# Finding aid for the Grand Rapids Furniture Designers Association records Collection 204

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
February 1997
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# **Summary Information**

**Repository** Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special

**Collections Department** 

**Creator** Grand Rapids Furniture Designers Association.

Title Grand Rapids Furniture Designers Association records

**Date [inclusive]** 1917-1978

**Extent** 4.8 Linear feet 11 boxes

**Language** English

**Abstract** The Grand Rapids Furniture Designers Association (Grand Rapids,

Michigan) is an organization of furniture designers dedicated to maintaining high standards in the design profession. The collection contains materials from the group's inception in 1917 through the 1990s. The bulk of the collection is scrapbooks and the magazine and newspaper articles provide access to locally printed design literature. The materials show how the designers influenced the furniture market and depict styles and trends. Photographs depict business and professional activities of the membership, but primarily their annual dinners and picnics. Some

biographical information on local furniture designers is also included.

# Biographical/Historical note

The Grand Rapids Furniture Designers Association was formally organized October 25, 1917. The group's purpose was to help maintain high standards in the furniture designing profession and to promote and sponsor educational development in its field. To this end the Association helped found the Kendall School of Design in 1928, where a number of the Association members taught classes, and which is still functioning today. Members of the Association were credited with helping to set industry styles, trends and designs.

Lying dormant during the late part of World War I and the totality of World War II, the Association was reorganized during both 1920 and 1949. Membership was limited to those professionally engaged in the art of furniture design. At its inception, membership was also limited to those designers who resided in the Grand Rapids area. As some members work locale changed, in later years this rule was not enforced. The Association met four times a year, three of the meetings consisting of dinners followed by business sessions. They also engaged in a number of annual outdoor outings and other events, such as the annual December Ladies Parties at the Peninsular Club.

The Association elected four officers annually. The group's prestige can be illustrated in that President Hoover in 1925 appointed several members of the Association to report on the Exposition of Modem Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris. The group was active in promoting knowledge of furniture design and the industry and also in protecting designer's copyrights. The collection dates to the early 1970s, but the Grand Rapids Furniture Designers Association continues in 2008.

# **Scope and Contents note**

The collection provides insight into the interests, activities, and business that the Association dealt in. Grand Rapids, Michigan is historically known as the "Furniture City" and for the high quality of design from the professionals who have been part of this Association.

The collection contains materials from the group's inception in 1917 through the 1990s. The bulk of the collection is scrapbooks and the magazine and newspaper articles provide access to locally printed design literature. The materials show how the designers influenced the furniture market and depict styles and trends. Photographs depict business and professional activities of the membership, but primarily their annual dinners and picnics. Some biographical information on local furniture designers is also included. A name index to scrapbook pages, using the inverted form of the name, is available for some scrapbooks.

#### **Administrative Information**

#### **Publication Information**

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department February 1997

#### **Immediate Source of Acquisition note**

Grand Rapids Furniture Designers Association, via the Grand Rapids Public Library Reference/Rare Book Department. Accession numbers 1996.005, 1996.025 and 1996.018

#### **Related Materials**

#### **Related Archival Materials note**

The Furniture Design Book Collection is the primary collection related to the Grand Rapids Furniture Designers Association. It is housed in its own room, within Grand Rapids History & Special Collections, at the Grand Rapids Public Library. The collection was originally created by and for the local furniture designers, who had their own space within the public library building. Today, the primary users of the collection are students of the neighboring Kendall College, as well as academics and interested others.

The Library continues to build this collection, adding new national and international titles from the published design literature, which occasionally includes information on Grand Rapids companies. The books in the collection are included in the GRPL Library catalog accessible through the website http://www.grpl.org.

Use of the collection requires a photo ID, such as a driver's license, along with other restrictions typical of the use of rare materials.

Most of the historical collections related to and from local Grand Rapids, or other area, furniture companies are located in the GRPL Archives or at the Public Museum of Grand Rapids or at other area institutions, such as the Holland Historical Trust. See staff for assistance in accessing those collections.

Coll. 109-2c-66 = GR Furniture Designers Assoc. Workshop newsletter, 1956-1957 Coll. 109-2c-67 = Stationery, forms & logo

# **Controlled Access Headings**

## **Corporate Name(s)**

• Grand Rapids Furniture Designers Association.

#### Genre(s)

· business records

## Geographic Name(s)

• Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History

#### Subject(s)

- Furniture design -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- Furniture industry and trade -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids -- History

# Name index (scrapbooks)

(Box-folder-page)

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Berg, Hans: 7- v.5- 24

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Blickley, Ed: 3-4-33, 3-8-72, 3-8-77

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Brower, John: 3-2-15, 7-v.5-8

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Clingman, J. Stuart: 7- v.5- 27

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Colleen, Robert: 6- v.3- 6

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DiFiglia, Joseph (Mr and Mrs): 4- 12- 230

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Ford, Dale: 3-2-19, 6-v.3-52, 6-v.3-56

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Kimerly, William L: 7- v.5- 21

Kirkpatrick, James Russell: 3-2-13, 3-4-37, 3-5-41, 3-1-7, 7-v.5-16, 7-v.5-46

Kirkpatrick, Marie: 3-1-9

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Kleaver, William: 3-6-57, 3-1-9

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LeDonne, Gerard: 7- v.5- 23

Loewy, Raymond: 3-1-7

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Margantin, Adrien: 7- v.5- 7

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Morgan, Guy: 3- 3- 25

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Nieuwenhuis, Mike: 3-4-31

Orr, Edgar: 3-1-10, 3-2-14

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Sabota, Ray: 3- 2- 15

Samuelson, John: 7- v.5- 40

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Thompon, Donald: 6- v.3- 52

Thompon, Mrs. Donald: 6- v.3- 48

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Veen, Mrs. James Sr.: 6- v.3- 56

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Widdicombe, Ralph: 3- 3- 28, 3- 4- 40, 3- 1- 5, 7- v.5- 33

Witman, Charles: 3-2-15, 3-3-29, 4-8-188, 4-12-223, 6-v.3-6

Witman, Charles (Mr and Mrs): 4- 8- 188, 4- 8- 190, 6- v.3- 55

# **Collection Inventory**

#### Series I. Biographical Data of Members, n.d.

#### **Scope and Contents note**

This small series contains biographical information on some of the Association's members.

	Box	Folder
Data on various members.	1	1
Obituaries	1	1.5

#### Series II. Correspondence, 1929-1966, n.d.

#### **Scope and Contents note**

This series contains correspondence from the Association to its members, from members to other members, from furniture manufacturing companies to the Association, from furniture manufacturing companies to the group members, and some personal correspondence of some of the Association's members.

	Box	Folder
1929	1	2
1931-1940.	1	3-12
		Box

Letter and envelop. March 12, 1936. White House. Signed Eleanor(?)Rooseve 1996.018	lt.	SAFE
	Box	Folder
1944	1	13
1949-1956.	1	14-21
1963-1966.	1	22-5
n.d.	1	26
Series III. Minutes, 1920-1966.		
Scope and Contents note		
This series contains the records of the Association's official meetings. Not all	years are repr	esented.
	Box	Folder
1920-1940.	1	27-44
1962-1966.	1	45-49
Additions. "Secretary's Reports", and other unidentified eclectic files		
Additions. "Secretary's Reports", and other unidentified eclectic files	Box	Folder

1965-1969	2	29
1970	2	30
1971	2	31
1972	2	32
1973	2	33
1974	2	34
1975	2	35
1976	2	36
1977	2	37
1978 [Scott Dergins, secretary]	2	38
1979 [Scott Dergins]	2	39
1980 [Scott Dergins]	2	40
1982, 1983, 1984	2	41
President's Letters (Deborah Kimberlin), 1994-1995	2	42

# Series IV. Miscellaneous, 1920-1966.

## **Scope and Contents note**

This series contains various files of the Association such as receipts, press releases, etc.

	Box	Folder
Activity notes to members, 1939-1966, n.d.	2	1
American Designers Institute Membership list, n.d.	2	2
Civic Concerns, 1950-1966, n.d.	2	3
Constitutions, 1933, 1950, 1953, 1959.	2	4
Election Ballots, 1935, 1954, 1964.	2	5
Entertainment. Picnic, 1980 Info.	2	6
Entertainment Committee Reports and papers, 1938-1966.	2	7
Furniture Industry Concerns, 1963-1965, n.d.	2	8
Letterhead and Envelope, c1930.	2	9
Memorandum. Education Committee. Source and Date unknown	2	10
Personal Expense Reports Charles Witman, 1927-1930.	2	11

Press Releases, 1931-1964.	2	12
Receipts to Association, 1931-1955.	2	13
Statement of Treasurer, 1928-1966.	2	14
Tribute to GRFDA members, n.d.	2	15

### Series V. GR Furniture Designers Membership Lists, 1930-1966.

## **Scope and Contents note**

This series contains membership lists and directories of varying years between 1930 and the late 1960s.

	Box	Folder
1930s-1940s.	2	16
1950s-1960s	2	17
Guest Membership Lists	2	18
Members Directory 1953, 1962.	2	19
Notes relating to 1953 directory.	2	20
Membership Directories, 1984 (4), 1988 (3). See also the 1995/1996 directory in the GRHSC Local History book collection: M749 058 G762m	2	20.5

#### Series VI. Newsletters, 1962-1966.

#### **Scope and Contents note**

This series contains newsletters that the Association sent out to its members between 1962 and 1966. For other newsletters, see these scattered in the "Secretary's Reports" files

	Box	Folder
1962	2	21
1963	2	22
1964	2	23
1965	2	24
1966	2	25
1984 to 1994	2	25.5

# Series VII. Newspaper Clippings from Scrapbook #2, 1927-1978.

#### **Scope and Contents note**

This series contains photocopies of newspaper articles from between 1927-59, and 1963-78.

	Box	Folder
1963-1978.	2	26

1927-1959.

# **Series VIII. Graphics**

#### **Scope and Contents note**

This series contains photographs of furniture, and of various members of the Association. Also added to this collection are paper graphics, such as the useful map from the Furniture Exposition Association showing furniture factories, and other Grand Rapids buildings. Some graphic ephemera is also found within this series.

#### Subseries I. PHOTOGRAPHS, 1955-1992, n.d.

		Box
Unprocessed Photos		9
Unprocessed Photos.		10
	Box	Folder
Furniture. (8 b/w + $3 = 11 \frac{2}{8}/2005$ ). Including Bechtold Brothers show room, C.T. Witman, designer.	11	1
GRFDA Officers 1963. (3 items, 2 images)	11	2
People—Unidentified. (9, 4/2000)	11	3

Person—Unidentified. (1, 2/8/2005. Note 3 photos which belong in folder 1 have been returned there from this folder.). Believed to be Charles Witman.	11	4
Group photo, Mar. 14, 1955. L-R: Henry Warren, G.J. Buzzitta, F.C. Ruppel, Steve Tourre	11	5
Stanley Green, n.d.	11	6
Banquet photos, May 22, 1957 (2 8x10, 2/8/2005)	11	7
GRFDA Annual Picnic, 1980? (6 sheet with 4 b/w snapshots each)	11	8

#### **Scope and Contents note**

Note: The photos place the images September, 1981, though the material was found with documents for Spring and Fall picnics in 1980. 1. Jack Buzzitti / 2. Larry Stoffer / 3. Frank Davidhazy, Sr. / 4 "Portraits by R. Colleen"? 5. Horse race with cutout horses / 6. 4 men standing in a group / 7. Buzzitti left with unidentified woman and man in visor / 8. Men looking up for a ball(?) 9. Woman and man from 7 above w/o Buzzitti / 10. Men around the drink dispenser / 11. Person catching a "die" in the air / 12. Two men talking. 13. "Like Father, like son". / 14. "Have you paid your dues", man in a visor, seated, pointing a finger. / 15. Group looking toward the camera, with a building behind. / 16. Group of men talking. One is Larry Stoffer / 17. Group in foreground near camera, with group a picnic tables in the background and a structure behind. / 18. Group in foreground of picnic tables. / 19. Group watching the "horse" race. / 20. Group, including women, looking at the camera, with a structure background right.

Picnic Photos, n.d. (24 color negs.)	11	9
Fall(?) Picnic Photos, n.d. (15 color / negs.)	11	10
Picnic (27 color Polaroid)	11	10.5
GRFDA Scholarship, Dec. 1992. (2)	11	11

#### **Scope and Contents note**

1. Student Steve Martin right, receiving scholarship certificate from President Mike Warren, left. 2. GRFDA Scholarship Committee at Christmas Party, Dec. 1992, Forest Hills Golf Club. L-R: Kevin Dewald, Barry Pischner, Bruce Mulder (pt. Time Kendall instructor), Steve Martin (student receiving award), Joe McCambridge, Vice President Deborah Kimberlin (pt. Time Kendall instructor), President Mike Warren.

Unidentified Furniture Museum Visit / Objects (20 color snapshots, with visitors).	11	12
Subseries II. Maps.		
	Box	Folder
Grand Rapids Furniture Exposition Association. Furniture Map of Grand Rapids. n.d., ca. 1930s?	11	13
Subseries III. Ephemera		
	Box	Folder

Van Andel Museum Invitation, 1995.	11	14
Drawing. Furniture, n.d.	11	15

#### Series IX. Scrapbooks

#### **Scope and Contents note**

This series is the largest of the collection and consists of five scrapbooks and a similar book entitled Furniture Record and Journal.

Scrapbook #1 contains individual and group photographs of Association members during their meetings and social functions and consists of 246 pages.

Scrapbook #2 contains numerous newspaper and magazine clippings as well as many photographs of furniture designers and some personal memorabilia of Charles Witman, the original owner of the scrapbook. It is 244 pages long.

Scrapbook #3 consists group photographs of Association social events, mainly from the Ladies Parties at the Pen club. It is 56 pages long.

Scrapbook #4 contains illustrations of wood carvings and furniture. It also contains some designer's drawings.

Scrapbook #5 contains portrait photographs of Grand Rapids area furniture designers. Most include a short biography and birth and death dates. It has 47 pages.

Furniture Record and Journal contains photographs of suites and individual furniture items.

See also the scrapbook photo index.

#### Photographs. Disbound, in 2 parts, Boxes 3 and 4

**Box** Folder

Millington, William; Schmidt, Karl.	3	3
Group—formal.	3	4
Ruppel, Fred; Widdicomb, Ralph.	3	5
Warren, Henry; Buzzitta, Jack; Ruppel, Fred; Tourre, Steve.	3	6
Kirkpatrick, James R.; Schmidt, Karl; Loewy, Raymond.	3	7
Group—at dining table.	3	8
Warren, Henry; Kirkpatrick, Marie; Fry, Frank; Kleaver, William; Green, Stanley.	3	9
Orr, Edgar.	3	10
Group—at dining table.	3	11
Schmidt, Karl; Latto, Donald; Deryke, Donald; Tourre, Steve.	3	12
Boukma, John; Kirkpatrick James R.; Schmidt, Karl.	3	13
Fry, Frank; Buzzitta, Jack; Orr, Edgar; Ruppel, Fred.	3	14
Sabota, Ray; Clark, Earl; Witman, Charles; Stekette, Frank; Brower, John.	3	15

Group—at Country Club, 1955.	3	16
Group—at dining table.	3	17
Group—at dining table.	3	18
Ford, Dale; Mailloux, L.O.	3	19
Group—at dining table.	3	20
Group—formal.	3	21
Group—at Frank Burton's Cabin, 1955.	3	22
VandenBout, Adrian; Schmidt, Karl; Westveer, Ray.	3	23
Group—at Frank Burton's Cabin, 1955.	3	24
Bjorncrantz, Carl; Morgan, Guy; Stuart, Claude; Briggs, Sandy.	3	25
Group—at Frank Burton's Cabin.	3	26
Group—outdoors.	3	27
Widdicomb, Harry and Ralph.	3	28
Burton, Frank; Witman Charles; Baxter, Bob; Eddy, George.	3	29

Group—at Frank Burton's Cabin, 1955.	3	30
Nieuwenhuis, Mike; Schmidt, Karl; Tenhave, Herbert.	3	31
Group—at Frank Burton's Cabin, 1955.	3	32
Buzzitta, Jack; Blickley, Ed; Veen, James	3	33
Group—at Frank Burton's Cabin, 1955.	3	34
Johnson, Phil; Pike, George; Ruppel, Fred.	3	35
Group—at Frank Burton's Cabin, 1955.	3	36
Eggebrecht, Carl; Kirkpatrick, Russel; Warren, Henry.	3	37
Group—at Frank Burton's Cabin, 1955.	3	38
Eddy, George; Veen, Jim.	3	39
Briggs, Sandy; Buzzitta, Jack; Widdicomb, Ralph; Widdicomb, Harry.	3	40
Kirkpatrick, Russ; Goebel, Jack; Stekette, Frank.	3	41
Group—standing, 1955.	3	42
Group—at Frank Burton's Cabin, 1952.	3	43

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Group—at Frank Burton's Cabin, 1952.	3	45
Group—at GRFDA workshop.	3	46
GRFDA Officers, 1953.	3	47
Group—at GRFDA workshop.	3	48
Group—Christmas Party, 1953.	3	49
Group—at GRFDA workshop.	3	50
Group—dinner at Rowe Hotel, 1952.	3	51
Man lecturing.	3	52
Group—dinner at Penn Club, 1954	3	53
Group—at dining table.	3	54
GRFDA Officers, 1954.	3	55
Group—dining.	3	56
Kleaver, William; Eddy, George.	3	57

Group—Turner Brass Co. Party—Pantlind Hotel, 1957.	3	58
Stekette, Frank; Millington, William; Eggebrecht, William	3	59
Group—Turner Brass Party, 1957.	3	60
Baxter, Bob; Holmberg, Herman.	3	61
Group—Turner Party, 1957.	3	62
Krause, Max; Fry, Frank.	3	63
Group—Turner Party, 1957.	3	64
Group—at Frank Burton's Cabin 1954.	3	65
Group—Turner Party, 1957.	3	66
Group—at Frank Burton's Cabin, 1954.	3	67
Group—Victor S. Barnes Party—Penn Club, 1957.	3	68
Group—at Frank Burton's Cabin, 1954.	3	69
1)Turner Party 1957 2) Man standing 3) Group.	3	70
1)Group—at Burton's Cabin 2) Group—dining 3) group—formal.	3	71

1)Buzzitta, Jack; Blickley Ed 2) Group—sitting 3) Two men standing.	3	72
1)Burton, Frank 2) Group—standing 3) Johnson, Phil	3	73
1)GRFDA Officers, 1957 2) Group—outdoors 3) Group—outdoors.	3	74
1)Group at Burton's Cabin, 1954 2) Group—outdoors 3) Group—outdoors.	3	75
1)GRFDA Officers and Buzzitta, Jack 2) Group—outdoors 3) group—outdoors.	3	76
1)Warren, Henry; Blickley, Ed; Bjorncrantz, Carl 2) Group—standing.	3	77
1)Victor S. Barnes Party—Penn Club, 1957 2) Two men 3) Group—standing.	3	78
1)Bjorncrantz, Carl; Warren, Henry; Burton, Frank 2) Group—standing, 1958; 3)Group—standing, 1958.	3	79
1)Group—at Penn Club 1957 2) Group—standing 3) Group—standing.	3	80
1)Group—dining 2) Group—standing.	3	81
1)Group—at Penn Club 1961 2) Group—dining 3) Group—dining.	3	82
1)Group—dining 2) Group—dining 3) Group—dining.	3	83

1)Group—standing 2) Group—dining.	3	84
1)Group—dining outdoors 2) Group—dining.	3	85
1)GRFDA Officers 1958 2) Group—dining.	3	86
1)Schnitzelbank Annual Meeting, 1957 2) Group—dining	3	87
GRFDA Officers, 1960.	3	88
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Group—at Schulers, 1960.	3	90-5
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Group—at Hattams, at Penn Club.	3	97-100
Group.	3	102-3
Group at Hattams.	3	104
Groups—at Penn Club, 1961.	4	105-19
1) Keeler Brass Co. Party, 1962 2) Group—sitting.	4	120
1) Group—at Penn Club, 1961 2) Group—sitting 3) Group-standing.	4	121

1) Keeler Brass Co. party, 1962 2) Group—dining 3) Group—standing.	4	122
1)" " 2) Group—sitting 3) Group—standing.	4	123
Two men—at Keeler Brass Co. Party, 1962.	4	124
Groups—at Keller Brass Co. Party, 1962.	4	125-30
Groups—Ladies Party at Penn Club, 1962.	4	131-52
Groups—Mahoq. Assoc. Party—Pantlind Hotel, 1962.	4	153-71
1) Warren, Henry 2) Sobota, Ray.	4	172
Group—at Burton's Cabin, 1962.	4	173
Two men sitting.	4	174
Group—standing.	4	175
Man standing in convertible (imitating Hitler).	4	176
Groups—standing.	4	177-81
Group—dining.	4	182-3
Witman, Charles.	4	184

Three men playing horseshoes.	4	185
Group—sitting.	4	186-7
Witman, Mr. and Mrs.—Ladies Party at University Club, 1963 Group—sitting.	4	188
Group—sitting.	4	189
Witman, Mrs. and Mrs., 1963.	4	190
Witman, Mr. and Mrs; Fry, Mr. and Mrs., 1963.	4	191
Group.	4	192
Groups—(Ladies Party?, c1963).	4	193-200
Groups—Penn Club 1964.	4	201-22
Hall, Leon; Witman, Charles —Penn Club, 1964.	4	223
Groups—at Schnitzelbank Party, 1964.	4	224-7
(All at Designer's Pines 1965) 1) Group—standing 2) Group—standing 3) Man on horse 4) Man on horse.	4	228
(At Desinger's Pines, 1965) 1) Man on horse 2) Men cooking 3) Three men standing 4) Group—dining.	4	229

Defiqla, Mr. and Mrs., 1965.	4	230
Group—at bar- Ladies Party at Penn Club, 1965.	4	231
GRFDA Officers, 1965.	4	232-3
Groups—Ladies Party at Penn Club, 1965.	4	234-45
Empty Dining room—Ladies Party at Penn Club, 1965. 5 Loose photos 1)Two men shaking hands 2-3) Group—dining 4) Group-sitting 5) Three men standing.	4	246
Scrapbook #2 (newspaper clippings)		
Scrapbook #2 (newspaper clippings)	Box	Folder
Scrapbook #2 (newspaper clippings)  Berg, Hans; Rutili, Renzo, 1939.	<b>Box</b> 5	Folder 2
Berg, Hans; Rutili, Renzo, 1939.	5	2
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