

Grand Rapids History & Special Collections

Archives

GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC LIBRARY

Finding Aid for the

Baker Furniture Company Collection

Collection # 206

October 2009 version

Abstract

The Baker Furniture Collection contains legal, financial, and business records of the company received from Hollis M. Baker, the last family owner of the company, which still continues today. 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 & 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.

Collection #: 206

Accession #: 1992.019

Donor: Hollis M. Baker

Span dates: 1895-1969

Original archival processing date: April 1997

Size: 14.7 linear ft. (176.0 in.)

NOTE: This finding aid has been in revision in 2004, and there may still be some unresolved inconsistencies to clarify, when staff time permits. 9/29/2004

Related Collections

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

Coll. 232 GRPL Furniture Trade Catalog Collection, contains several boxes of trade catalogs from the different generations of the company

Coll. 233 GRPL Furniture Industry Collection.

Coll. 088 Furniture Manufacturers Association Records.

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

Box Summary

Box No.	Description of Contents	Box Description
Box Inventory September 2009		
1	Legal	Standard
2	Market Reports, 1956-1969	Standard
3	June 1958-1962 market	Standard
4	1963-1965 market	Standard
5	1966-1968	Standard
6	Milling Road Market, 1957-1963	Standard
7	Milling Road Market, 1963-1967	Standard
8	Minutes, Business documents	Standard
9	Photos, Price lists	Standard
10	Receipts	Standard
11	Financial reports	Slim legal
12	Stock Certificates	Slim legal
13	GR Chair & Misc. +	Blue lidded w/ handles
13.5	Furniture Drawings	Small clam
Box is about 2" too long for the material		
Several items in this box need to be unfolded, humidified & placed in oversized, 2/27/2004		
14	Misc. oversized	Folio clam
15	Baker Booklets	3" print
16	Scrapbooks	3" print
17	Scrapbooks	3" print
18	Scrapbooks	3" print
19	Scrapbooks	3" print
20	Scrapbooks	Unboxed oversized, wrapped
21	Scrapbooks	Unboxed very oversized
22	Scrapbooks	Unboxed oversized, wrapped

Revised 2/2004

History

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, 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.

Note: Inaccuracies may exist in the information above which may be clarified by using the evidence presented in the documents within this collection or items in the related collections listed above.

Scope and Content

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. 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.

Series Descriptions

Series I. Legal & Corporation Records, 1913-44, n.d.

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

Series II. Minutes, 1931-1936.

Minutes of various meetings of the Board of Directors.

Series III. Business Documents

Subseries A. Financial Records, 1923-1936, n.d.

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

Subseries B. Receipts, 1898-1920.

Receipts for items purchased by the Baker factories.

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

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.

Series V. Trade Literature

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

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.

Subseries B. Price Lists, 1928-49, n.d.

This series contains the price lists for Baker furniture.

Subseries C. Furniture Trade blueline prints

Subseries D. Market Reports, 1956-1969.

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 & miscellaneous, Sales.

Series VI. Advertising & promotional materials

Subseries A. Publicity Materials, 1956-66, n.d.

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

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

Various booklets published by Baker, and other miscellaneous publications that were received by the firm.

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

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

Series VIII. Miscellaneous materials.

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

Contents

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
		Series I. Legal & Corporation Records, 1913-1944.
1	1	Consolidation of Peck & Hills Furn. Co, 1926.
1	2	Merger?
1	3	Merger correspondence & figures, 1923-1925.
1	4	Miscellaneous, n.d.
1	5	Miscellaneous, 1932.
1	6	Misc.
1	7	Misc. papers, 1913, 1922, 1937-1944, n.d.
1	8	Papers, 1933.
8	7	By-Laws of Faker Furn. Factories, c.1934.
8	8	Diagrams of Holland Plant, 1934.
8	9	Employee petition for higher wages, 1937.
8	11	Inventory, 1903.
		Papers concerning the Manor House 1932-1937
1	9	
1	10	
1	11	
1	12	
1	13	Papers regarding move to Holland, Michigan, 1933.
1	14	Property deeds records, n.d.
1	15	Proposed merger, n.d.
13	1	Minutes of stockholders, 1935
13	2	
13	3	Stock transfer sheets, n.d.
13	4	Stock certificates, n.d.
	13	Loose stock certificates, n.d.
		Series II. Minutes, 1931-1936
8	1	1931-1932.
8	2	1933.
8	3	1934.
8	4	1935.
8	5	1936.

Series III. Business Documents.

Subseries A. Financial Records, 1923-36, n.d.

Seidman & Seidman, Accountants & Tax Consultants Reports

“Comparative Statistics with other Wood Working Plants”

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 11 | 1 | Baker & Company, 1923 |
| 11 | 2 | Allegan Furniture Shops, 1924 |
| 11 | 3 | Baker Furniture Factories, Inc. Balance sheet, June 30, 1931. |
| | | Audit reports, Baker Furniture Factories |
| 11 | 4 | June 30, 1932 |
| 11 | 5 | June 30, 1933 |
| 11 | 6 | June 30, 1934 |
| 11 | 7 | June 30, 1935 |
| 11 | 8 | Report on examination, Hollis S. Baker Company, 1936.
Manor House Furniture Works, Ltd. Balance Sheets |
| 11 | 9 | Feb. 1, to Dec. 31, 1936. (2 copies) |
| 11 | 0 | “Confidential Report for ... your capital account ...”
[Unidentified comprehensive financial report for unspecified person/corporation and unspecified period.] |
| 11 | | Baker Furniture, Inc.
Interim financial report / Office of Price Administration,
Washington, Mar. 31, 1942. |

Subseries B. Receipts, 1898-1920

- | | | |
|----|----|---------------------|
| 10 | 1 | |
| 10 | 2 | |
| 10 | 3 | |
| 10 | 4 | |
| 10 | 5 | |
| 10 | 6 | |
| 10 | 7 | |
| 10 | 8 | |
| 10 | 9 | |
| 10 | 10 | 1904-1917. |
| 10 | 11 | 1920. |
| 10 | 12 | various, 1898-1955. |

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

- 14 x **Photographs.** 5 images by E.J. McDormand believed to be 1903, showing flood conditions. Note that this is a year before the better known 1904 flood. The Grand Rapids Chair Company was purchased by Baker in xxxx.
1. G.R. Chair Co. building, with the name on the building.
 2. G.R. Chair Co. building [n.d.] near view with a small boy standing in the water facing the camera, and other men looking on.
 - 3.-5. Flooded lumber yard (3-5) 3 variant views of the same theme, of lumber stacks in front of a couple of buildings which are all standing in the water.
 3. One view has a near view of the fence line at right.
 4. Another view has a near view of the left building, and railroad cars at the left of the lumber piles.
 5. The remaining view is centered between the other images, and provides a better look at a building which was hidden behind the building on the right in the 3 above.
- 9 .75 **Folio (8)**
A small booklet of photos with textured paper covers, and a red ribbon at the left margin. Includes mostly images of the flood, including duplicates of some images above. Has a Bird's eye view of the factory from a lithograph on the cover. Includes 2 cyanotype images.
1. small boy in floor water, as above.
 2. Elder man seated in a one horse open sleigh in the middle of a snow storm, with the factory behind.
 3. Flood view of building with name of building as above.
 4. Flood view as in 3 in set above.
 5. Flood or river view, with a bridge spanning the river in the foreground and factories across the river in the background.
 6. Flood view as in 4 in set above.
 7. Cyanotype. A group of boys standing in the water with a group of men standing behind, and a building with stripped awnings in the background.
 8. Cyanotype. Interior view of furniture with tags.
- 9 .5 Grand Rapids Chair Company views(2)
- "D&M. R.R. Bridge after the break" n.d. Shows a demolished covered bridge, perhaps broken by a flood, with the factory across the river in the background.
 - Stereocard by Schuyler C. Baldwin.
- Identified as "Grand Rapids Views", the image shows the chair factory with piles of lumber in the foreground & smaller buildings at center left. N.d.

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

Books

- 13 1 Reflections : commemorating fifty years progress in the making of fine furniture by the Grand Rapids Chair Company. 1922.
- 13 4 Modern Steam Generators. Saginaw, Mi. : Wickes Bros, 1900. 2nd ed.
- 13 Magazine [serials]
- 13 5 Furniture World. Dec. 6, 1945.
- 13 6 G.R. Furniture Record, v. 7, no. 2, July 1903. Front pages in poor condition with yellowed tape.
- 13 3 The Commonwealth, v. 6, no. 12, Oct. 1923. "All in One Day at the Grand Rapids Chair Co." pg. 16-17.
- 13 Small scrapbook, n.d. [Missing, 2/23/2004]
- 13 2 Furniture Trade Catalogs
GR Chair Co. Chamber Furniture, Book Cases Catalog,
May 1, 1885. [Poor condition, tape, front cover missing]
- Trade Pamphlets
- 13 16 Reflections on a unique tradition.
One large cream colored printed sheet, folded twice.
- 13 16 The Britannia Collection by Baker
- Flyer
 - Invitation, Jan. 2, 1966.

Series V. Trade Literature

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

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

Series V. Trade Literature

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

9 6

List guide, n.d.

9 7

1928-1936

- Feb. 15, 1931 "Net Wholesale Prices"
- June 30, 1931
- Jan. 1934. The Upholsterer's Guide and Price list
- Oct. 1, 1934
- Oct. 5, 1935
- Jan. 1, 1936
- July 7, 1936
- Sept. 1, 1936. Name changed here from Baker Furniture Factories to Baker Furniture, Inc.
- Dec. 1, 1936

The Manor House (Holland, Mich.)

9 8

Jan. 1, 1936

1937-1940.

- Mar. 20, 1937
 - Jan. 19, 1938
 - May 16, 1938
 - Nov. 1, 1938
 - Aug. 1, 1939
 - Jan. 15, 1940
 - Apr. 8, 1940
 - Sept. 10, 1940
 - Dec. 20, 1940
 - Jan. 27, 1937. Has N.Y., Chicago & Los Angeles addresses
- Below have Holland, N.Y. & Chicago addresses
- Sept. 15, 1937.
 - May 16, 1938.
 - Sept. 10, 1940.

Series V. Trade Literature

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

Manor House continued ...

9 9

1941-1942

- May 12, 1941
- Nov. 10, 1941
- Feb. 28, 1942

The Manor House.

- May 12, 1941

Also unpublished in-house price lists, mostly not dated, but one with 1946.
1947 & n.d. Not formally published lists.

9 10

9 11

1948 Not formally published lists.

9 12

1949 & not formally published lists.

- Apr. 1, 1949
- July 1, 1949

Subseries C. Furniture Trade blueline prints

Furniture Blueprints

13.5

“Jan Market, 1963” on front of folded blueline print.

Source of information unknown.

13.5

“Jan Market, 1963. (Milling Road” on front of folded blueline print.

Source of information unknown

13.5

“E.J. Bellaire” [Market Reports, Jan. or June 1965?]

13.5

Market Reports, Chicago?, Jan. 1966.

Series V. Trade Literature
Subseries D. Market Reports, 1956-1969.
Baker Furniture Company

		Jan Market, 1956
2	1	Dealer Materials.
2	2	Memos & Misc.
2	3	Sales.
2	4	Oct Market, 1956.
		Jan Market, 1957
2	5	Attendance records.
2	6	Dealer materials.
2	7	Sales.
		Jun Market, 1957
2	8	Attendance records.
9	9	Dealer materials.
2	10	Misc. & memos.
2	11	Sales.
		Oct Market, 1957
2	12	Attendance records.
2	13	Dealer materials.
2	14	Sales.
		Jan Market, 1958
2	15	Attendance records.
2	16	Dealer materials.
2	17	Sales.
		Jun Market, 1958
3	1	Attendance records.
3	2	Dealer materials.
3	3	Sales.
3	4	Oct Market, 1958.
3	5	Jun Market, 1959.
3	6	Jan Market, 1960.
3	7	Jun Market, 1960.
3	8	Oct Market Preview, 1960.
3	x	Jan Market, 1961
3	9	Dealer materials.
3	10	Misc. & memos.
3	11	Sales.
3	12	Jun Market, 1961.
3	13	Jan Market, 1962.
3	14	Jun Market, 1962.

Series V. Trade Literature
Subseries D. Market Reports, 1956-1969.
Baker Furniture Company

4		Jan Market, 1963
4	1	Attendance records.
4	2	Dealer materials.
4	3	Sales.
4	4	Jan L.A. Market, 1963.
		Jun Market, 1963
4	5	Attendance records.
4	6	Dealer materials.
4	7	Misc. & memos.
4	8-9	Sales.
		Jan Chicago Market, 1964
4	10	Attendance records.
4	11	Misc. & memos.
4	12	Sales.
		Jun Market, 1964
4	13	Attendance records.
4	14	Dealer materials.
4	15	Misc. & memos.
4	16	Sales.
		Jan Chicago Market, 1965
4	17	Attendance records.
4	18	Dealer materials.
4	19	Misc. & memos.
4	20	Sales.
		Jun Chicago Market, 1965
4	21	Attendance records.
4	22	Dealer materials.
4	23	Sales.

Series V. Trade Literature
Subseries D. Market Reports, 1956-1969.
Baker Furniture Company

		Jan Chicago Market, 1966
5	1	Attendance records.
5	2	Dealer materials.
5	3	Misc. & memos.
5	4-5	Sales.
		Jun Chicago Market, 1966
5	6	Attendance records.
5	7	Misc. & memos.
5	8	Sales.
5	9	Jan Chicago Market, 1967.
		Jun Chicago Market, 1967
5	10	Attendance records.
5	11	Misc. & memos.
5	12	Sales.
5	13	Oct Market, 1967.
		Jan Market, 1968
5	14	Attendance records.
5	15	Sales/Misc..
5	16	Apr Mocksville Market, 1968.
		Jun Market, 1968
5	17	Attendance records.
5	18	Sales.
5	19	Jun Market, 1967.

Milling Road

6	1	Oct Market, 1957.
6	2	Jun Market, 1959.
6	3-4	Jan Market, 1960.
6	5	Oct Market Preview, 1960
6	6-7	Jan Market, 1961.
		Jan Market, 1962
6	8	Attendance records.
6	9	Dealer materials.
6	10	Sales.
6	11	Jun Market, 1962.
		Jan Market, 1963
6	12	Attendance records.
6	13-14	Dealer materials.
6	15	Misc. & memos.

Series V. Trade Literature
Subseries D. Market Reports, 1956-1969.

		Milling Road Continued ...
7		Jun Market, 1963
7	1	Attendance records.
7	2	Dealer materials.
7	3	Sales.
7	4	Jan Market, 1964.
		Oct Southern Market, 1964
7	5	Attendance records.
7	6	Dealer materials.
7	7	Misc. & memos.
7	8	Sales.
7	9	Jan Chicago Market, 1965.
7	10	Apr Southern Market, 1965.
		Southern Market, 1966
7	11	Dealer materials.
7	12	Sales.
7	13	Apr Market, 1966.
7	14	Oct Market, 1966.
7	15	Jan Market, 1967.
7	16	Apr Market, 1967.

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

13	7	Milling Road Publicity kit, 1960's.
14	x	Baker Promotion kit, 1957.
13	8	The Britannia Collection. Press review.
		1. Invitation on gold card.
		2. Info. Folder on tan stock. (1 folded sheet)

Series VI. B. Publication. 1906-66, n.d.

- 13 17 The Story of Baker Furniture : skilled hands make the difference. Holland, Mi. : Baker Furniture, Inc, n.d.
(6 copies)
- 15 1 Baker booklets, 1959, n.d.
Shop Mark, 1925.
Baker, The Far East Tradition, n.d.
Furniture in the Ancient World, 1966.
- The Furniture industry in GR, 1926.
Miniature rooms, 1938.
Dealer's & Decorators guide to the Exhibitors Building, n.d.
Verba Volant Scripta Munent, 1957.
- Eighteenth Century Furniture (photographs of buildings), n.d.
The House Beautiful, Apr 1905.
House and Garden, Nov 1943.
Fortune, Jan 1947.
- Series VII. Scrapbooks, 1898-1966, n.d.**
- 16 #1 Baker Bugle, a company newsletter, 1941-1966.
16 #2 Baker advertisements, 1940-1941.
17 #3 Baker advertisements, n.d.
17 #4 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 advertisements, n.d.
20 #10 Baker and other firms, adv's, 1930-1931.
21 #11 Baker and other firms, adv's, 1934-1939.
22 #12 Baker adv's/old Baker catalogs. 1898-1928.

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

8	6	Baker Furniture Museum, n.d.
13	12	European castle guides, n.d. [Formerly 8-10]
13	14-15	Newspaper clippings, 1933, 1946, n.d. [Formerly 8-14/15]
8	16	Odds & ends, n.d.
13	11	Personal sale of yacht, 1948. [Formerly 8-17]
8	18	Post office, 1923.
13	13	Report on Death-rate among Manufacturing plants, c.1924. [Formerly 8-19]
13	5	Christmas greetings, 1936. [where?]
14		Pictures : trip to Italy, 1938. Holiday greetings from Hollis S. Baker. [Blue paper folder with loose published images, all generic unidentified European scenes, except one Bird's eye of the Baker plant. + Letter from Baker.
13	9	Christmas greetings, 1944
13	10	Christmas greetings (photographs), n.d.