

The Filson Historical Society
Myer Berman & Sons (Louisville, Ky.)
Records, 1919-1941

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Size of Collection:
.33 cubic feet

Location Number:
Mss. BB M996

**Myer Berman & Sons (Louisville, Ky.)
Records, 1919-1941**

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of records and materials, 1919-1941, primarily related to the business of Myer Berman & Sons, a Jewish owned clothing store on West Market Street in Louisville. Legal and business records and promotional materials document the finances and marketing strategies of the retail store right before and during the Great Depression years.

Folders 1-3 contain legal and financial records. Folder 1 contains Myer and Esther D. Berman's 1919 property title, a 1927 mortgage note, and individual income tax returns from 1926-1931 and 1933-1934. Folder 2 contains Myer Berman & Sons corporation tax returns from 1928-1930 and 1933-1934. These individual and corporation tax returns show that Myer Berman's net income was in the red in 1933-1934 and that the Myer Berman & Sons store logged net losses in 1930 and 1933-1934. Folder 3 contains additional business records, including 1928 articles of incorporation for Myer Berman & Sons, stockholders' meeting minutes, a list of business accounts, a list of individual "accounts stopped until paid," blank stockholder certificates, and gross retail sales tax receipts.

Folders 4-5 contain promotional materials for Myer Berman & Sons as well as for the Fit-Rite Pants Company. Folder 4 includes correspondence from 1927-1929 regarding the store's acquisition of rabbits to give away to customers during the months leading up to Easter. Also included are fragments of advertising circulars from the 1930s. Folder 5 contains a ca. 1930 packet of order sheets, price schedule, fabric samples, and "confidential information" for salesmen of the Fit-Rite Pants Company, with Dennis Berman (one of Myer Berman's sons) listed as a sales manager.

Folder 6 contains miscellaneous records and materials from the store after it was renamed Myer Berman's Sons. Records document the store's name change to Myer Berman's Sons in 1931 and the decision to close the store in 1941. Also included is a segment of a roll of Myer Berman's Sons clothing labels. A newspaper clipping, ca. 1941, details the shooting down of a German plane during World War II by Sergeant Ford Cowherd, the son of Myer Berman's Sons salesman Roy Cowherd.

Papers in folder 7 relate to the mid-1930s settlement of the estate of Harris J. Berman (the father of Myer Berman). Materials include his Liberty Special savings account book, financial and legal records, correspondence among family members, and documentation of his donation to the Louisville Hebrew School.

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Historical Note

Myer Berman (1866-1935) came to the United States from Poland in 1886 and eventually settled in Louisville, where he peddled goods to rural families in Shelby County. In the late 1880s, he married Esther Shpindler (1868-1944), who also had immigrated from Poland. He opened his first store on Market Street near Preston, at the center of Louisville's Russian and Eastern European Jewish community.

Myer Berman & Sons was legally incorporated in 1928 and located on West Market Street between 2nd and 3rd, but a store by that name and at that address first appears in the Louisville city directory in 1923. All six of the Berman sons worked at the store during its existence and in 1931, the store's name was changed to Myer Berman's Sons. Ten years later, Hyman and Isaac Berman—the only stockholders of Myer Berman's Sons in 1941—signed documents giving their consent to close the business. It appears that the store either remained opened or later reopened. Louisville city directories in 1946 and 1949 list Myer Berman's Sons next to the names of Hyman and Isaac Berman and, in 1952, identify it as a men's clothing store at 245 West Jefferson.

Sources:

Carol Ely, *Jewish Louisville: Portrait of a Community*, pp. 67-70, 81
Louisville, Kentucky, City Directory, 1922, 1923, 1946, 1949, 1952, Ancestry.com

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Folder List

Box 1

Folder 1: Myer and Esther Berman Property Records and Income Tax Returns, 1919-1934

Folder 2: Corporation Income Tax Returns, 1928-1930, 1933-1934

Folder 3: Legal and Business Records, 1928-1934

Folder 4: Promotional Materials and Records, 1927-1941

Folder 5: Fit-Rite Pants Company Materials, ca. 1930

Folder 6: Myer Berman's Sons Records and Clothing Labels, 1931-1941

Folder 7: Estate of Harris J. Berman, 1926-1936

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Subject Headings

Berman, Harris J., 1838-1934.
Business enterprises – Kentucky – Louisville.
Business records – Kentucky – Louisville.
Clothing and dress – Kentucky – Louisville.
Depressions – 1929 – Kentucky – Louisville.
Estate planning – Kentucky – Louisville.
Jewish businesspeople – Kentucky – Louisville.
Marketing – Kentucky – Louisville.
Men's clothing – Kentucky – Louisville.
Merchants – Kentucky – Louisville.
Pants – Kentucky – Louisville.
Sales management – Kentucky – Louisville.
Sales personnel – Kentucky – Louisville.
Stores, retail – Kentucky – Louisville.
World War, 1939-1945.