

McLean County Museum of History

Blotters Collection

Processed by
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Collection Information

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 Box
COLLECTION DATES:	1933 to 1948
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives
NOTES:	2020.0015 Past Perfect #

Brief History

Before the age of the ballpoint pen, Americans wrote with fountain pens dipped in ink. In the first half of the 20th century, clerks and others using fountain pen faced the problem of ink smearing. Consequently, offices and homes needed a way to keep freshly written words from smearing. Thus the ink blotter.

Ink blotters were small cards of soft, absorbent paper. They were universally common in every home and office in America. Once a way to adhere printable paper to blotting paper was patented in 1885, publishers rushed to create desktop advertisements for everything from cough drops to colleges. Usually made of a soft absorbent paper and formed into a card, ink blotters were used to dry up excess ink.

Ink blotters were a very popular form of advertising that were often given away by fountain pen manufacturers, banks, merchants and especially insurance companies. Blotters became by far the most widely used advertising novelty of the early 1900s, as common as business cards are today.

With the invention of the ballpoint pen in the 1950s, fountain pens became uncommon, and ink blotters disappeared from most office desks. Some vintage blotters, made in the 1930s and 1940s, are very highly prized and sought after collectibles.

Scope

This collection is mostly composed of advertising blotters from local businesses and is organized by category of business. The last folder contains correspondence from 1933 between the Bienemann Brothers company and manufacturers of blotting paper. The correspondence contains several lists of firms where such paper can be acquired. In 1924, Bienemann Brothers purchased the coal business and office formerly conducted by the firm of Smith and Peters at 1107 W. Washington Street, opposite the then C. & A. depot. It closed in 1956.

Box and Folder Inventory

Folder 1: Retail Business

1. Bostonians, McLean-Moore Shoe Co.
2. August 1934, Believe it or Not, Clay Dooley.
3. March 1935, Believe it or Not, Clay Dooley.
4. July 1935, Believe it or Not, Clay Dooley.
5. September 1935, Believe it or Not, Clay Dooley.
6. October 1935, Believe it or Not, Clay Dooley.
7. November 1935, Believe it or Not, Clay Dooley.
8. January 1936, Believe it or Not, Clay Dooley.
9. March 1936, Believe it or Not, Clay Dooley.
10. May 1936, Believe it or Not, Clay Dooley.
11. June 1936, Believe it or Not, Clay Dooley.
12. The New Green Goblin sweet shop.

13. Normal Cleaners.
14. Colfax Dry Goods Store, Goodrich Light Rubbers
15. W.B. Read & Co, Scotch Cellophane Tape

Folder 2: Wholesale Business

1. McKnight & McKnight.
2. Lang-Fuller Printing Company.

Folder 3: Insurance

1. Dudley C. Johnson
2. Hardware Mutuals, Harold R. Bruce
3. Law Union & Rock Insurance Company, Harold Raymond (3)
4. Law Union & Rock Insurance Co., Ltd., F.C. Wollrab (3)
5. Harold D. Walters Agency, automobile insurance.
6. The Normal Insurance & Real Estate Agency, R.R. Armstrong, L. T. Wade Ins.
7. Millard A. Lloyd, The Union Central Life Insurance Co., Cincinnati (baseball theme and calendar, July 1946)
8. The Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company featuring Illinois Wesleyan University Football Schedule. 1948.
9. The Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company featuring Illinois Wesleyan University Football Schedule.
10. Kazar & Freese, Inc. Auto-Owners Insurance
11. The Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co., Roe Walker, District Agent, August 1941.

Folder 4: Contractors

1. Bash Coal & Roofing Co.
2. Bob Moore, painter and paper hanger
3. J. V. Flavin Coal Co.
4. Higgins-Jung-Kleinau Company.

Folder 5: Miscellaneous

1. "Co-op Parties," subscribe today.
2. Peer Loan Co. Inc.
3. Illini Theatre, "Blossom Time," 1934 British musical drama film with Richard Tauber, Jane Baxter, and Carl Edmond, Premiered in London 10 July 1934, shown in Bloomington February 15, 1937.

Folder 6: Correspondence from The Bienemann Coal Collection

1. Letter from M. L. Strutzenberg, *Postage and The Mailbag*, to Arthur Bienemann, Jul 12, 1933 regarding suppliers of promotional blotters.
2. Letter from Arthur Bienemann to Albemarle Paper Mfg. Co, Jul 14, 1933, requesting quotes for blotting papers.
3. Letter from Arthur Bienemann to Wrenn Paper Company, Jul 14, 1933, requesting quotes for blotting papers.
4. Letter from Arthur Bienemann to *Postage and The Mailbag*, Jul 14, 1933.

5. Letter from John Scott, Printed Salesmanship, to Arthur Bienemann, Jul 20, 1933.
6. Letter to Arthur Bienemann from Albemarle Paper Mfg. Co, Jul 20, 1933, giving quotes.
7. Letter to Arthur Bienemann from Wrenn Paper Company, Jul 14, 1933, giving quotes for blotting papers and sample blotter.
8. Letter from Arthur Bienemann to O.G. Williams Co., Jul 28, 1933, requesting quotes for blotting papers.
9. Letter to Arthur Bienemann from O.G. Williams Co., Aug 2, 1933, giving quotes for blotting papers.
10. Letter from Arthur Bienemann to Dwight Bros. Paper Co., Jul 28, 1933, requesting quotes for blotting papers.
11. Letter to Arthur Bienemann from Dwight Bros. Paper Co., Aug 1, 1933, replying that they do not make printed blotters.
12. Letter to Arthur Bienemann from Brown & Bigelow, Aug 7, 1933, responding on referral from Dwight Bros. with brochure and promise of visit.