



Whitaker Family Collection (SP0076)

Collection Number: SP0076

Collection Title: Whitaker Family Collection

Dates: 1902-1972

Creator: Whitaker Family

Abstract: The Whitaker Family Collection contains materials related to Whitaker Printing and Manufacturing Company, a family-owned business that was located in Joplin, Missouri. The collection consists of correspondence, financial records, photographs, publications, and records pertaining to Sar-Tol pharmaceutical products. The collection also contains artwork by Joplin artist Robert Higgs.

Collection Size: 2 cubic feet
(22 folders, 116 photographs, 2 oversize boxes)

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-Springfield](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at springfield@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

Restrictions on Use: The Donor has given, assigned, and transferred to the Society all copyrights, and associated rights the Donor may possess in the materials.

Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Whitaker Family Collection* (SP0076); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Springfield [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Springfield].

Donor Information: The records were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Joy Whitaker Barnett on March 29, 2022 (Accession No. SPA0102).

Related Materials: Additional materials related to the Whitaker Family Collection can be found in the following collections:

[*Ozark Artists' Guild Papers, 1952-1962*](#) (R0862)

Processed by: Processed by Haley Frizzle-Green, June 10, 2022

Historical Note:

Whitaker Printing and Manufacturing Company

Oliver Benton Whitaker was born on June 12, 1889, in Diamond, Missouri, to James H. Whitaker and Sarah *Warden* Whitaker. He moved to Joplin, Missouri, in 1906 and married Eunice *Fisher* on March 29, 1916. The couple had one son, Benton F. Whitaker.

Oliver Whitaker was a Joplin businessman, civic leader, and inventor. In 1922, he established the O. B. Whitaker Printing and Rubber Stamp Company, located at 529 Joplin Street. Whitaker was known throughout the United States as the inventor of the Automatic Ad-Stamper, which was sold throughout the U.S. and Europe. In 1932, he invented a patent medicine known as Sar-Tol and established the Sar-Tol Company in Joplin. Sar-Tol products included cough and flu medication, athlete's foot, and laxatives. The company also produced hair and skin products, as well as oral care.

Oliver Whitaker died on June 1, 1957, in Joplin, Missouri. He is buried at Mount Hope Cemetery in Webb City, Missouri. Whitaker Printing and Manufacturing Company continued operating under the ownership of Benton Whitaker.

Benton F. Whitaker was born on October 9, 1919, in Joplin, Missouri, to Oliver B. Whitaker and Eunice *Fisher* Whitaker. He graduated from Joplin High School in 1936 and attended Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. Whitaker graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a bachelor's degree in accounting. After graduating, he was auditor of the western region of Trans World Airlines at Kansas City, Missouri. He married Ruth *Spratt* on November 21, 1943. The couple had two children including a son, Kim, and a daughter, Joy. After his father's death, Benton Whitaker became president of Whitaker Printing and Manufacturing Company in 1957.

In 1976, Benton Whitaker, with his son Kim and son-in-law Stephen Barnett, purchased Joplin Printing Company. Joplin Printing Company was established in 1900 by Bert Manning and became one of the largest printing companies in the area. After the death of Bert in 1932, Manning's son, Gerry, became the company's president. In 1946, Jack Manning succeeded his father Gerry as president and manager of Joplin Printing Company. After the purchase, Whitaker dissolved the Whitaker Printing and Manufacturing Company into the Joplin Printing Company in 1977 and moved the business to 220 West 2nd Street.

Benton Whitaker died on May 24, 1997, in Joplin, Missouri. He is buried alongside his wife Ruth at Mount Hope Cemetery in Webb City, Missouri. In 1997, Stephen and Joy Barnett purchased Joplin Printing Company and Stephen was president of the corporation until his death in 2020. Joplin Printing Company was sold in 2021 by Joy Barnett. The company continues to operate today at 220 West 2nd Street.

Robert Higgs

Robert Higgs was born on August 14, 1916, to Ollie Higgs and Della *Chapman* Higgs in Anderson, Missouri. He studied art in Kansas City, Missouri, and the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts. During World War II, Higgs served with the U.S. Army and was stationed in the

Philippines and Japan. After returning to the United States, he moved to Joplin, Missouri. In 1953, Higgs married Margaret Jane *Buster*. The couple had two daughters.

Higgs was one of the founding members of the Ozark Artists' Guild, located in Joplin, Missouri, and known today as the Spiva Art Center, where he provided painting classes. He also worked for the Joplin Printing Company for 17 years as the company's commercial artist. Higgs died on February 5, 1967, in Joplin and is buried at Ozark Memorial Park Cemetery.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following six series:

Whitaker Printing and Manufacturing Company

Photographs

Publications

Robert Higgs

Miscellaneous

Oversize

Scope and Content Note:

Whitaker Printing and Manufacturing Company

This series contains materials related to Whitaker Printing and Manufacturing Company. The records include advertisements, correspondence, invoices, patent and trademark records, and documents related to the Sar-Tol Company. Most of the correspondence discusses Sar-Tol products and formulas. This series is arranged by subject and then chronologically.

Photographs

This series consists of photographs taken of the Joplin, Missouri, area. Many of the photographs were printed by the Joplin Printing Company. The photographs include local businesses, buildings, people, and outdoor scenes. Of particular note are images of Joplin's Main Street during the early 1900s. This series is arranged by subject and then chronologically.

Publications

This series contains published materials such as catalogs, user manuals, booklets, and newspaper articles. The catalogs contain rubber stamp products from Whitaker Printing and Manufacturing Company, as well as office supplies from Joplin Printing Company. There are two booklets related to Rotary Clubs, including the Joplin Rotary Club and a booklet dedicated to the Rotary Club of Tacoma, Washington, titled, *That Something*, by W. W. Woodbridge. This series also includes a Joplin High School Yearbook from 1914. This series is arranged chronologically.

Robert Higgs

This series consists of artwork created by Joplin, Missouri, artist Robert Higgs, in addition to photographs of Higgs. This series is arranged chronologically.

Miscellaneous

This series contains miscellaneous materials such as business cards, personal records related to Benton F. Whitaker, and distillery labels from Joplin-area distilleries. This series is arranged chronologically.

Oversize

This series includes oversize photographs of Joplin, Missouri, as well as artwork by Robert Higgs. This series also includes artifacts such as the original Automatic Ad-Stamping used at Whitaker Printing and Manufacturing Company and empty Sar-Tol pharmaceutical bottles. This series is arranged by subject and then chronologically.

Container List:

f. 1-6		Whitaker Manufacturing Company
Box 001	f. 1	Advertisements, 1933-1938
	f. 2-3	Correspondence, 1929-1945
	f. 4	Invoices, 1930-1946
	f. 5	Patents and trademarks, 1934-1938
	f. 6	Sar-Tol Products, 1933-1945
f. 7-12		Photographs
	f. 7	Buildings, circa 1950s
	f. 8	Businesses, circa 1920s-1950s
	f. 9	Houses, no date
	f. 10	Main Street, 1902- circa 1970s
	f. 11	Outdoor Scenes, no date
	f. 12	People, circa 1900s-1960s
f. 13-17		Publications
	f. 13	Joplin High School Yearbook, 1914
	f. 14	Rotary Club Booklets, 1916, 1966
	f. 15	Catalogs, 1942, no date
	f. 16	Manuals, no date
	f. 17	Newspaper Articles, 1968-1972
f. 18		Robert Higgs, 1956-1958, no date
f. 19		Miscellaneous, 1945-1967, no date
f. 20-22		Oversize
Box 002	f. 20	Photographs, 1909-1930, no date
	f. 21	Artwork, no date
Box 003	f. 22	Artifacts, no date

Index:

Index Term	Folder	Image
African American women--Societies and clubs	12	Yes
Airports--Missouri	8	Yes
Artists--20th century	18, 21	Yes
Association for the Blind (Joplin, Mo.)	12	Yes
Cummings, Robert, 1910-1990	12	Yes

Index Term	Folder	Image
Davison Chemical Company (Joplin, Mo.)	8	Yes
Empire District Electric Company (Joplin, Mo.)	8	Yes
First Presbyterian Church (Joplin, Mo.)	7	Yes
Frank Sievers Undertaking Company (Joplin, Mo.)	8	Yes
Franklin Technical School (Joplin, Mo.)	8	Yes
Freeman Hospital (Joplin, Mo.)	12	Yes
George Washington Carver National Monument (Mo.)	9	Yes
Grand Falls (Joplin, Mo.)	11	Yes
Grand Lake (Okla.)	11	Yes
Higgs, Robert, 1916-1967	18, 21	Yes
Inventors & inventions	1-6, 15, 22	Yes
Jasper County (Mo.)	1-22	Yes
Joplin High School (Mo.)	13	Yes
Joplin Printing Company (Joplin, Mo.)	7-12, 15, 17, 19, 20	Yes
Junge Baking Company (Joplin, Mo.)	8	Yes
Keystone Hotel (Joplin, Mo.)	8	Yes
Keystone Laundry & Dry Cleaners, Inc. (Joplin, Mo.)	8	Yes
Main Street (Joplin, Mo.)	10	Yes
Meramec Caverns (Mo.)	11	Yes
Missouri Farmers Association	8	Yes
Newton County (Mo.)	9, 11	Yes
Old Rock Distilling Company (Joplin, Mo.)	19	
Ozark Mountain Distilling Company (Joplin, Mo.)	19	
R & S Chevrolet (Joplin, Mo.)	8	Yes
Redings Mill (Mo.)	11	Yes
Rotary Club (Joplin, Mo.)	14	
Rotary Club (Tacoma, Wash.)	14	
Salvation Army--Buildings	7	Yes
Sar-Tol Pharmaceuticals	5-6, 22	Yes
Schools--Missouri	12	Yes
Scottish Rite (Masonic order)--Buildings	7	Yes
Twin Oaks Court (Joplin, Mo.)	8	Yes
Whitaker Manufacturing Company (Joplin, Mo.)	1-6, 15-18, 19, 22	Yes
Whitaker, Benton F., 1919-1997	17, 19	Yes
Whitaker, Oliver Benton, 1889-1957	1-6, 17, 19, 22	Yes
Young Men's Christian Association (Joplin, Mo.)	7	Yes
Young Women's Christian Association (Joplin, Mo.)	12	Yes