



Howard F. Baer Papers (S0038)

Collection Number: S0038

Collection Title: Howard F. Baer Papers

Dates: 1960-1998

Creator: Baer, Howard F., 1902-1998

Abstract: The Howard F. Baer Papers contain correspondence, photographs, memos, and press releases documenting Baer's activities as a civic leader in St. Louis, Missouri, including his time as a member of the St. Louis Zoological Commission and as a Trustee of the Missouri Botanical Garden.

Collection Size: 5 cubic feet
(127 folders, 140 photographs)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at stlouis@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Howard F. Baer Papers* (S0038); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-St. Louis].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the Western Historical Manuscript Collection by Howard F. Baer on May 31, 1979 (Accession No. SA2176). Additions to the records were made on April 29, 1987 by Howard F. Baer (Accession No. SA2783); May 22, 1987 by Howard F. Baer (Accession No. SA2787); and on January 29, 1999 by an anonymous donor (Accession No. SA3325).

Alternate Forms Available: Some of the photographs have been digitized and are available online at: <https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/search/searchterm/S0038>.

Related Materials: Additional materials related to the Howard F. Baer Papers can be found in the following collections:

[*Marlin Perkins Papers*](#) (S0516)

[*St. Louis Zoo Records*](#) (S0194)

[*Health And Welfare Council of Metropolitan St. Louis Records*](#) (S0434)

Processed by: Processed by Rachael Heriford, September 2023

Biographical Note:

Howard Fiest Baer was born on June 10, 1902, in Charleston, West Virginia, to parents David and Mayme Baer. From 1916 to 1920, Baer attended the private boarding school Choate Rosemary Hall in Wallingford, Connecticut. After his graduation, Baer subsequently attended Princeton University from 1920 to 1924. In 1926, Baer married Isabel Aloe, the daughter of Louis Aloe, the president of St. Louis-based surgical, photography, and surveying equipment manufacturer and distributor, A.S. Aloe. The couple subsequently moved to Baer's hometown in Charleston, West Virginia.

By 1927, the couple had moved to St. Louis so Howard could work at A.S. Aloe. The couple had two children, Barbara (1932-1997) and Alan (1936-1979). After the death of Louis Aloe in 1929, Howard was named president of A.S. Aloe. Howard successfully led the company throughout the Great Depression and helped turn the company into a thriving enterprise that eventually merged with Brunswick Corporation in 1959. In 1961, Howard retired as president of the newly merged company and turned more to civic work. Baer belonged to over fifty civic organizations, including Forest Park Forever, Arts and Education of Greater St. Louis, and the Board of Trustees of the St. Louis Art Museum. However, his most notable civic improvement roles were on the Missouri Botanical Garden Board of Trustees and the St. Louis Zoological Commission.

From the 1960s to the 1990s, Baer contributed to various construction and renovation projects at the St. Louis Zoo, including the Children's Zoo, Big Cat Country, and the Phil the Gorilla statue. From June to December 1972, Baer spearheaded the successful campaign to broaden the base of tax support for the St. Louis Zoo and Art Museum to include St. Louis County. This culminated in the creation of the Metropolitan Zoological Park and Museum District. In addition to Baer's work at the St. Louis Zoo, Baer sponsored several sculpture shows and the development of the Schoenberg Fountain at the Missouri Botanical Garden.

For his effort in civic improvement in St. Louis, Baer received several awards including, the St. Louis Award in 1969 and the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* Man-of-the-Year Award in 1971. Baer also broke several social barriers in St. Louis with him being the first Jewish member of the Board of Directors of the St. Louis Union Trust and First National, and one of the first Jewish members to join the St. Louis Club. In addition to contributing to dozens of civic projects, Baer chronicled his life in two memoirs *St. Louis to Me: Footnotes on 50 Years* and *An Ordinary Man* in 1976 and 1985, respectively. Howard F. Baer died on December 30th, 1998, in St. Louis, Missouri.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following six series with four subseries:

St. Louis Zoo

- Chronological Files

- Correspondence

- Metropolitan Zoological Park and Museum District

Missouri Botanical Garden

- Chronological Files

Civic Projects**Personal Correspondence****Awards****Books and Photographs****Scope and Content Note:****St. Louis Zoo**

The St. Louis Zoo series contains reports, memos, correspondence, and meeting minutes documenting Howard Baer's experience on the St. Louis Zoological Park Commission from 1965 to 1990. This series primarily chronicles the opening and financing of several exhibits during Baer's time on the St. Louis Zoological Park Commission and includes materials such as memos announcing the creation of the elephant pool, press releases announcing a new south entrance of the St. Louis Zoo under the name of the Howard F. Baer Plaza, and correspondence with Marlin Perkins regarding the creation of a children's zoo. Other materials of interest include a white paper written by Baer detailing the dire financial situation of the St. Louis Zoo in 1980, meeting minutes from a meeting of the St. Louis Zoo, architects, and the National Zoo regarding the creation of an education and visitors center at the St. Louis Zoo, and the 1985 master plan of the St. Louis Zoo which detailed initiatives to create a new great ape exhibit, implementation of new signage and directional information. The materials have been arranged alphabetically by subject.

The Chronological Files subseries contains memos, meeting minutes, lists, and correspondence primarily documenting Baer's involvement with the financial and long-term operations of the St. Louis Zoo. Materials of interest include meeting minutes of the St. Louis Zoological Commission discussing appointments of new members and construction of new exhibits at the zoo, financial reports detailing the yearly fiscal operations of the St. Louis Zoo, and correspondence to St. Louis mayor, James Conway, regarding the St. Louis Zoo seeking funds from the Missouri General Assembly in the form of a general obligation bond. The materials have been arranged chronologically from 1963 and 1971 to 1983.

The Correspondence subseries contains Baer's correspondence with St. Louis Zoo directors and the St. Louis Zoological Commission. Topics of interest include correspondence with Charles Hossle, director of the St. Louis Zoo from 1982 to 2002, regarding the creation of the Marlin Perkins Society, and a lawsuit of the St. Louis Zoo regarding disability access to the railroad at the St. Louis Zoo, and correspondence with presidents of the St. Louis Zoological Commission

including John D. McGwire, and Robert F. Hyland Jr. regarding meetings of the St. Louis Zoological Commission and the financial stability of the St. Louis Zoo. The materials have been arranged chronologically and contain materials from 1983 and 1985 to 1996.

The Metropolitan Zoological Park and Museum District subseries contains a diary, court briefs, correspondence, and memos detailing Baer's successful effort to create the Metropolitan Zoological and Museum District, which provides funding through St. Louis City-County property taxes to the St. Louis Art Museum, Zoo, Science Center, Missouri History Museum, and Missouri Botanical Garden. Materials of interest include a diary created by Baer documenting the origins and progress of the Metropolitan Zoological Park and Museum District, court briefs from a lawsuit between the Metropolitan Zoological Park and Museum District and board of directors of the St. Louis Zoo and Art Museum regarding who has the authority to adjust tax rates, and correspondence from St. Louis mayor, Alfonso J. Cervantes, regarding his disapproval for the creation of the Metropolitan Zoological Park and Museum District. The materials have been arranged alphabetically by subject and contain materials from 1962 to 1976.

Missouri Botanical Garden

The Missouri Botanical Garden series contains correspondence, meeting minutes, memos, and reports documenting Baer's involvement with the Missouri Botanical Garden from 1965 to 1996. Much of the correspondence included in this series is between Baer and the director of the Missouri Botanical Garden, Dr. Peter Raven. Topics of interest include Baer's monetary contribution to the Botanical Garden, the Isabel Baer Memorial Garden, and the acquisition of new sculptures. Other materials of interest include the Board of Trustees meeting minutes detailing the long-term operations of the Botanical Garden, memos from Dr. Raven regarding new exhibits, and financial reports produced by the Board of Trustees Business Committee. The materials have been arranged alphabetically by subject.

The Chronological Files subseries contains memos, correspondence, and pamphlets regarding Baer's experience on the Missouri Botanical Garden's Board of Trustees. Materials of interest include memos from Dr. Raven regarding the implementation of the 1973 Master Plan, which saw the construction of a maintenance and education building, the revised bylaws of the Board of Trustees that expanded the number of trustees, and correspondence from Clarence C. Barksdale, chairman of the nominating committee, regarding nominations of the newly increased membership size of the Board of Trustees. The materials have been arranged alphabetically by subject and contain materials from 1976 to 1985.

Civic Projects

The Civic Project series contains correspondence, memos, newspaper clippings, and press releases detailing Baer's involvement with other civic projects across St. Louis. Materials of interest include correspondence from the St. Louis Beautification Commission regarding preliminary redevelopment plans of Aloe Plaza, a brochure detailing the history of the Jewish Tercentenary Monument, and a report regarding proposed tourism signage in St. Louis City. The materials have been arranged alphabetically by subject and contain materials from 1960 to 1998.

Personal Correspondence

The Personal Correspondence series contains letters from Baer's alma mater, universities across St. Louis County, and Missouri political leaders from 1969 to 1998. Most of the correspondence

in this series pertains to Princeton University and contains topics such as class reunions, the adoption of the class of 1924 bylaws, and a dinner honoring Baer. Other topics of interest include correspondence to Saint Louis University regarding the Baer family scholarship, Baer's contribution to the political campaigns of Kit Bond, Vincent Schoemehl, and John Danforth, and letters from the Jewish Federation of St. Louis regarding banquet dinners. The materials have been arranged alphabetically by subject.

Awards

The Awards series contains pamphlets, flyers, correspondence, and newspaper clippings documenting awards and honorary degrees such as the Mayor's Award for the Arts, Civic Cooperation Award, and *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* Man-of-the-Year Award awarded to Baer for his contribution to civic projects across St. Louis. Materials of interest include Baer's acceptance speech for the Council Spirit of Cooperation award, congratulatory letters regarding the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* Man-of-the-Year Award, and newspaper clippings from the *St. Louis Business Journal* highlighting Baer's lifetime accomplishments. The materials have been arranged alphabetically by subject and contain materials from 1969 to 1995.

Books and Photographs

The Photographs and Books series contains images of civic projects in St. Louis and copies of Baer's two memories: *St. Louis to Me: Footnotes on 50 Years* and *An Ordinary Man*. Photos of interest include the Jewish Tercentenary Monument in St. Louis, the Howard F. Baer Plaza at the St. Louis Zoo, and images of the newly constructed Isabel Baer Memorial Garden at the Missouri Botanical Garden. The books have been arranged alphabetically by subject and the photographs have been arranged numerically by their labeling number. The series contains materials from 1965 to 1988.

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