission, Union Station and municipal buildings group**

**Unit Date** 1919

**oversize** 1 (folder)

#### **St. Louis City Plan Commission, unidentified St. Louis projects**

**Unit Date** c. 1920

**oversize** 1 (folder)

## **Rug patterns and designs**

**Unit Date** undated

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 12 (folder)

### **Scope and Contents**

Many patterns and designs appear to be for client Jenny Davida Johnson. Media include watercolors, pen, pencil, and diazo copies.