

Thornton, Rosemary

Rosemary Thornton Papers
1914-2005, undated

Title Statement

Thornton, Rosemary A Guide to the Rosemary Thornton Papers MG 111

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MG 111

Unit Date

1914-2005, undated

Unit Date

Date acquired: 06/21/2011

Language

English .

Abstract

The Papers of Rosemary Thornton is a collection of catalogs and documents from kit-house manufacturers such as Sears, Roebuck and Company, as well as papers that Thornton has accumulated during her search for kit-houses in the United States.

Creator

Thornton, Rosemary (1959-)

Extent

7.60 Linear Feet

Extent

2 half size boxes, 1 oversized box, 2 binders, and 3 poster tubes boxes

Repository

ODU Community Collections

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

Open to researchers without restrictions.

Conditions Governing Use

Before publishing quotations or excerpts from any materials, permission must be obtained from Special Collections and University Archives, and the holder of the copyright, if not Old Dominion University Libraries.

Source of Acquisition

Ms. Rosemary Thornton

Method of Acquisition

Gift. Accession #A2011-18

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Box [insert number], Folder [insert number and title], Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Biographical or Historical Information

Rosemary Thornton was born in Portsmouth, Virginia in 1959, to Thomas Hoyt Fuller and Betty Brown Fuller. Thornton spent most of her childhood in Virginia, where her father worked as an assistant manager at Skippy Peanut Butter. In 1974, her father left Thornton and her mother, and would not return to Thornton's life until the early 2000's. Most of Thornton's life from then on was spent in Illinois.

As an adult, Thornton's career has revolved around real estate. She first worked as both a realtor and freelance writer in Alton, Illinois. Later, she and her husband started a small rental property business. She continued to do freelance work, along with her real estate business, and published her first book, "The Reality of Real Estate", in 1993.

Thornton made Sears homes and writing her primary focus and career from that point on. She spent the remainder of the year completing her manuscript for her second book and published it in 2002. In less than two years, the book sold several thousand copies, and Thornton received several hundred e-mails and letters about possible Sears homes and praise for her book. She published two more books about Sears homes following that two-year timespan, as well as a re-print of "The Houses That Sears Built".

Thornton later moved from Illinois to Norfolk, Virginia and re-married in 2007. She traveled to more than 24 states to give lectures on Sears homes. Thornton made appearances on several television programs to promote her writing and bring attention to the existence of kit-homes. Since publishing her second book, hundreds of Sears and kit-homes have been found across the United States.

The success of kit-homes began to falter in 1930. The Great Depression, coupled with demand for more intricate house designs, slowed house sales. Sears was forced to liquidate \$11 million in mortgages. Sears closed the Modern Homes department in 1940. All sales records were destroyed during the company's corporate house cleaning, leaving no record of where the houses were located. Thornton's third book, "Finding the Houses that Sears Built; A Guide to the 60 Most Popular Designs", revolves around identifying Sears homes, as the only way to find them now is one by one. All other companies closed down their kit-home departments or were out of business by 1982.

Scope and Contents

The contents of the collection include catalogs, photographs, and estimates from kit-house manufacturers, along with letters, photographs, newspaper clippings, and e-mails received and sent by Thornton.

Keywords

Homes, Prefabricated

Sears, Roebuck and Company

Sears, Roebuck and Company. Home Construction Division

Montgomery Ward

Aladdin Company. Aladdin homes "built in a day"

Arrangement Note

The collection is organized into two series: Series I: Kit-House Manufacturers; and Series II: Rosemary Thornton Correspondence.

Description of Subordinate Components

Series I: Kit-House Manufacturers

Unit ID Series I

Unit Date circa 1908-2005, undated

Scope and Contents

This series contains catalogs from kit-house manufacturers such as Aladdin Homes, Montgomery Ward and Company, and Sears, Roebuck and Company, as well as advertisements, estimates, floor plans, and photographs. The series is arranged in alphabetical order.

Box 1

Unit ID Box 1

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Photograph: Montgomery Ward and Company: Group Photograph of Workers Outside Building

Unit ID Item 1

Unit Date undated

Graphic Materials 1 (box)

Preferred Citation

Photograph: Montgomery Ward and Company: Group Photograph of Workers Outside Building, undated, Box 1, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Publication: Montgomery Ward and Company: Lighting the Path to Economy

Unit ID Item 2

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Preferred Citation

Publication: Montgomery Ward and Company: Lighting the Path to Economy, undated, Box 1, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Publication: Sears, Roebuck and Company: Peerless Wall Board, Roofing of the Future

Unit ID Item 3

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Preferred Citation

Publication: Sears, Roebuck and Company: Peerless Wall Board, Roofing of the Future, undated, Box 1, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Building Estimate: Sears, Roebuck and Company: Catalogue of Millwork, Specifications and Bill of Materials for Modern Home

Unit ID Item 4

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials 1 (box)

Preferred Citation

Building Estimate: Sears, Roebuck and Company: Catalogue of Millwork, Specifications and Bill of Materials for Modern Home, undated, Box 1, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Box 2**Unit ID** Box 2**Mixed Materials** 2 (box)**Folder 1: Aladdin Homes: The New Home, Advance Messenger of Aladdin****Unit ID** Folder 1**Unit Date** 1914**Mixed Materials** 2 (box)**Container** 1 (folder)**Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item and date], Box 2, Folder 1, Aladdin Homes: The New Home, Advance Messenger of Aladdin, 1914, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 2: Montgomery Ward and Company: Book of Homes**Unit ID** Folder 2**Unit Date** 1915**Mixed Materials** 2 (box)**Container** 2 (folder)**Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item and date], Box 2, Folder 2, Montgomery Ward and Company: Book of Homes, 1915, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 3: Sears Home Construction Division, America's New Low Cost Homes**Unit ID** Folder 3**Unit Date** circa 1934**Mixed Materials** 2 (box)**Container** 3 (folder)**Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item and date], Box 2, Folder 3, Sears Home Construction Division, America's New Low Cost Homes, circa 1934, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 4: Sears, Roebuck and Company: HonorBilt Modern Homes, HonorBilt Homes, Concrete Machinery, Starr Garages, The Book of Modern Homes, Modern Homes**Unit ID** Folder 4**Unit Date** 1938-1940**Mixed Materials** 2 (box)**Container** 4 (folder)**Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item and date], Box 2, Folder 4, Sears, Roebuck and Company: HonorBilt Modern Homes, HonorBilt Homes, Concrete Machinery, Starr Garages, The Book of Modern Homes, Modern Homes, 1938-1940, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 5: Sears, Roebuck and Company: Modern Plumbing and Heating Systems, Building Materials and Millwork**Unit ID** Folder 5**Unit Date** 1921-1930**Mixed Materials** 2 (box)**Container** 5 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 2, Folder 5, Sears, Roebuck and Company: Modern Plumbing and Heating Systems, Building Materials and Millwork, 1921-1930, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 6: Sears, Roebuck and Company: The Kit House in Southeastern VA

Unit ID Folder 6

Unit Date 2005

Mixed Materials 2 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 2, Folder 6, Sears, Roebuck and Company: The Kit House in Southeastern VA, 2005, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Box 3

Unit ID Box 3

Mixed Materials 3 (box)

Building Plans for The Crafton, Model 3318

Unit ID Item 1

Unit Date 1930-1931

Mixed Materials 3 (box)

Preferred Citation

Building Plans for The Crafton, Model 3318, 1930-1931, Box 3, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Box 4

Unit ID Box 4

Mixed Materials 4 (box)

Building Plans for The Osborn, Model 2050

Unit ID Item 1

Unit Date 1917-1920

Mixed Materials 4 (box)

Preferred Citation

Building Plans for The Osborn, Model 2050, 1917-1920, Box 4, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Box 5

Unit ID Box 5

Mixed Materials 5 (box)

Building Plans for The Somerset, Model 7008

Unit ID Item 1

Unit Date 1920

Mixed Materials 5 (box)

Preferred Citation

Building Plans for The Somerset, Model 7008, 1920, Box 5, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Box 6**Unit ID** Box 6**Mixed Materials** 6 (box)**Aladdin Catalog****Unit ID** Item 1**Unit Date** circa 1920**Mixed Materials** 6 (box)**Preferred Citation**

Aladdin Catalog, circa 1920, Box 6, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Gordon Van-Tine Catalog**Unit ID** Item 2**Unit Date** circa 1948**Mixed Materials** 6 (box)**Preferred Citation**

Gordon Van-Tine Catalog, circa 1948, Box 6, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Sears, Roebuck and Company, "HonorBilt Homes"**Unit ID** Item 3**Unit Date** 1929**Mixed Materials** 6 (box)**Preferred Citation**

Sears, Roebuck and Company, "HonorBilt Homes", 1929, Box 6, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Sears, Roebuck and Company, "Summer Cottages"**Unit ID** Item 4**Unit Date** circa 1927**Mixed Materials** 6 (box)**Preferred Citation**

Sears, Roebuck and Company, "Summer Cottages", circa 1927, Box 6, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Sears, Roebuck and Company, "Simplex Sectional Buildings"**Unit ID** Item 5**Unit Date** 1921**Mixed Materials** 6 (box)**Preferred Citation**

Sears, Roebuck and Company, "Simplex Sectional Buildings", 1921, Box 6, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Sears, Roebuck and Company, "HonorBilt Homes"**Unit ID** Item 6**Unit Date** 1924**Mixed Materials** 6 (box)**Preferred Citation**

Sears, Roebuck and Company, "HonorBilt Homes", 1924, Box 6, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Sears, Roebuck and Company, Book of Modern Homes and Building Plans

Unit ID Item 7

Unit Date circa 1908

Mixed Materials 6 (box)

Preferred Citation

Sears, Roebuck and Company, Book of Modern Homes and Building Plans, circa 1908, Box 6, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Gordon Van-Tine, "Book of Homes"

Unit ID Item 8

Unit Date circa 1941

Mixed Materials 6 (box)

Preferred Citation

Gordon Van-Tine, "Book of Homes", circa 1941, Box 6, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

International Mill & Timber Company, "The Famous Fifty and Other Favorite Homes, Built by the Sterling System"

Unit ID Item 9

Unit Date 1916

Mixed Materials 6 (box)

Preferred Citation

International Mill & Timber Company, "The Famous Fifty and Other Favorite Homes, Built by the Sterling System", 1916, Box 6, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Sears, Roebuck and Company, "The Book of Modern Homes"

Unit ID Item 10

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials 6 (box)

Preferred Citation

Sears, Roebuck and Company, "The Book of Modern Homes", undated, Box 6, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Series II: Rosemary Thornton Correspondence

Unit ID Series II

Unit Date 2001-2005, undated

Scope and Contents

This series contains letters, photos, and publications received by Thornton on the subject of kit-houses. It also contains responses from Thornton and notes on possible and confirmed kit-houses. The series is arranged in chronological order.

Box 7

Unit ID Box 7

Mixed Materials 7 (box)

Folder 1: Notes, Letters and Photos

Unit ID Folder 1

Unit Date 2001

Mixed Materials 7 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 7, Folder 1, Notes, Letters and Photos, 2001, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 2: Notes, Letters, and Photos

Unit ID Folder 2

Unit Date 2002

Mixed Materials 7 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 7, Folder 2, Notes, Letters, and Photos, 2002, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 3: Notes, Letters, and Photos

Unit ID Folder 3

Unit Date 2003

Mixed Materials 7 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 7, Folder 3, Notes, Letters, and Photos, 2003, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 4: Notes, Letters, and Photos

Unit ID Folder 4

Unit Date 2003

Mixed Materials 7 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 7, Folder 4, Notes, Letters, and Photos, 2003, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 5: Notes, Letters, and Photos

Unit ID Folder 5

Unit Date 2004

Mixed Materials 7 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 7, Folder 5, Notes, Letters, and Photos, 2004, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 6: Notes, Letters, and Photos

Unit ID Folder 6

Unit Date 2005

Mixed Materials 7 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 7, Folder 6, Notes, Letters, and Photos, 2005, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Folder 7: Notes, Letters, and Photos

Unit ID Folder 7

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials 7 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item and date], Box 7, Folder 7, Notes, Letters, and Photos, undated, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.

Box 8

Unit ID Box 8

Mixed Materials 8 (box)

E-mails and Correspondences

Unit ID Item 1

Unit Date 2002-2004

Mixed Materials 8 (box)

Preferred Citation

E-mails and Correspondences, 2002-2004, Box 8, Rosemary Thornton Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Old Dominion University Libraries.