

Finding aid for the Baker Furniture Company collection Collection 206

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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

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Summary Information

Repository	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Creator	Baker Furniture Company.
Title	Baker Furniture Company collection
Date [inclusive]	1895-1969
Extent	14.7 Linear feet 23 boxes
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Baker Furniture Company is a furniture business that operated in the West Michigan area from 1890 through 2006. The collection contains legal, financial and business records of the company received from Hollis M. Baker, the last family owner. Included are documents related to the furniture for sale by the company, including photos of products and price lists. The scrapbooks contain additional information, such as advertising, but also some actual catalogs. Business and legal files include information on subsidiary companies or companies purchased by Baker, such as the Grand Rapids Chair Company or the Manor in New York City. The documents depict various aspects of the operations of a furniture company. In particular, the Market Reports portray the life of the furniture market in America. As such, this collection is valuable for understanding the furniture market in general, and specifically the operations of a furniture company.</p>

Biographical/Historical note

The Baker Furniture Company was founded in 1890 in Allegan, Michigan, by Siebe Baker as Cook, Baker & Company, in partnership with Henry Cook and Hiram DeLano. The firm's first products were carvings and moldings. In 1893 furniture was added to their product line.

In 1903 the firm's name was changed to Baker & Co. Siebe Baker (1852-1925), a native of the Netherlands, bought out his partners in 1913 and incorporated the firm. About 1912, after graduating from the University of Michigan, Siebe's son Hollis joined the company. In 1922, Baker purchased another plant, the Allegan Furniture Shops. Siebe Baker died in 1925 and was succeeded by his son, Hollis, as president. The next year the business acquired the Allegan Furniture Shops. The following years the name was changed to Baker Furniture Factories and in 1928 also acquired the Jewett Radio Co. of Allegan.

In 1933, the business moved into a single, larger plant, the former Lane Piano Factory, in Holland, Michigan. The company continued to grow. It introduced showrooms in Grand Rapids and The Manor House in New York City.

In 1952 Baker purchased the Williams-Kimp Company in Grand Rapids. Five years later the firm purchased the Grand Rapids Chair Company, incorporating its Milling Road line into Baker's increasing repertoire of furniture designs. In 1965, Hollis Baker died and was succeeded by his son, Hollis M. Baker as president. The family sold the company to Magnavox, Inc., in 1969. Presently it is owned by the Koehler Company.

Product lines: In 1931 Baker concentrated on 18th century reproductions via its Old World line. The next year Baker organized The Manor House, a New York City firm that showed very exclusive lines. The Far East collection was added in 1949, Palladian in 1950, Finn Juhl designs in 1951, New World in 1953, Continental in 1954, Northwest in 1960, A la Carte, in 1963, Crown and Tulip in 1964, Executive in 1964, Normandy in 1967, Woburn Abbey in 1969 and Connoisseur Classic in 1970.

Scope and Contents note

The collection contains legal, financial and other records of the firm. It also contains photographs, receipts, price lists, scrapbooks and other miscellaneous materials relating in some way to the firm which became known internationally for the high quality of its designs and workmanship. The material depicts various aspects of the operations of a furniture company. In particular, the Market Reports portray the life of the furniture market in America. As such, this collection is valuable for understanding the furniture market in general and specifically the operations of a furniture company. The collection provides insight into the operations of a successful furniture company and into the furniture market as a whole. In the scrapbooks there are many examples of the furniture that Baker produced.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

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

Revision Description

2004

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Hollis M. Baker, accession number 1992.019

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

These other GRHSC Archival Collections contain addition information on and from the Baker Companies:

Collection 232, GRPL Furniture Trade Catalog Collection, contains several boxes of trade catalogs from the different generations of the company Collection 233, GRPL Furniture Industry Collection Collection 088, Furniture Manufacturers Association Records

See also the Furniture Periodicals in the GRHSC open floor collections.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Baker Furniture Company.
- Grand Rapids Chair Co.

Genre(s)

- business records

Geographic Name(s)

- Allegan (Mich.) -- History
- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History
- Holland (Mich.) -- History

Subject(s)

- Furniture industry and trade -- Michigan

Series I. Legal and Corporation Records, 1913-1944.

Collection Inventory

Series I. Legal and Corporation Records, 1913-1944.

Scope and Contents note

Contains various legal documents pertaining to the operations of the Baker Furniture Co., as well as stockholder information, and stock certificates.

	Box	Folder
Consolidation of Peck & Hills Furn. Co, 1926.	1	1
Merger?	1	2
Merger correspondence and figures, 1923-1925.	1	3
Miscellaneous, n.d.	1	4
Miscellaneous, 1932.	1	5
Misc.	1	6
Misc. papers, 1913, 1922, 1937-1944, n.d.	1	7
Papers, 1933.	1	8

Series II. Minutes, 1931-1936

By-Laws of Faker Furn. Factories, c.1934.	8	7
Diagrams of Holland Plant, 1934.	8	8
Employee petition for higher wages, 1937.	8	9
Inventory, 1903.	8	11
Papers concerning the Manor House 1932-1937	1	9-12
Papers regarding move to Holland, Michigan, 1933.	1	13
Property deeds records, n.d.	1	14
Proposed merger, n.d.	1	15
Minutes of stockholders, 1935	13	1-2
Stock transfer sheets, n.d.	13	3
Stock certificates, n.d.	13	4
		Box
Loose stock certificates, n.d.		13

Series II. Minutes, 1931-1936

Scope and Contents note

Series III. Business Documents.

Minutes of various meetings of the Board of Directors.

	Box	Folder
1931-1932.	8	1
1933	8	2
1934	8	3
1935	8	4
1936	8	5

Series III. Business Documents.**Subseries A. Financial Records, 1923-36, n.d.****Scope and Contents note**

This series contains financial information about the company, such as annual audits and balance sheets.

	Box	Folder
Comparative Statistics with other Wood Working Plants, Baker & Company, 1923	11	1
Comparative Statistics with other Wood Working Plants, Allegan Furniture Shops, 1924	11	2

Subseries B. Receipts, 1898-1920

Comparative Statistics with other Wood Working Plants, Baker & Company, 1924	11	2
Baker Furniture Factories, Inc. Balance sheet, June 30, 1931.	11	3
Audit report, Baker Furniture Factories, June 30, 1932	11	4
Audit report, Baker Furniture Factories, June 30, 1933	11	5
Audit report, Baker Furniture Factories, June 30, 1934	11	6
Audit report, Baker Furniture Factories, June 30, 1935	11	7
Report on examination, Hollis S. Baker Company, 1936.	11	8
Manor House Furniture Works, Ltd.: Balance sheet, December 31, 1936 and Statement of Profit and Loss, February 1, 1936-December 31, 1936	11	9
Company financial records, n.d.	11	10
Interim financial report, Baker Furniture / Office of Price Administration, Washington, Mar. 31, 1942.	11	11

Subseries B. Receipts, 1898-1920**Scope and Contents note**

Receipts for items purchased by the Baker factories.

Series IV. Grand Rapids Chair Co., 1885-1945, n.d.

	Box	Folder
Receipts	10	1-9
1904-1917.	10	10
1920	10	11
various, 1898-1955.	10	12

Series IV. Grand Rapids Chair Co., 1885-1945, n.d.**Scope and Contents note**

This series contains items related to the subsidiary company Grand Rapids Chair Company, but before it was purchased by Baker. Included are photos, periodical articles and booklets, and one trade catalog.

	Box	Folder
Photographs. Five images by E.J. McDormand believed to be 1903, showing flood conditions. Includes GR Chair Co. building, flooded lumber yard		14
	Box	Folder
Folio (8): A small booklet of photos, includes mostly images of the flood, also a bird's eye view of the factory.	9	0.75
Grand Rapids Chair Company views(2)	9	0.5
Books		
	Box	Folder

Trade Pamphlets

Reflections : commemorating fifty years progress in the making of fine furniture by the Grand Rapids Chair Company. 1922.	13	1
Modern Steam Generators. Saginaw, Mi. : Wickes Bros, 1900. 2nd ed.	13	4
		Box
Magazine [serials]		13
	Box	Folder
Furniture World. Dec. 6, 1945.	13	5
G.R. Furniture Record, v. 7, no. 2, July 1903. Front pages in poor condition with yellowed tape.	13	6
The Commonwealth, v. 6, no. 12, Oct. 1923. "All in One Day at the Grand Rapids Chair Co." pg. 16-17.	13	3
		Box
Small scrapbook, n.d. [Missing, 2/23/2004]		13
	Box	Folder
Furniture Trade Catalogs GR Chair Co. Chamber Furniture, Book Cases Catalog, May 1, 1885.	13	2
Trade Pamphlets		
	Box	Folder
Reflections on a unique tradition.	13	16

Series V. Trade Literature

The Britannia Collection by Baker, Flyer, Invitation, Jan. 2, 1966. 13 16

Series V. Trade Literature

Subseries A. Trade Photographs, 1940s, n.d.

Scope and Contents note

Images individual furniture pieces, also of aircraft which Baker possibly might have made parts for during WWII. Some of the scrapbooks also contain a few pictorials.

	Box	Folder
Bookcases/Beds, n.d.	9	1
Bureaus/Dressers, n.d.	9	2
Chairs, n.d.	9	3
Tables, n.d.	9	4
Tables, n.d.	9	5
		Box
Airplanes, 1940s.		17
Bookcase, n.d.		17
Baker Furniture Factory, n.d		17

Subseries B. Price Lists, 1928-1949, n.d.

Subseries B. Price Lists, 1928-1949, n.d.		
	Box	Folder
List guide, n.d.	9	6
Price lists, 1928, 1931, 1934-1936	9	7
Price lists, 1937-1940	9	8
Price lists, 1941-1942, 1946	9	9
Price lists, 1947	9	10
Price lists, 1948	9	11
Price lists, 1949	9	12
Subseries C. Furniture Trade blueline prints		
	Box	
“Jan Market, 1963” on front of folded blueline print.	13.5	
“Jan Market, 1963. (Milling Road” on front of folded blueline print.	13.5	
“E.J. Bellaire” [Market Reports, Jan. or June 1965?]	13.5	
Market Reports, Chicago?, Jan. 1966.	13.5	

Subseries D. Market Reports, 1956-1969.**Subseries D. Market Reports, 1956-1969.****Scope and Contents note**

Details the annual furniture markets in the winter and summer. It contains sets divided into Baker, Milling Road, as well as four subsets which are: Attendance records, Dealer materials, Memos and miscellaneous, Sales.

Baker Furniture Company

Jan Market, 1956

	Box	Folder
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Dealer Materials.	2	1
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Memos and Misc.	2	2
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Sales.	2	3
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	Box	Folder
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Oct Market, 1956.	2	4
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Jan Market, 1957

	Box	Folder
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Attendance records.	2	5
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Dealer materials.	2	6
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Baker Furniture Company

Sales.	2	7
Jun Market, 1957		
	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	2	8
Dealer materials.	9	9
Misc. and memos.	2	10
Sales.	2	11
Oct Market, 1957		
	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	2	12
Dealer materials.	2	13
Sales.	2	14
Jan Market, 1958		
	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	2	15

Baker Furniture Company

Dealer materials.	2	16
Sales.	2	17
Jun Market, 1958		
	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	3	1
Dealer materials.	3	2
Sales.	3	3
	Box	Folder
Oct Market, 1958.	3	4
Jun Market, 1959.	3	5
Jan Market, 1960.	3	6
Jun Market, 1960.	3	7
Oct Market Preview, 1960.	3	8
		Box
Jan Market, 1961		3
	Box	Folder

Baker Furniture Company

Dealer materials.	3	9
Misc. and memos.	3	10
Sales.	3	11
	Box	Folder
Jun Market, 1961.	3	12
Jan Market, 1962.	3	13
Jun Market, 1962.	3	14
Jan Market, 1963		
	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	4	1
Dealer materials.	4	2
Sales.	4	3
	Box	Folder
Jan L.A. Market, 1963.	4	4
Jun Market, 1963		
	Box	Folder

Baker Furniture Company

Attendance records.	4	5
Dealer materials.	4	6
Misc. and memos.	4	7
Sales.	4	8-9
Jan Chicago Market, 1964		
	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	4	10
Misc. and memos.	4	11
Sales.	4	12
Jun Market, 1964		
	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	4	13
Dealer materials.	4	14
Misc. and memos.	4	15
Sales.	4	16

Baker Furniture Company

Jan Chicago Market, 1965

	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	4	17
Dealer materials.	4	18
Misc. and memos.	4	19
Sales.	4	20

Jun Chicago Market, 1965

	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	4	21
Dealer materials.	4	22
Sales.	4	23

Jan Chicago Market, 1966

	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	5	1
Dealer materials.	5	2

Baker Furniture Company

Misc. and memos.	5	3
Sales.	5	4-5
Jun Chicago Market, 1966		
	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	5	6
Misc. and memos.	5	7
Sales.	5	8
	Box	Folder
Jan Chicago Market, 1967.	5	9
Jun Chicago Market, 1967		
	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	5	10
Misc. and memos.	5	11
Sales.	5	12
	Box	Folder
Oct Market, 1967.	5	13

Milling Road

Jan Market, 1968		
	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	5	14
Sales/Misc..	5	15
	Box	Folder
Apr Mocksville Market, 1968.	5	16
Jun Market, 1968		
	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	5	17
Sales.	5	18
	Box	Folder
Jun Market, 1967.	5	19
Milling Road		
	Box	Folder
Oct Market, 1957.	6	1
Jun Market, 1959.	6	2

Milling Road

Jan Market, 1960.	6	3-4
Oct Market Preview, 1960	6	5
Jan Market, 1961.	6	6-7
Jan Market, 1962		
	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	6	8
Dealer materials.	6	9
Sales.	6	10
	Box	Folder
Jun Market, 1962.	6	11
Jan Market, 1963		
	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	6	12
Dealer materials.	6	13-14
Misc. and memos.	6	15
		Box

Milling Road

Jun Market, 1963		7
	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	7	1
Dealer materials.	7	2
Sales.	7	3
	Box	Folder
Jan Market, 1964.	7	4
Oct Southern Market, 1964		
	Box	Folder
Attendance records.	7	5
Dealer materials.	7	6
Misc. and memos.	7	7
Sales.	7	8
	Box	Folder
Jan Chicago Market, 1965.	7	9
Apr Southern Market, 1965.	7	10

Series VI. Publicity Materials, 1956-66, n.d.

Southern Market, 1966

	Box	Folder
Dealer materials.	7	11
Sales.	7	12
	Box	Folder
Apr Market, 1966.	7	13
Oct Market, 1966.	7	14
Jan Market, 1967.	7	15
Apr Market, 1967.	7	16

Series VI. Publicity Materials, 1956-66, n.d.**Subseries A. Publicity Materials, 1956-66, n.d.****Scope and Contents note**

Materials that were intended for salesmen and customers to promote Baker furniture.

	Box	Folder
Milling Road Publicity kit, 1960's.	13	7
		Box

Subseries B. Publications, 1906-1966, n.d.

Baker Promotion kit, 1957.		14
	Box	Folder
The Britannia Collection. Press review.	13	8
Subseries B. Publications, 1906-1966, n.d.		
Scope and Contents note		
Various booklets published by Baker, and other miscellaneous publications that were received by the firm.		
	Box	Folder
The Story of Baker Furniture : skilled hands make the difference. Holland, Mi. : Baker Furniture, Inc, n.d. (6 copies)	13	17
Baker booklets, 1959, n.d.	15	1
Shop Mark, 1925.	15	1
Baker, The Far East Tradition, n.d.	15	1
Furniture in the Ancient World, 1966.	15	1
The Furniture industry in GR, 1926.	15	1
Miniature rooms, 1938.	15	1

Series VII. Scrapbooks, 1898-1966, n.d.

Dealer's and Decorators guide to the Exhibitors Building, n.d.	15	1
Verba Volant Scripta Mument, 1957.	15	1
Eighteenth Century Furniture (photographs of buildings), n.d.	15	1
The House Beautiful, Apr 1905.	15	1
House and Garden, Nov 1943.	15	1
Fortune, Jan 1947.	15	1

Series VII. Scrapbooks, 1898-1966, n.d.**Scope and Contents note**

Contains the Baker Bugle, a company newsletter, 1941-1966; Baker advertising; images of pieces and suites of furniture; and old catalogs.

	Box	Folder
Baker Bugle, a company newsletter, 1941-1966.	16	#1
Baker advertisements, 1940-1941.	16	#2
Baker advertisements, n.d.	17	#3
Baker advertisements, n.d.	17	#4

Series VIII. Miscellaneous and ephemera, 1903-1948. n.d.

Baker advertisements, n.d.	18	#5
Baker advertisements, n.d.	18	#6
Baker advertisements, n.d.	19	#7
Baker advertisements, n.d.	19	#8
Baker advertisements, n.d.	19	#9
Baker and other firms, adv's, 1930-1931.	20	#10
Baker and other firms, adv's, 1934-1939.	21	#11
Baker adv's/old Baker catalogs. 1898-1928.	22	#12

Series VIII. Miscellaneous and ephemera, 1903-1948. n.d.**Scope and Contents note**

Included here are Baker ephemera, graphic Christmas greetings which include generic art images or travel imagery, general publications of the furniture trade

	Box	Folder
Baker Furniture Museum, n.d.	8	6
European castle guides, n.d. [Formerly 8-10]	13	12

Series VIII. Miscellaneous and ephemera, 1903-1948. n.d.

Newspaper clippings, 1933, 1946, n.d. [Formerly 8-14/15]	13	14-15
Odds and ends, n.d.	8	16
Personal sale of yacht, 1948. [Formerly 8-17]	13	11
Post office, 1923.	8	18
Report on Death-rate among Manufacturing plants, c.1924. [Formerly 8-19]	13	13
Christmas greetings, 1936. [where?	13	5
		Box
Pictures : trip to Italy, 1938. Holiday greetings from Hollis S. Baker. [Blue paperfolder with loose published images, all generic unidentified European scenes, except one Bird's eye of the Baker plant. + Letter from Baker.		14
	Box	Folder
Christmas greetings, 1944	13	9
Christmas greetings (photographs), n.d.	13	10