

Women Who Manage Departments of Omaha Stores



Miss Elizabeth Burmester
BRANDEIS



Mrs. B. Ruben
BRANDEIS



Miss Mary Spellman
HAYDEN BROS.



Mrs. E. T. Wright
ORKIN'S



Mrs. Thos. J. Willows - BRANDEIS



Miss L. N. Lissner
ORKIN'S



Miss Nan Watson
ORKIN'S



Miss O. Jones
BRANDEIS



Miss Carrie Hill
ORKIN'S

NOT only are women and girls employed as clerks in the department stores of Omaha, but they are employed as heads, managers and buyers for certain departments. It has long since been found that women can do better in laying in stocks of goods that are peculiarly for the woman trade of the city than can men, and the result is that women have been made heads of these departments. There are many women heads of departments in the department stores in Omaha who have as many as eight or a dozen clerks under them, and who do all their own buying without consulting any superior. Thus twice a year the heads of departments make their buying trips to New York and other eastern points. Usually these women go east on the buying trips about the same time of year and when they do they aim to go together to get the advantage of company and companionship during the stay in the American metropolises.

There are women heads of departments in Omaha stores who got their first experience in the very store in which they now head their department. There are others that have changed about in the various stores of the city, while there are still others who were brought here from the larger stores of Chicago, New York, Kansas City and St. Louis for the purpose of managing the departments here. Some of these imported women have built up splendid departments where not even a name existed in the store before.

One of the veterans in point of service is Mrs. Thomas J. Willows, head of the department of white goods and wash goods at the Brandeis stores. Mrs. Willows has been in the employ of the Brandeis people in the department store for twenty-five years. During the last ten years she has been head of this department. It was in 1889 that she started in the store as a salesgirl. She has been identified with the company during its great development in the city until she is now head of the department of white goods in the new Brandeis store building. Twelve clerks work under her in this department. She habitually makes three trips each year to New York when she does the buying for the department. She has been to Europe several times on trips. On such occasions she never fails to visit the large stores in Paris, Berlin and other European cities, to get new ideas as to what is going on in the great markets in her line of goods.

Another who has had experience in the department stores for years is Miss Elizabeth Burmester, head of the corset department in the Brandeis stores. Miss Burmester came here from Chicago last fall to take charge of this department. In Chicago she was an assistant buyer for eleven years in one of the large stores on State street, and for six years she was connected with Marshall Field & Company's establishments. At present she has a large force of clerks working under her. She makes never less than two trips a year to the eastern markets, in New York and Chicago, where she looks over the latest in her line and lays in her stock of goods for the coming season.

Seventeen years ago Miss Mary Spellman started her department store work with Hayden Brothers stores. She has remained with the firm from that day to this. She is at present head of the jewelry department, and although this is a department the stocking of which involves a large outlay of money, this little woman does all the buying and the firm lets her the stocking of the department to her own good judgment. Perhaps few department heads make more buying trips to the east than she, for she goes four times each year to New York and Chicago in the interest of her department. She has six clerks working under her.

Miss L. N. Lissner, head of the department of muslin underwear, infants' wear, house dresses, petticoats and negligees at Orkin's, is one of the newer department heads in Omaha, having come here a year ago to take charge of this department. She is buyer and manager of the department. Her former experience has been in the large and fashionable department stores of Philadelphia and Washington. She comes from the city where, in her work, she had to deal with the wives of senators and presidents, to say nothing of suiting the

whims of the wives and infants of foreign ambassadors.

Mrs. E. T. Wright, head of the corset department at Orkin's, is another who has had twenty-five years' experience. During all that time her experience has been in the corset business. Her experience has been largely in the large stores of New York, where she was employed for a number of years until she came to Omaha seven years ago. Coming to Omaha she took charge of the corset department of the Bennett store, and when the establishment passed into the hands of Orkin Brothers a year ago she continued at the head of the department. She is manager and buyer for the department and usually goes to New York and the east twice a year to stock up.

Mrs. B. Ruben, head of the department of negligees and infants' department at the Brandeis stores, is one of the veterans in point of service. She has been connected with department store work for twenty-one years and is thoroughly familiar with every detail of the work that comes within the range of her department. Twice a year she makes her buying trips to New York. These trips she makes in February and August to lay in the newer stocks of goods for the seasons immediately to follow. She has six clerks in her department.

Miss O. Jones, head of the department of ribbons, at the Brandeis stores, has been here but a year. She came here from the stores of the eastern cities and has practically made the ribbon department of the store. When she came there was scarcely what could be called a ribbon department. With her ability at selecting the classy and tasty lines of ribbon goods, she has built up one of the important departments of the establishment, and now has six clerks working under her. She buys for the department in New York and Chicago, to which places she goes for this purpose three times a year.

Miss Carrie Hill, head of the glove department at Orkin's, came to this store from the Brandeis establishment. After being with Brandeis ten years, she took the head of the glove department at Orkin's when the firm took the new location last year. She came to Omaha from St. Louis about eleven years ago. In St. Louis she had several years' experience in department store work. At Orkin's she has a large force of clerks employed under her, and does all her own buying for the department, making two trips a year to New York for the purpose.

Miss Nan Watson is buyer and manager of the art needlework and fancy goods department of Orkin's. She came here from Grand Rapids, Mich., some years ago. Her first experience in the business was at Grand Rapids. Since coming to Omaha

she has been employed for a number of years at the Brandeis stores. She came to manage the department with Orkin's when they took the new location on Sixteenth street. She also makes two trips each year to New York to do her buying.

Miss Agnes O'Neill is head of the department of crockery at the Hayden stores. Although she is somewhat modest and does not like to talk to strangers about her achievements in life, the management of the store assert that she has made good and that she is an efficient department head. Several clerks are employed in the department, and Miss O'Neill looks after the management of the department in a quiet and efficient manner. What she doesn't know about pottery isn't on record.

Miss Mattie O'Malley is the genial head of the glove department of Thompson-Belden's establishment. She oversees the half dozen girls who are clerks in her department, and does all her own buying. This she is able to accomplish usually with one trip to the big American metropolises each year.

Miss Isabel Rhodes is head of the department of laces, embroideries, neckwear, handkerchiefs, ribbons, trimmings, etc., at the Thompson-Belden establishment. Before taking up this work in Omaha she had an experience in the city for eighteen years in Illinois. Since taking the work here she has made two trips each year to New York on buying expeditions. These trips are made in August and February, which are the recognized times for laying in the stocks.

Miss Alice Stork, head of the department of art needlework of the Thompson-Belden store, has been with the firm seven years. She is buyer and manager of her department, having a force of clerks subject to her direction, and making her trips personally to the eastern markets for the purpose of selecting her stocks.

Mrs. C. S. Brantner is the head of the muslin underwear and infants' wear department of Thompson-Belden's. She does the buying for and managing of the department entirely. She has been with

this company fourteen years. She has three girls under her in the department.

Miss Frances Dillman is buyer and manager for the corset department in the same store. Corsets and corset accessories are handled in her department. She has been with this company all the time since she began in the department store work. Five clerks under her direction handle the work of the department. She also goes on the buying excursions to the eastern markets.

Miss Jennie Arthur, at Thompson-Belden's, is head of the department of notions. She holds the title of buyer and manager here. She employs six clerks in her department, and personally makes her trips to do her buying.

Miss Myrtle Leach is Thompson-Belden's manager and buyer for the hosiery department. A number of clerks are employed under her. She came here from Iowa thirteen years ago. In the various cities in Iowa she gained her experience in her line of work, and thirteen years ago was employed at her present location.

Those establishments that have given the women a free hand in the buying and managing of their own departments have found this a very satisfactory method. They hold that when a woman once understands her business thoroughly in her department she is just as safe and conservative a buyer as a man would be in his department, if not even more so in many cases. Especially do they maintain that for certain departments handling especially women's and infants' apparel, women as heads of the departments are unequalled. They know what the women want and they can talk to them as men cannot. When a woman customer talks to a woman manager about the merits or demerits of a given garment or a peculiar style, the woman manager knows what she is talking about. She does not know it from hearsay, either. She knows it from experience, for has she not herself worn similar garments? Thus do the women managers sift down the information thus gained, the kicks, knocks, praises and blames, until at the end of a season they know whether it will ever pay the house to put in a line of the similar goods or not. They are more keenly sensitive in feeling out the likes and dislikes of the women in fitting them than men could be.

There are other department stores organized on a slightly different basis in the city who do not give their department managers an absolutely free hand in selecting and buying. The difference in system is often merely nominal. The woman managing the department decides on the policy of the department for the coming season, decides what

she wants and what she does not want, decides how much of a given fad to stock up with, and how little of an outgoing style to lay in, and then, before sending in the order, lays the matter before the general manager for approval. This, in some stores, is largely form, as the general manager must necessarily depend largely on the good judgment of the department heads. Still, there is a possibility that now and then he may make a suggestion that will be followed. With his general knowledge of the condition of the establishment, of the stocks carried in the various departments, he is now and then able to drop a suggestion that will be valuable. Now and then he orders the list cut down, or he may order it enlarged. At any rate, he is forced to go into conference with the department head about the pros and cons of the department, and to yield largely to her judgment in matters of selecting the stock.

Salary! Yes, these girls get a good salary. They are in demand. A woman who is an efficient buyer and manager of a department of women's apparel is in demand in the big stores and is a real asset. The customers soon learn to know that there is someone at the head of the department who knows just what is what in that particular line. They learn to go to the head often for advice concerning certain garments and especially concerning the styles and the possible transient nature of certain fads or the staying qualities of another fad.

Again, many customers look to the head of the department for an opinion as to a fit. Especially is this true in the corset departments, and to a large extent in the glove departments. A good head of a corset department must be also a first class fitter, so that when she says it is a fit, the customer must find it so on reaching home and giving the article some wear. This is also true in the negligee departments. The fitter must be conscientious and must strive to find the best possible fit for the customer, even though it takes longer to make the sale. The more inherent artistic sense the fitter has, the better satisfaction she will give in deciding when the customer has slipped into the garment that is most becoming. Next to that is knowledge of the styles and good common sense.

In her capacity as buyer for the department, the head must exercise good judgment not only with regard to what is the style, the rage, the fad, or the craze. These matters she must decidedly keep in mind. But further she must keep in mind her customers and what they want. She must know whether her customers as a class will demand much of the latest fad or craze, or whether they will be inclined to remain on a more conservative plane and buy more strongly of the more standard styles.