

Grand Rapids History & Special Collections

Archives

GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC LIBRARY

Finding Aid for the

Grand Rapids Public Library Furniture Design & Designers Collection

Collection # 276

October 2009 version

GRPL Furniture Design & Designers Collection  
Collection #276

Abstract

The Grand Rapids Furniture Design & Designers Collection brings together small and unknown accessions of materials under this general topic. It also contains research materials identified by staff through reference requests, gathered together as biographical files or files on other topics, related specifically to the furniture designers of Grand Rapids. As a collection recently defined, the holdings are small, but are expected to grow over the years. Additional information on area furniture designers can also be found in many other GRPL archival collections.

Collection #: 276

Accession #:00.[726].1; 00.[669].1 ; 00.[1993].1-6 ; 1993.016

Donor:

Span dates:

Processor: R. Mayne

Size: 2.8 linear ft. (33.0 in.)

Box Summary

Box No.	Description of Contents	Box Description
<hr/>		
Box Inventory September 2009		
1	History & Publications	Blue standard w handles
2	Charles Witman designs Misc. oversized.	Clam
3	Holmberg manuscript	standard
Boxing revised 11/23/2004		
B1	Biographies	Standard
Added 9/21/2006		
B2	Unknown	Folio Clam

### Related Collections

Information on individual furniture designers can be found on many other GRPL Archival Collections, and other types of departmental references.

- Books and periodicals on the public service floor. See staff for assistance with the library catalog or indexes to locate relevant materials.
- Archival image collections. Several photo collections exist which may contain information on furniture companies, furniture designers, or furniture. A few of these are:  
Coll. 054 the GRPL Photo Collection.  
Coll. 125, the Robinson Studio Collection.  
Coll. 230, the Rooks Studio Collection.

Ask staff for indexes or finding aids for better access to this information.

- Coll. 204, Grand Rapids Furniture Designers Association Records. This collection includes actual historical documents which original belonged to this organization. Scrapbooks provides some information on numerous designers. Some of the information gathered by the Designers Association or overlap or duplicate reference information found by staff, and filled in Coll. 276.
- Collections on or from individual furniture designers. See Coll. Xxx Sobota, for example, which provides general information on/from this designers family.
- Collections from particular furniture companies, which may or may not include documents that reference the designer. For example, Coll. 017 is the Widdicomb Company Collection. The materials in this particular collection tend to be early, so they probably do not includes documents with information on T.H. Robsjohn Gibbings, who worked for the Widdicomb Co., and John Widdicomb, a separate company, in later years.
- Collections related to the furniture industry.
  - Coll. 084, Furniture Manufacturers Association. Focus on the buildings and manufacturing, with little information on designers.
  - Coll. 232, GRPL Furniture Trade Catalog Collection. Some trade catalogs give the names of the designers, many do not.
  - Coll. 233, GRPL Furniture Industry Collection. Includes mostly publications from the companies which may refer to or give information on the designers. Also includes miscellaneous periodicals which may refer to the designers.

History

Scope and Content

Series Descriptions

**Series I. Grand Rapids Design / Designers in general.**

**Series II. By or about designers**

A. Biographies

B. Publications by or about designers

Includes instruction documents related to local design instruction institutions such as the

**Series III. Original design documents.**

Subseries I. Witman

Contents

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
		<b>Series I. GR Designers in General Histories</b>
1	x	Grand Rapids Furniture Designers Association / C.T. Witman. 1955. 00.[2139].1 Added 11/23/2004 1 folded sheet. Lists past presidents
1	x	History of Grand Rapids Furniture Designers' Workshop, 1976 / Charles T. Witman. 2007.075 Added 7/9/2007
		<b>Directories</b>
		Grand Rapids Furniture Designers Association. Directory.
1	x	1953 00.[2884].1 Formerly R749.048 G762d Still in pam binder.
1	x	1953 c. 2 00.[2137].1 Original in good condition. Has not on first page "Cover design by C.B. Andrews".
1	x	1970's ● Dec. 1971 ● April 1973 00.[5260].1-2 Added 3/22/2008
		Diamond Jubilee Directory
1	x	Association Membership Directory. [1995] 00.[2138].1 ● Includes Past Presidents to 1994. ● Includes "A Short History of the Grand Rapids Furniture Designers Association" / by Charles T. Witman, 1969, Edited by Scott Dergins, with update by Deb Kimberlin. ● Includes Constitution and By-Laws, listed the various revision dates, to march 1995.
		See also the separate Coll.

**Series II. Biographies**

**Lost City site**

<http://www.lostcityarts.com/?id=SEATING&logo=circle>

- |    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| B1 | x | 1 <sup>st</sup> dibs International Creators Directory 7/2007<br><a href="http://www.1stdibs.com/creators.php">http://www.1stdibs.com/creators.php</a>   |
| B1 | x | William A. <b>Balbach</b>   |
| B1 | x | Robert <b>Blaich</b><br>Website biographies <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● IDSA Industrial Designers Society of America<br/><a href="http://new.idsa.org/webmodules/articles/annviewer.asp?a=1970">http://new.idsa.org/webmodules/articles/annviewer.asp?a=1970</a><br/><a href="http://new.idsa.org">http://new.idsa.org</a></li><li>● New Orleans Build Better Project<br/>[bad link]</li><li>● Philips Electronics web pages<br/>[bad link]</li><li>● Reddot Design Award web pages<br/><a href="http://en.red-dot.org/191+M57eedde9313.html">http://en.red-dot.org/191+M57eedde9313.html</a></li></ul> |
| B1 | x | J. Stuart <b>Clingman</b>   |
| B1 | x | Eames. Ray Eames. Charles Eames<br><br>1 <sup>st</sup> dibs<br><a href="http://www.1stdibs.com/furniture_search.php?type=3&amp;i_creator=Eames+Ray+Charles">http://www.1stdibs.com/furniture_search.php?type=3&amp;i_creator=Eames+Ray+Charles</a>  |
| B1 | x | Frederick E. <b>Hill</b> , Jr.  |
| B1 | x | Otto J. <b>Jiranek</b>  |
| B1 | x | Arthur <b>Kirkpatrick</b>   |
| B1 | x | Charles <b>Limbirt</b><br>Arts & Crafts <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Arts &amp; Crafts Society Web page<br/><a href="http://www.arts-crafts.com/archive/limbert.shtml">http://www.arts-crafts.com/archive/limbert.shtml</a></li></ul>  |

**Series II. Biographies**

Forrest Emerson **Mann** (Forest)

See biographical information in Coll. 224

Arts & Crafts

- B1 x Paul McCobb, 1917-1969. Biographies from searchable sources
- B1 x Paul McCobb. Examples of Furniture from web sources.  
Added 6/12/2009
- B1 x A. Linn Murray. Correspondence.  
Letter & Envelop, Aug. 18, 1895, per postal mark, from A. Linn Murray to his wife in Grand Rapids. On letterhead for The Norwood, Waverly, N.Y.  
Hand written in black ink on lined paper, 5 sheets/9 pages. RE the life and strain of sales business & travel.  
Accompanied by a webpages showing a 1901 Ladies Home Journal ad for A. Linn Murray clock, Grand Rapids, Michigan.  
2009.044.2 Added 6/19/2009
- B1 x A. Linn Murray. Misc.
- B1 x **George Nelson.** Web pages  
1<sup>st</sup>dibs  
[http://www.1stdibs.com/furniture\\_search.php?type=3&i\\_creator=George+Nelson](http://www.1stdibs.com/furniture_search.php?type=3&i_creator=George+Nelson)
- B1 x William Pahlmann  
Objects in the Loft site  
<http://objectsintheloft.1stdibs.com/search.php>

**Series II. Biographies**

**T.H. Robsjohn Gibbings (Terence Harold Robsjohn-Gibbings, 1905-1976)**

Note: This section includes copies of some of the items cited. But, in other cases, users will need to see the location or item referenced on the following list of sources.

B1 x  
B1 x

Misc. Biographical  
T.H. Robsjohn Gibbings. Web Bios

Answer.com

<http://www.answers.com/topic/t-h-robsjohn-gibbings>

Lost City Arts

<http://www.lostcityarts.com/designers/showcase/gibbings.htm>

Time. Jan. 30, 1950.

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,856508,00.html>

Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T.\\_H.\\_Robsjohn-Gibbings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T._H._Robsjohn-Gibbings)

Istdibs

[bad link]

**Books**

**Photocopy of cover only located here.**

B1 x

Good-bye, Mr. Chippendale / T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings. Illustrated by Mary Petty. N.Y., Knopf, 1944.

This item is currently in the departments book collection under: M749.2.R576, and also in general library storage.

● Photocopy of book jacket & copy of online catalog entry.

● **Furniture Manufacturer**. March 1944. Book Review.

● Article from Pilastered.com website.

<http://www.pilastered.com/reviews/good-bye-mr-chippendale>

See also items listed in the online catalog for the Furniture Room, and for the general library collections.

**Series II. Biographies**

**T.H. Robsjohn Gibbings (Terence Harold Robsjohn-Gibbings, 1905-1976)**

**Periodical Articles**

**Furniture Age**

- Dec. 1953

B1 x

**Furniture Forum**

- All-American Gal? Jan. 5, 1948? [newspaper type clipping, only part of the article found]

B2 x

**Furniture Manufacturer & Artisan**

June 1, 1944

- Mar. 1944. pg. 29 where

233-2  
084-50

**Grand Rapids Furniture Forum** (Report of the Grand Rapids Furniture forum) / Grand Rapids Furniture Exposition Association. Jan. 5, 1948.

- Where is Madame X? / by T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings. pg. 6-9  
This item is a Coll. 233-2 and Coll. 084-50

**Home Furnishings**

- Feb. 1954 Where

B1 x

Newspaper clippings (photocopies)

**Grand Rapids Herald**

- Jan. 9, 1947
- Jan. 6, 1948
- Aug. 11, 1950
- Jan. 4, 1954
- Feb. 16, 1954
- June 24, 1959 where

**Grand Rapids Press**

- Jan. 3, 1950 where
- July 2, 1956

**Series II. Biographies**

**T.H. Robsjohn Gibbings (Terence Harold Robsjohn-Gibbings, 1905-1976)**

**Trade Literature**

See Coll. 225-

See Coll. 232-

**Web Illustrations**

B1      x

T.H. Robsjohn Gibbings. Webpages

cDecor.com

Magazine. Jan. 2001

An American in Paris

<http://www.cdecor.com/magazine/eric.asp>

Lost City Arts

<http://www.lostcityarts.com/designers/showcase/gibbings.htm>

1<sup>st</sup>dibs : the decorative arts source

[http://www.1stdibs.com/furniture\\_search.php?type=3&i\\_creator=T.H.+Robsjohn-](http://www.1stdibs.com/furniture_search.php?type=3&i_creator=T.H.+Robsjohn-)

[Gibbings](#)

See the following:

- His archive at the Smithsonian
- Contact the Public Museum of Grand Rapids, Chris Carron, RE possible Widdicomb drawings associated with this designer.
- Coll. 125-H009604. Robinson Studio Collection. Herald Series negatives. Jan. 6, 1948. And perhaps also a newspaper article on microfilm for that date.
- Coll. 204-
- Coll. 232-
- Coll. 225-
- Coll. 233
- Departmental furniture periodicals and indexes.

**Series II. Biographies**

**Bill Stumpf**

B1 x

**GR Press.** Sept. 1, 2006.

Designer made office more comfortable : Bill Stumpf created Herman Miller's iconic Aeron, other ergonomic chairs.

GR Press Business Section C. Added 9/21/2006.

B1 x

Ralph Hewitt Widdicombe

GRPL Furniture Design & Designers Collection  
Collection #276

**Series II. Biographies**

**Publications by or about Designers**

- 1 x A Brief Outline of Furniture History during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century / by Leon W. Hall, designer. G.R., Mi. 1937.  
00.[726].1 Formerly R749.092.H144b
- 1 x Design Piracy : plan adopted by the Furniture Code Authority for make effective section 4, article VIII, the Design Piracy Clause of the furniture Manufacturing Industry Codes. May 15, 1934.
- 1 x Details of Furniture Construction : a study ... / Arthur Kirkpatrick, Instructor, GR School of Designing. In **Furniture Manufacturer & Artisan**. Nov. 1920. p. 230+  
00.[3993].1 Added 12/28/2004  
"Rod making."—cover title/subject matter
- 1 x The Eames Lounge Chair : an Icon of Modern Design / Martin Eidelberg, Thomas Hine, Pat Kirkham, David A. Hanks, C. Ford Peatross. London ; N.Y. : Grand Rapids Art Museum in assoc. with Merrell, 2006.  
P2006.047.1 Added 10/16/2006
- 1 x Four Original Sources of Inspiration for Designs of Furniture / Arthur Kirkpatrick.  
00.[669].1 Formerly M749.K63
- FF- OVE 44 Suggestions for Furniture Workers. Grand Rapids School of Designing, 542-545 Houseman Building.  
Furniture illustrations on a poster sized sheet, used as a mailer. Mailed to Herzog Art Furniture Co., Saginaw, Mi. Aug. 1915  
Alternative title: Forty four suggestions ...  
P2009.038 Added 6/1/2009
- 1 x Full Instructions in the Art of Parchment Shade Making and Decorating. G.R. : Home Institute of Trades, 1921.  
Formerly MKG751.G76  
00.[3179].1 Added 11/23/2004  
Formerly bound with "Instructions in the Ar of Creating Oil ..."
- 1 x History of Furniture Designing ... / by Stephen M. Wirts. Detroit : Wolverine Manufacturing Co., 1915. ...Summary of an Address ... National Table Assoc. at Pittsburgh, Oct. 15, 1915. Univ. of Mich. Mar. 22, 1915, and Detroit Museum of Art, March, 26, 1915.

GRPL Furniture Design & Designers Collection  
Collection #276

Formerly R749.09.W748  
00.[0545].1 Added 11/23/2004

- x x An Illustrated Story of Furniture and ornamentation / by Herman Holmberg,  
instructor of Furniture Design and Furniture Craft, George Davis Vocational and  
Technical High School.  
1993.016 Added 11/23/2004  
Oversized binder with typed sheets and pasted illustrations.

GRPL Furniture Design & Designers Collection  
Collection #276

**Series II. Biographies**

**Publications by or about Designers**

- |    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 1  | x | Instructions in the Art of Creating Oil Colors and Color Blends for Parchment Shade Decorating. G.R. : Home Institute of Trades, 1921.<br>Formerly MKG751.G76<br>00.[3173].1                      Added 11/23/2004<br>Formerly bound with "Full Instructions in the Art of parchment ..."  |
| 1  | x | Nelson, Eames, Girard Propst : the design process at Herman Miller. <b>Design Quarterly</b> 98/99<br>00.[2198].2                      Added 10/4/2005<br>Accompanied by a Checklist of the Exhibit, Walker Art Center 25 November 1975-18 January 1976.<br>00.[2198].2a                      Added 10/4/2005<br>See also 233-2   |
| 1  | x | Salute to Grand Rapids Designers / by Jay Gary. <b>Furniture Age</b> , Dec. 1953.<br>Includes a picture and brief information on 14 Grand Rapids, Michigan designers:<br>T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings<br>Renzo R. Rutili<br>Paul T. Frankl<br>John B. Wisner<br>Hendrik Van Keppel and Taylor Green<br>William K. Kleaver<br>Herbert Ten Have<br>Warner Rains Cleveland<br>William Millington<br>William H. Eggebrecht<br>Carl H. Eggebrecht<br>Michael E.C. Taylor<br>Paul Tuttle |
| B2 | x | Oversized copy   |
| 1  | x | The Symbolic Interpretation of Our Playing Cards / by Arthur Kirkpatrick. 1925.  |

**Series II. Biographies**

**Publications by or about Designers**

- 1 x The Waddell Book of Projects : Designs of Furniture You Will Like to Build, c. 1931.  
P2002.026  
Includes attached inside front cover:  
1. Student Context (pink sheet)  
2. Letter. "To Instructors and Teachers"
- 1 x Waddell Manufacturing Co. illustrated trade letters, n.d. 00.[1993].1-6  
Includes designs by Arthur Gommesson, Randolph R. Mohlhenrich (Baltimore)?, Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, Henry Warren Jr., Mr. Guenaux, and illustrations by Oakley V. Weeks.
- 1 x What is Beautiful in Furniture and Why, or the Historical Development of Furniture as Compared with the Passions of men / by Arthur Kirkpatrick. GR School of Designing. Illustrated by Lyle Newman. GR : Mills Printing Co., [1910]  
Formerly MKG749.K63  
00.[3175].1 Added 11/23/2004  
See also copy in school vertical file.  
Other illustrations included:  
● Arthur Kirkpatrick. Sketched by student Frank Johnson, Chicago.  
● Suggestion for Cigar Store Outfit / R.B. Leibius, Jr. (Robert Leibius, the Designer for Kansas City Show Case Works). Interior Perspective showing counter set up and wall treatment.  
● A Detail and sketch of rocker. A cut from one of our lesson plates. Source not given.
- 1 x What the Furniture Designer Sees in Mythology / by Arthur Kirkpatrick, Instructor & Designer of the GR School of Designing. G.R. : Duhamel Printing Co., n.d.  
00.[5611].1

**Series II. Biographies**

**Publications by or about Designers**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | x | Why are Period Styles Evolved? / A. Kirkpatrick. Grand Rapids School of Designing.<br>Formerly MKG740.K63<br>00.[3176].1 Added 11/23/2004<br>Note: Bound with the two items below.                                      |
| 1 | x | What Suggested Form or Design of figures / by Arthur Kirkpatrick. GR School of Designing, n.d.<br>Formerly MKG740.K63<br>c.1 00.[3177].1 Bound with "Why are Period Styles Evolved?"<br>c.2 00.[3177].2 Separate folder |
| 1 | x | What Suggested Form or Design of figure seven (7) / by Arthur Kirkpatrick. GR School of Designing, n.d.<br>Formerly MKG740.K63<br>00.[3178].1 Bound with "Why are Period Styles Evolved?"                               |

**Series III. Original Designs**

**Subseries A. Witman.**

Original designs of library furniture by Chas. T. Witman, Grand Rapids.  
(Formerly R 849.212 .W781)

2	1	Charging Desk. Colonial Design. A.
2	2	Charging Desk. Colonial Design. B.
2	3	Charging Desk. Colonial Design. B.
2	4	Charging Desk. Colonial Design. A.
2	5	Dictionary Stand. Colonial Design. A.
2	6	Rectangular Table. Colonial Design. B.
2	7	Dictionary Stand. Colonial Design. B.
2	8	Magazine Rack. B.
2	9	Magazine Rack. Colonial Design. A.
2	10	Periodical Rack and File. Colonial Design. B.
2	11	Periodical Rack and File. Colonial Design. A.
2	12	Table. 30 ½
2	13	Periodical Rack and File. 33.
2	14	Periodical Rack and File. 34.
2	15	Magazine Rack. 27.
2	16	Magazine Rack. 28.
2	17	Table. 31
2	18	Magazine Rack. 28 ½
2	19	Dictionary Stand. 26.
2	20	Dictionary Stand. 25.
2	21	Table. 29.
2	22	Table. 30.
2	23	Wainscot Table. Colonial Design. 32.
2	24	Straight Charging Desk. 1.
2	25	Straight Charging Desk. 2.
2	26	Straight Charging Desk. 3.
2	27	Straight Charging Desk. 4.
2	28	Straight Charging Desk. 5.
2	29	Straight Charging Desk. 6.
2	30	Octagonal Charging Desk. 7.
2	31	Octagonal Charging Desk. 8.
2	32	Odd Chairs. 23.
2	33	Odd Chairs. 24.
2	34	Octagonal Charging Desk. 9.
2	35	Octagonal Charging Desk. 10.
2	36	Octagonal Charging Desk. 11.
2	37	Octagonal Charging Desk. 12.
2	38	Shelving. 13.
2	39	Shelving. 14.

**Series III. Original Designs**

**Subseries A. Witman.**

Original designs of library furniture by Chas. T. Witman, Grand Rapids  
(Formerly R 849.212 .W781)

- |   |    |  |
|---|----|--|
| 2 | 40 | 60 Tray Cabinet with leg base. 15.   |
| 2 | 41 | 60 Tray Cabinet. Special Design. 16.   |
| 2 | 42 | 60 Tray Cabinet with leg base. 17.   |
| 2 | 43 | 60 Tray Cabinet with leg base. 18.   |
| 2 | 44 | 60 Tray Cabinet, cupboard base. 19.  |
| 2 | 45 | [Chair] 22.  |
| 2 | 46 | Pennsylvania Type Windsor. Reproduction. 21  |
| 2 | 47 | [Chairs] 20.   |
| 2 | 48 | Filing Equipment Bureau. Product Sheet.  |
| 2 | 49 | Twelve blueprints. These have A-B lettering, and may correspond to the first 11 drawings above.  |
| 3 | x  | Designs & sketches for Furniture in the Neo-Jacobean & other styles / by Bernard E. Smith, arch. Strand : 8 Buckingham St. ; London, printed by C.F. Kell, 1876. Reprint?<br>(Formerly R749.222.Sm52) Accession 102857<br>Nov.1908 |
| 3 | x  | One Hundred Designs with Full details of 'Easy-to-make' furniture / issued by Crater & Holt. G.R., Mich. N.d.<br>(Formerly R 849.084 .C85) Accession 151451 "Copyrighted"—stamped on intro page.                                   |

**List of Grand Rapids Furniture Designers**  
In Process

Guido Alessandrini (Mr. & Mrs.)

William R. Balbach  
Barnes, Victor S.  
Baxter, Bob  
Bebalacqua, Aurelio  
Berg, Hans  
Bjorncrantz, Carl  
Blickley, Ed  
Borneman, Louis  
Boukma, John  
Briggs, Sandy  
Brower, John

GRPL Furniture Design & Designers Collection  
Collection #276

Burton, Frank  
Buzzitta, Giacomo "Jack"

Cameron, Thomas  
Chatfield, Charles B.  
Clark, Earl  
Warner Rains Cleveland  
Clingman, J. Stuart  
Colleen, Mrs. Robert  
Colleen, Robert

Frank Davidhazy  
Deryke, Donald  
DiFiglia, Joseph (Mr & Mrs)  
Dryden, E.E

Eddy, George  
Carl H. Eggebrecht  
84-2-22  
William H. Eggebrecht

Ford, Mrs.  
Paul T. Frankl  
Fry, Frank  
Fry, Frank (Mr & Mrs)

**List of Grand Rapids Furniture Designers**  
In Process

Goebel, Jack  
Graham, Charles  
Green, Stanley  
Taylor Green

Hall, Harvey  
Hall, Leon  
Handley, Tom  
Hawk, Clayton  
Hill, Fredrick  
Hoffman, William  
Hohnberg, Herman  
Holt, William  
Hompe, Alexander

Jiranek, Otto  
Johnson, Phil  
Johnson, Thomas

Kendall, David W.  
Kimerly, William L  
Kirkpatrick, James Russell  
Kirkpatrick, Marie  
Kirkpatrick, Mrs.  
William K. Kleaver  
Kohlstedt, Donald  
Krause, Max  
Kuppel, Fred

Latto, Donald  
LeDonne, Gerard  
Loewy, Raymond

Mailloux, Lawrence O.  
Margantin, Adrien  
William Millington  
Morgan, Guy  
Morton, John

**List of Grand Rapids Furniture Designers**

In Process

Nieuwenhuis, Mike

Orr, Edgar

Pike, George

Pischner, Barry

T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings

Ruppel, Fred

Rutili, Renzo

Sobota, Ray

Samuelson, John

Schmidt, Karl

Somes, Edgar

Stekette, Frank

Stuart, Claude

Michael E.C. Taylor

Teal, Arthur

TenHave, Herbert

Thompon, Donald

Thompon, Mrs. Donald

Tourre, Steve

Paul Tuttle

Hendrik Van Keppel

VandenBout, Adrian

Veen, James

Veen, Mrs. James Sr.

Vennell, Jesse

Warren, Henry

Westveer, Ray

Widdicombe, Harry

Widdicombe, Ralph

John B. Wisner

Witman, Charles

Witman, Charles (Mr & Mrs)