

Collection #
M 1021,
OMB 0128,
BV 3784,
CT 2152-2153

PAUL HARRIS STORES, INC. COLLECTION, 1971–2001

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 half-width manuscript box, 1 OMB box, 1 folder black and white photographs, 2 folders color photographs, 1 bound volume, 2 cassette tapes, 1 OVA graphic

COLLECTION DATES: 1971–2001

PROVENANCE: Gerald Paul, Indianapolis, Ind., 12 July 2011

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2011.0104

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Paul Harris Stores, Inc. was incorporated by the company's cofounders, Gerald Paul and Earl Harris, on 8 April 1952. Born 28 September 1924, Paul and his family fled from Nazi Germany to Indianapolis in 1937, where his cousin was president of the Real Silk Hosiery Co. Here Paul spun and shaped stockings and established a store for employees that sold apparel that failed to meet quality standards. After this successful endeavor, Paul became merchandise manager at Real Silk, where he met Earl Harris, an employee of Huntington Manufacturing Co. After becoming friends, Paul and Harris established their first company, Packaged Apparel, in 1952. The company sold prepackaged merchandise to other manufacturers, but afforded the men little creativity, so in 1954 Paul and Harris opened their first store in a strip mall in Plainfield, Indiana. The store offered clothing for the entire family and gradually expanded. Paul and Harris opened a second location in a strip mall located in Indianapolis, eventually expanding within Indiana and adjacent states.

The store went public in 1960 and Paul and Harris soon moved their stores into covered shopping centers, narrowing the product to women's apparel only. The first Paul Harris Store located within a mall utilized attention-getting displays, resulting in coverage in trade publications. Later in the 1960s, older strip mall stores were transformed into Paul Harris Discount Stores, which then became Clothes Out Junction and eventually The \$5-\$10-\$15-\$20 Place (\$5-\$20).

In the 1970s, Paul Harris's image evolved, offering psychedelic styles in order to be recognized as a store for "young swingers." As the chain expanded, a tornado demolished the company's distribution center in June 1978, paralyzing company headquarters. Paul and Harris located temporary warehouses and replaced missing stock, but were left with a shortage of merchandise in stores. After recovering, the company's owners tried to cater to the more subdued style of the 1980s, offering suits for working women. Paul Harris also offered casual wear by launching PASTA brand clothing, sold within existing Paul Harris stores and eventually in freestanding stores. In 1985, Earl Harris retired from the retail industry to establish his own consulting business, leaving Paul in charge.

Paul Harris stores continued to expand in 1986, but experienced losses in 1988 when the debut of a sportier look was not adopted by Paul Harris's primary customers. The company experienced a turn-around in 1989 when it improved the balance between inventory and demand and returned to traditional businesswomen apparel. A dismal holiday season in 1990 created threatening business conditions, causing the company to file for Chapter 11 protection in 1991. During the period of bankruptcy, the company conducted research to learn about their customers and provided them with toll-free numbers allowing for direct communication with Paul.

By August 31, 1992 the company emerged from bankruptcy and sales increased as Paul Harris began offering affordable apparel for both business and casual functions. PASTA and Paul Harris merchandising departments were merged under the direction of Paul's daughter, Eloise. Using research findings, Paul Harris offered a better selection of mix-

and-match items and larger product quantities to allow for better prices. As a result of these changes, Paul was named 1994 “CEO of the Year” by *Indiana Business Magazine*.

Charlotte Fischer, Paul Harris board member and experienced retail leader, assumed the position of CEO in 1995 when Paul retired and became board chairman emeritus. Under Fischer’s guidance, the company offered more customer-friendly stores and added new items with clear price points. By 1996, all \$5-\$20 stores were phased out and a prototype Paul Harris store opened in Indianapolis. In 1997, Paul Harris had earned the reputation for being a profitable store, not just a surviving one. Fischer left Paul Harris in March 2001 and the company again claimed bankruptcy due to high overhead and poor management. In November 2001, Fischer purchased the Paul Harris name and property rights in an attempt to resurrect the company, with plans to open a store in Carmel, Indiana.

Sources:

Harry, Lou. “The Woman.” *Indianapolis Monthly* (March 2002): 92-95, 190-193.

Johnson, Douglas J. “CEO of the Year: Leadership of Style.” *Indiana Business Magazine* (December 1994): 8-12, 59.

FundingUniverse. “Paul Harris Stores, Inc.” Accessed February 7, 2011.
<http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/Paul-Harris-Stores-Inc-Company-History.html>.

FindArticles.com. "Paul Harris: comeback or curtain call? - Brief Article". *DSN Retailing Today* (October 2001).
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0FNP/is_20_40/ai_79803248/

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection spans from 1971, in which Gerald Paul spearheaded a marketing seminar, to the company's closing in 2001. The collection centers around the retail company, rather than its two owners. Box 1 includes 14 folders arranged according to subject, primarily involving the company's advertising and marketing campaigns, shareholder information, and media coverage in the form of clippings and publications. Included in these folders are production diagrams, financial charts, print advertisements, company training materials, annual reports and pamphlets for both advertising and in-house purposes.

The collection contains three folders of photographs, with folders organized according to color and subject. The folder consisting of two black and white photographs (8 x 10 in.) features images of male and female models, which were likely used for advertising purposes. Folder 1 of the color photographs consists of ten 3 x 5 in. photographs of the tornado devastation. Folder 2 of the color photographs contains one 8 x 10 in. of a Paul Harris storefront.

A box of oversize manuscript materials, comprised of four folders, includes a Paul Harris merchandising manual, which consists of several color photographs and printed merchandising suggestions. The box also includes an "Our Best for You" poster, featuring a toll-free number to reach the CEO, which reflects the company's efforts to get customers to communicate with the owners. Additionally, the box includes a copy of *Indianapolis Business Journal* 14-20 March 1983 and *Women's Wear Daily* 28 April 1993, both of which review the struggles and successes of the company.

The collection also consists of an oversize visual that appears to be the cover of *Clothes* from 15 August 1969, featuring a sketch of a theatre marquis proclaiming "Paul Harris Retail Theater 70's." The abstract style and bright color scheme reflect the company's attempt to be recognized as "psychedelic" in the 1970s.

Two cassette tapes feature advertisements for Paul Harris stores in the form of songs, such as "Club Flamingo" and "Eloquence."

A bound volume 1983 report entitled "880,000 Shares of Common Stock" contains various financial documents and memorandums

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Paul Harris Stores, Inc. company history, n.d.

Annual Reports, 1979–1987

Annual Reports, 1988–1993

Paul Harris: Merchandising Manual, n.d.

Distribution Center Tornado Damage, ca. 1978

Storefront, ca. 1990s-2000s

“Quality Control Process”, diagrams, ca. 1980s–1990s

Shareholders Correspondence, 20 May 1983–19 June 1984

880,000 Shares of Common Stock, 1983, report

Marketing, target consumer review, ca. 1980s–1990s

“Marketing Through Retail Sales Seminar”, 15–18 June 1971

“We’re the Paul in Paul Harris” Campaign, [1990s]

Ads, includes pamphlets and ephemera, ca.1993

“Our Best for You” poster, n.d.

Black and White Advertisements, n.d.

Cassette tape, song advertisements for Paul Harris, 12 Mar. 1981

Cassette tape, “Club Flamingo w/ Anncr,” song advertisement for Paul Harris, ca. 1980

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 1

Box 1, Folder 2

Box 1, Folder 3

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Folder 1

Color Photographs,
Folder 1

Color Photographs,
Folder 2

Box 1, Folder 4

Box 1, Folder 5

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Box 1, Folder 6

Box 1, Folder 7

Box 1, Folder 8

Box 1, Folder 9

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Photographs,
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“Promotional Sign Specifications”, ca. 1980s–1990s	Box 1, Folder 10
Pasta Clothing Line, pamphlet and company report, ca. Mar. 1985	Box 1, Folder 11
Financial Documents, stock certificate, chart, volume report, 4 May 1992–8 Oct. 1992	Box 1, Folder 12
Publications, Mar. 1985–Dec. 1994	Box 1, Folder 13
<i>Clothes</i> cover (15 Aug. 1969)	OVA Graphics
<i>Indianapolis Business Journal</i> 14-20 Mar. 1983 (vol. 3, no. 81)	OMB 0128, Folder 3
<i>Women’s Wear Daily</i> 28 Apr. 1993 (vol. 165, no. 81)	OMB 0128, Folder 4
Clippings, 16 June 1987–22 Oct. 2011, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 14

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:
<http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 1021).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.