



THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI RESEARCH CENTER-KANSAS CITY

K0059

William Volker and Company Records

ca.1893-1964

14 cubic feet + oversize

The William Volker Company provided William Volker with the means to become a major philanthropist in Kansas City, Missouri. Included is limited correspondence, Company records pertaining to sales, accounts, employee policies, and photographs of employees. Also included are requests for financial assistance from the William Volker Fund.

BIOGRAPHY:

William Volker, son of Frederick and Dorthea (Busche) Volker, was born near Hanover, Germany on April 1, 1859. He immigrated with his family to Chicago, Illinois in 1871. During the next eleven years William Volker attended public school, studied accounting and bookkeeping, worked as a store clerk and became a trusted employee of a moulding and picture frame company in Chicago. When his employer died suddenly, young William Volker became an adviser to the estate of Charles Brachvogel and managed the business for the family. Volker soon decided it was time for him to begin his own business. He visited Kansas City, Missouri and saw the beginnings of a bustling city beginning to build and expand, a city without a retail moulding and custom frame store.

Volker entered into a partnership with a Mr. Hansmann and Albert Saukup, both from the Brachvogel Company. William Volker & Company opened for business in July 1882 at 6th and Delaware in Kansas City, Missouri. When production costs proved far greater than anticipated, Volker shifted the company from retail to wholesale. By 1885, when the partnership ended, the company was on a sound financial footing. In 1889 Volker instituted profit sharing, then an unheard of innovation. By 1891 the net worth of the William Volker Company was \$60,000, up from the initial total investment of \$7,000. The company continued to thrive and in 1900 Volker opened a branch office in Denver, Colorado. In 1906 two new offices were added, one in Houston and the other in San Francisco. Other branch offices followed.

Kansas City proved to be very profitable for William Volker and he, in turn, was good to the citizens of Kansas City. In 1907 Volker helped establish the Kansas City Transportation and Steamship Company and he also donated a tuberculosis pavilion for the Kansas City General Hospital. Volker was president of the first Board of Pardons and Paroles for three years using as his motto, "no job, no parole." He worked with Terry Brigham of the Helping Hand Institute to provide employment for the impoverished and was a strong supporter of the Provident Association. Volker conceived and wrote the plans for the first municipal department of public welfare which passed city council on April 4, 1910. He then served as its first president. While William Volker had been quietly and unobtrusively giving aid to the needy and footing many of the bills for the public projects he helped to institute through committee membership, he still felt he could do more. On August 29, 1917, William Volker established the William Volker Charitable Fund and served as its president to insure the proper dispersal of funds to those in need.

The William Volker Company continued to thrive and Mr. Volker remained active in the company until his retirement on January 3, 1938. At that time Harold W. Luhnnow, Volker's nephew, became company president. Luhnnow, with Volker's moral and financial support was active in breaking the hold of the Pendergast Machine on Kansas City. Mr. Volker continued to assist with business matters and used his office to administer the Volker Charitable Fund.

Mr. Volker retired from the presidency of the William Volker Charitable Fund in 1944. William Volker died on November 4, 1947. He was survived by his wife of thirty-six years, Rose Roebke Volker and many nephews and nieces.

During his lifetime, Volker had been a strong advocate of education and served on the school board. He was also one of the principal benefactors of the University of Kansas City, now the University of Missouri-Kansas City. The campus located at 51st and Rockhill Road is named the William Volker Campus in his honor.

Volker's biography *Mr. Anonymous: The Story of William Volker*, by Herbert C. Cornuelle was published in 1951.

PROVENANCE:

This gift was received from the William Volker Company through the General Library of the University of Missouri-Kansas City as accession KA0092 on June 19, 1981 and accession KA0147 on May 20, 1982. The General Library purchased accession KA0147 on February 27, 1974 with funds provided by Mr. and Mrs. John J. Ryder. As accession KA0154 on July 9, 1982 from the General Library and accession KA0227 on January 12, 1984. The General Library received accession KA0227 as a gift from Dr. Herbert W. Rumsfeld, Jr., Dr. John A. Rumsfeld, and Mrs. Dorothy R. Frye. Accession KA0401 was received on February 1, 1987 from Ray B. Luhnnow, Jr.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PAPERS:

These records contain a limited amount of correspondence of William Volker, Company records pertaining to sales, accounts, employee policies, and photographs of employees. Also included are requests for financial assistance from the William Volker Fund and notes concerning the applicants made by Mr. Volker during the years 1938-1947. Cancelled checks issued on the Volker Fund for February and March 1937 are also included. The records further contain information on the Kansas City Blind Manufacturing Company, the William Rockhill Nelson Trust, and the dedication of the Volker Memorial in 1958. The records include 62 volumes of catalogues from the William Volker Company and the Armstrong Floor Covering Company for whom Volker Company was a Kansas City distributor. These volumes cover the years 1894-1957, for the Volker Company, and 1916-1964 for the Armstrong Company.

INVENTORY:**BOX 001**

- Folder 1. William Volker In-coming Correspondence, 1909-1938
- Folder 2. Cancelled check to "Collector U.S. Internal Revenue" for September 13, 1937, amount: \$46,088.05
- Folder 3. Employee Records: Sales and mileage of salesmen, car information and pictures
- Folder 4. Credit and Collection Training Program, May 1, 1953, pages 1-59

- Folder 5. Credit and Collection Training Program, May 1, 1953, pages 60-127
- Folder 6. Sales Training, Individual Evaluations of the Training Program, 1960
- Folder 7. Employee Minimum Wage Notices, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1968, 1974
- Folder 8. Sales receipt, July 25, 1899
x1: William Volker and Company Accounts: Credit Dept.
- Folder 9. Gross sales records, 1887, 1890, 1892, 1893,
x1: Gross Sales Records, 1901-1908
- Folder 10. Sales records for Kansas City and branches, 1906-1909 with comparisons by months
Note: Removed from leather bound ledger. Book retained for display
- Folder 11. Sales record, 1911-1914, Ledger Book, Recorded by Department, Salesman, Office.
Note: Removed from box due to size and weight. Relocated with the Volker Company Catalogues before volume 1
- Folder 12. Sales receipts and shipping lists for 1947-1948 and Bookkeeper's copy for February 1952
- Folder 13. Sales Figures 1928-1930
- Folder 14. Sales Figures 1931
- Folder 15. Sales Figures 1931-1932
- Folder 16. Sales Figures 1933
- Folder 17. Sales Figures 1934-1935
- Folder 18. Sales Figures 1936-1937
- Folder 19. Sales Figures 1938-1939
- Folder 20. Specifications for Volker Building by architects Shepard, Farrarm and Wiser
- Folder 21. Insurance papers on rental property
- Folder 22. Photographs
1) William Volker ca. 1906
2) William Volker no date
3) Harold W. Luhnnow no date
- Folder 23. Photographs: William Volker and Company Employees total of 15
- Folder 24. Photographs: Volker Company Social Functions total of 5; x3 Photographs, total of 9

- Folder 25. Photographs: Retirement party of Charles Epps, 1963
total of 12
- Folder 26. Kansas City Blinds Manufacturing Company subscription
agreement, Articles of Association, Certificate of Incorporation,
Minutes of August 12, 1935 – December 14, 1942
- Folder 27. Kansas City Blinds Manufacturing Company Affidavit of
Dissolution, December 14, 1942
- Folder 28. Correspondence of Harold W. Luhnnow, 1929-1944
Includes a biographical sketch
- Folder 29. Articles of Agreement for the William Volker and Company Trust
Estate, August 29, 1917

*Folder 30-48 Applications for financial assistance from the Volker Fund
(by year of first visit)*

- Folder 30. 1930: 1 item; 1938
- Folder 31. 1939
- Folder 32. 1940
- Folder 33. 1941
- Folder 34. 1942
- Folder 35. 1943
- Folder 36. 1943
- Folder 37. 1943
- Folder 38. 1944
- Folder 39. 1944
- Folder 40. 1944

BOX 002

- Folder 41. 1945
- Folder 42. 1945
- Folder 43. 1945
- Folder 44. 1946
- Folder 45. 1946
- Folder 46. 1946
- Folder 47. 1946
- Folder 48. 1947
- Folder 49. William Volker Fund, Incorporated Cancelled Checks for February
and March 1937

- Folder 50. William Volker Fund, Incorporated Cancelled Checks for March 1937
- Folder 51. William Volker Tribute by Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce of Kansas City, November 10, 1947
- Folder 52. Dedication of the William Volker Memorial Fountain, September 21, 1958
- Folder 53. Dedication Ceremony: "Misc. Bulletin #1619" October 1, 1958, William Volker Company
- Folder 54. Dedication Ceremony: Internal Volker Company Correspondence
- Folder 55. Dedication Ceremony: Photographs, total of 5
- Folder 56. Dedication Ceremony: Photographs, total of 8
- Folder 57. William Rockhill Nelson Trust Minutes of March 3, 1926 – August 16, 1926 (Note: First pages missing)
- Folder 58. William Rockhill Nelson Trust Minutes of August 19, 1926 – May 23, 1927
- Folder 59. Book: Walton, Fredrick. The Infancy and Development of Linoleum Floorcloth, ca. 1925
- Folder 60. Report on The Window Shade Industry by R.O. Eastman, Inc.
- Folder 61. William Volker and Company Catalogue: Fall 1897
- Folder 62. William Volker and Company Catalogue: 1894
- Folder 63. William Volker and Company Catalogue: 1895
- Folder 64. William Volker and Company Catalogue: 1896
- Folder 65. William Volker and Company Catalogue: Spring 1896
- Folder 66. William Volker and Company Catalogue: Spring 1900
- Folder 67. "Mr. Anonymous," Luhnnow Typescript
- Folder 68. "Mr. Anonymous" Publisher's notes, list and description of photographs
- Folder 69. Photographs: Parents of William Volker
- Folder 70. Photographs: William Volker (item removed x4)
- Folder 71. Photographs: Mrs. William Volker (Rose Roebke)
- Folder 72. Photographs: Roselawn, Home of William Volker
- Folder 73. Clipping: Kansas City _____, November 6, 1947, Thursday. "His Life His Memorial"
- Folder 74. Photographs: William Volker & Company Building
- Folder 75. William Volker & Company Catalogue Pages

- Folder 76. Photographs: German Hospital (Became Research Hospital)
- Folder 77. Photographs: Helping Hand Institute
- Folder 78. Photographs: Early Kansas City (item removed x5: Old City Hall; item removed x6: 9th & Main Junction; item removed x7: Old Post Office.) This folder contains photocopies. Photographs are located with the WHMC-KC Photo collection
- Folder 79. Genealogical and biographical information on Volker and his family
- Folder 80. Marriage announcement for William Volker and Rose Roebke, September 6, 1911
- Folder 81. William Volker Charities Fund
Trustee Meeting, October 25, 1952
- Folder 82. Correspondence concerning Banquet
September 24, 1982
- Folder 83. Speeches presented at Banquet
September 28, 1982
- Folder 84. Program: the 1982 Business Leader Hall of Fame Banquet
September 28, 1982
- Folder 85. The "Pinnacle" award of the Business Leader Hall of Fame
(item removed x8)
- Folder 86. Press release concerning Hall of Fame, undated
News clips: September 26-27, 1982
- Folder 87. Photographs: Roselawn, ca. 1911

The following is a listing of the 62 volumes of catalogues published by the William Volker Company or used by this company from 1904-1964

BOX 003

- Volume 1. 1904, Owner: Albert J. Hochland
Folder with sales notes removed from Vol. 1
- Volume 2. 1904-1905, Owner: Albert J. Hochland
- Volume 3. 1905-1906, Owner: Albert J. Hochland
Folder: Loose material removed from Vol. 3
- Volume 4. 1906-1907, Owner: Albert J. Hochland
Folder: Loose material removed from Vol. 4
- Volume 5. Attachment 1907-1908

BOX 004

- Volume 6. 1910, Owner Albert J. Hochland

- Volume 7. 1912-1913
Folder: Loose material removed from Vol. 7
- Volume 8. 1913-1914, Owner: Joe Masur
Folder: Loose material removed from Vol. 8
- Volume 9. 1914-1915
- Volume 10. Loose pages from 1916-1914, in folder

BOX 005

- Volume 11. 1918, Owner: Joe Masur
- Volume 12. "May 1, 1920 Price List to Fall 1918 Catalogue"
Owner: Joe Masur
- Volume 13. 1921, Owner: J.P. Masur
- Volume 14. 1921 Fall Illustrated Catalogue
- Volume 15. 1923-1924, Owner: George W. Epp
Folder: Loose materials removed from Vol. 15
- Volume 16. 1927, Lighting Fixtures
- Volume 17. 1928, Owner: William Volker. No marks or papers
- Volume 18. 1929

BOX 006

- Volume 19. 1930
- Volume 20. 1930-1931
- Volume 21. Spring 1931 Floor Covering Catalog, Owner: J.D. Alexander
Folder: Floor Covering Price List
- Volume 22. 1931, pages 329-374 are missing
- Volume 23. 1932, Illustrated Art Catalog
- Volume 24. 1932
Folder: Loose material removed from Vol. 24
- Volume 25. 1933-1934, Owner: William Luhnnow
- Volume 26. 1937-1938
- Volume 27. 1938-1939, Draperies

BOX 007

- Volume 28. 1938-1939, Owner: Joe Masur
Folder: Loose material removed from Vol. 28
- Volume 29. 1939-1940, Denver, Colorado
- Volume 30. 1939-1940, Salt Lake City, Utah
- Volume 31. 1941-1942, Salt Lake City, Utah

- Volume 32. 1941-1942
- Volume 33. 1942 Fall Supplement
- Volume 34. 1951, Owner: John Chough
- Volume 35. 1951-1952
- Volume 36. 1952, Owner: Norma Borgman

BOX 008

- Volume 37. 1953-1954, Home Furnishings Catalog
- Volume 38. 1956, Home Furnishings Catalog
- Volume 39. 1957, Home Furnishings Catalog
- Volume 40. "The Volker Color Book A Catalog of Beautiful Window Shades"
- Volume 41. "Volker Window Shades" (yellow binding)
- Volume 42. "Volker Window Shades" (green binding)
- Volume 43. The Nairn Linoleum Company of Newark, N.J., 1923 Catalogue
- Volume 44. 1929, W. & J. Sloane Linoleum and Felt Base
- Volume 45. 1916, Armstrong's Linoleum Pattern Book Season 1916
- Volume 46. 1918, Armstrong's Linoleum Pattern Book
- Volume 47. 1924, Armstrong's Linoleum Pattern Book
- Volume 48. 1928, Armstrong's Linoleum Pattern Book A
- Volume 49. 1930, Armstrong's Pattern Book 1
- Volume 50. 1933-1934, Armstrong's Quaker Rugs, Floor Coverings
- Volume 51. 1936, Armstrong's Linoleum, Quaker Rugs, Floor Covering with Supplement

BOX 009

- Volume 52. 1938, Armstrong Pattern Book with price list
- Volume 53. 1942, Armstrong Pattern Book
- Volume 54. 1948, Armstrong Pattern Book
- Volume 55. 1950, Armstrong Pattern Book
- Volume 56. 1952, Armstrong Pattern Book with supplement
- Volume 57. 1954, Armstrong Pattern Book with June supplement
- Volume 58. 1956, Armstrong Pattern Book
- Volume 59. 1958, Armstrong Pattern Book with Fall Style Additions
- Volume 60. 1960, Armstrong Pattern Book
- Volume 61. 1962, Armstrong Pattern Book

Volume 62. 1964, Armstrong Pattern Book

BOX 010 (display and exhibit items)

Folder 1. (2) 8x10" black and white portrait photographs of William Volker

Folder 2. Print type – signatures

Folder 3. Engraving type – letterhead

Folder 4. Engraving plate – portrait of Volker

Folder 5. Engraving plate – Volker logo

Folder 6. Embosser samples

Folder 7. Leather document wallet

(1) Conductor's Cap

(1) Trophy cup for Wm. Volker Bowling League 10"x5", 1924-1925

(1) Trophy cup with black wood base: 10 3/4" x 6" wide. "Champions/Wm. Volker and Company/Bowling League/Winners Luxor 1923-1924

(1) Hand tool: Flat wood plane 5" h x 9 3/4" l

(1) Embosser "The Great Western Portland Cement Company" Corporate Seal 10 1/2" h x 6 1/2" w

(1) Embosser "Bellevue Investment Company" Missouri/Seal 10 1/2" h x 6 1/2" w

BOX 011 (display and exhibit items)

(1) Trophy, Shipping Department, 1924

(1) Measurement Device for Rolled linoleum and carpet

(1) Base Ball

Text of exhibit

Photo – William Volker Fountain

Pictures – William Volker and Co. building; "Use of Mirror in Teaching Speech to Deaf Pupils"; Front of a William Volker & Co. catalog; Examples of designs on oil cloth and linoleum

Catalogue William Volker & Co. 1906-1907

BOX 012

Paperback copies of "Mr. Anonymous"

BOX 013

Paperback copies of "Mr. Anonymous"

BOX 014

Paperback, multiple hardback copies of "Mr. Anonymous"

OVERSIZE PANORAMIC PHOTOGRAPHS (in office)

- Item 1. Department Heads & Salesmen, Wm Volker & Co., Kansas City, Aug. 2, 1929.
- Item 2. Employees Annual Picnic, Wm. Volker and Col, Wm. Volker Farm, Sept. 14, 1940.
- Item 3. Banquet, Wm. Volker & Co. Sales and Office Force of Kansas City-Houston-Dallas offices, Kansas City Club, Dec. 29, 1922.
- Item 4. Annual Picnic, Wm. Volker Company, Crystal Springs, Aug. 20, 1938.
- Item 5. Sales Meeting, William Volker and Company, Palmer House, Chicago, June 21-22-23, 1951.