

**Finding aid for the Ypsilanti
Reed Furniture Co. collection
Collection 057
The Ypsi-Doodler**

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
December 1987
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Summary Information

Repository	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Creator	Ypsilanti Reed Furniture Co.
Title	Ypsilanti Reed Furniture Co collection
Date [inclusive]	1944-1946
Extent	0.21 Linear feet One box
Language	English
Abstract	<p>The Ypsilanti Reed Furniture Co. was a manufacturer of specialty reed furniture and was based in Ionia (Mich.). This collection consists of three volumes (incomplete) of the Ypsi-Doodler, a publication by and for the employees of the company. It appears to have been created to keep workers informed during the great changes experienced in the plants during war production. The publication expressed the employee's views, spotlighted their personalities and complimented their individual and group achievements.</p>

Biographical/Historical note

The Ypsilanti Reed Furniture Co. originated in Ypsilanti, Michigan. The company moved to Ionia, Michigan in 1903, making specialty reed furniture in the state's factory building at the Michigan Reformatory using the prison labor pool. In 1911 the company started operations at its first outside plant in downtown Ionia with 150 men as an experiment to determine whether the plant could attract enough labor. The company had been told that Ionia could not support such a company due to lack of labor. The experiment proved successful and the company opened another plant in 1913, the largest in Ionia. Shortly afterward, fire destroyed the Reformatory factory. The company prospered and soon had branch factories in Portland, Saranac, Lyons and Lowell, together employing 2,000 workers in Ionia County and building 1500 pieces per day.

The company enjoyed its most profitable years after World War I when it installed a specially designed machine to cut and trim reed and cane and began supplying other companies as well as making furniture. In addition, the company added upholstered lines and controlled the manufacturing license on a special spring construction for furniture. Its furniture was sold throughout the U. S. and in several South American countries. However, the company suffered during the Depression -- it sold the Lowell and Portland plants and abandoned the Saranac and Lyons plants.

As a result of World War II the company changed its product line to bus seats, automobile/truck bodies and canvas goods, discontinuing furniture production in 1948. In 1953 the name changed to Ionia Manufacturing Co. and much later to Diversitech.

Scope and Contents note

The collection consists of three incomplete volumes of *The Ypsi-Doodler*, a publication by and for the employees of the Ypsilanti Reed Furniture Co., Ionia, Michigan, to express their views, spotlight their personalities and compliment their individual and group achievements. The first issue appeared in February 1944; it is unknown whether the publication continued beyond February 1946, the last issue of this collection. It appears to have been formed in order to keep workers informed during the great changes experienced in the plants during war production, and its tone is very patriotic.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department December 1987

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Library purchase, accession number 1987.000

Controlled Access Headings

Geographic Name(s)

- Ionia (Mich.) -- History

Subject(s)

- Furniture industry and trade -- Michigan

Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
Volume 1, not inclusive February-December 1944	1	1
Volume 2 January 1945, March-December 1945	1	2
Volume 3 January-February 1946	1	3