

Title: Schoenleber Family Papers

Call Number: Mss-1219

Inclusive Dates: 1852 – 1986

Bulk: 1.35 cu. ft. total

Location: BV, Sh. 305 (1.3 cu. ft.)
OS LG “S” (1 item)
OS SM “S” (4items)

Historical Note: Adolph Schoenleber (16 June 1825 -1886), a journeyman cabinetmaker from Baden, Germany, arrived in Wisconsin in 1849 following the Revolution of 1848. He continued his trade as a cabinetmaker, undertaker, and furniture dealer, eventually establishing the Pioneer Furniture Company at 291 Third Street, Milwaukee. He became a naturalized citizen on March 3, 1856.

In 1850 he married Margaretha Kuhnmuensch (18 January 1826- ?), also an immigrant from Baden. They had four children: Bertha, Clara, Anna, and Otto J. Virtually no information is available about the daughters.

Otto (16 October 1858-4 February 1927) was educated at St. School, St. Gall’s School, the Deutsch-Englisch Academie, and Wulkow’s Business College of Milwaukee. He joined the family business, becoming its president upon his father’s death. He also established the Otto Desk and Furniture Company at 331 Fifth Street. On 9 May 1894 he founded the Ambrosia Chocolate Company, partially as a result of the effects of the Depression of 1893 and the trend of department stores to sell furniture on the installment plan. Its location was on the site of the Desk and Furniture Company. Ambrosia was the first commercial cocoa and chocolate factory in the Midwest. It purchased the Hooten Chocolate Company (Newark, N.J.) in 1963, and remained a family operation until 1964, when it merged with the W. R. Grace Company.

Otto was actively involved in civic affairs. He served on the school board from 1889 to 1895, the local draft board in 1917-1918, the committee that constructed and operated the Milwaukee Auditorium between 1906 and 1921, and was active in Milwaukee Homecoming of 1909 and the Solomon Juneau Centennial celebration in 1918.

He was a member of numerous social organizations, including the Milwaukee Liederkrantz, the Old Settlers Club, the City Club, the Wisconsin Club, and the Masons. A hobby was drafting poems and verses in honor of friends. He married Emma Theede (23 April 1858-1931) of Milwaukee on 12 July 1887. Emma had also attended the Deutsch-Englisch Academie. They briefly lived on Eighth Street; in 1890 the Schoenleber-Theede families built a brick double house at 264-266 Tenth Street, which they sold to the county in 1924 as part of its planned expansion of the courthouse grounds. In 1925 the family, including Emma’s sister Louise, moved to 3453 North Lake Drive.

Emma and Otto had three daughters: Marie (24 July 1890-12 July 1969), Gretchen (c. 1891-3 September 1953), and Louise (24 March 1893-1986). All three daughters were well educated. Marie graduated from the Milwaukee State Normal School in 1908, and taught at the Hopkins Street School from 1908 to 1917. Gretchen was a 1911 graduate of the University of Wisconsin, taught briefly, served as her father's assistant at Ambrosia, and became president following his death. She was the first woman to be elected a member of the New York Cocoa Exchange, and the first female owner of a seat on a national commodity exchange (1935). Louise graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1914, and was employed by the Milwaukee Public Library from 1915 through 1931.

None of the sisters married; they lived together with their aunt Louise A. Theede (1857-1941), long-term head of the dressmaking department at T. A. Chapman & Co., at the Lake Drive residence. They were active in a variety of civic activities, and often entertained at their vacation cottage, "Sandalwood," in Oostberg, Wisconsin.

To honor their parents, Marie and Louise proposed constructing a clock tower as part of the renovation of the county courthouse grounds and the creation of a civic center plaza. The site selected was close to the original family home. Their offer was proposed in 1965; after some controversy over the design, it was completed in 1969 and formally dedicated on 27 May 1970. It was demolished in 1990.

Scope and Content: The collection consists of materials created by and about various members of the Schoenleber and Theede families of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The largest group of papers relate to the construction of the Schoenleber Memorial Clock Tower, and include discussions of its design, construction records, the dedication ceremony and an accompanying brochure, and letters to Louise following its completion. Newspaper clippings and some photographs are included. Materials relating to the family and its business ventures are fragmentary, and must be used in conjunction with other published and non-published sources at, among other repositories, the Milwaukee County Historical Society, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Archives, and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Access and Use: There are no access restrictions on the materials. However, the researcher assumes full responsibility for conforming with the laws of libel, privacy, and copyright which may be involved in the use of this collection.

Administrative Note: Louise Schoenleber donated eleven groups of books, pamphlets, manuscripts, newspaper clippings, photographs, and objects to the Milwaukee County Historical Society between 1970 and 1976. Peter C. Haensel, Esq., executor of her estate, donated additional materials in 1986. This manuscript group represents a combination of portions of three accessions: 42-1970 (10 March 1970); L-60 (2 April 1974); and the Estate of Louise A. Schoenleber (1 August 1986). The collection was processed by Sally Schwartz, April 29, 2001.

Arrangement: The Manuscript Group consists of the following series:

Series 1: Adolph and Margaretha (Kuhnmuensch) Schoenleber

Dates: 1888-1970

Scope and Content: The series contains letters and papers relating to family history, including a notarized statement that Margaretha was the widow of a naturalized citizen planning to travel to Germany with daughters Anna and Clara.

Series 2: Adolph Schoenleber

Dates: 1852-1880

Scope and Content: The series consists of business records, primarily advertisements, relating to the Pioneer Furniture Company. It also contains various legal documents, including Adolph's naturalization certificate, a permit to conduct business, and the sale of the company to Otto.

Series 3: Emma (Theede) Schoenleber

Dates: 1858-1931

Scope and Contents: This series consist of school records, a confirmation certificate (in German), a few records of social activities, and a newspaper clipping of her obituary.

Series 4: Otto J. and Emma (Theede) Schoenleber

Dates: 1858-1927

Scope and Contents: The series contains correspondence, Otto and Emma's marriage certificate, and the program for their silver anniversary celebration. The bulk of this collection consists of bills, primarily 1886-1888, relating to establishing their new household.

Series 5: Otto J. Schoenleber

Dates: 1858-1927

Scope and Contents: The series contains records pertaining to Otto's education, his social, civic, and political activities, and business affairs. It includes a transcript of an interview in which he reminisces about Milwaukee, speeches, correspondence, and newspaper clippings. Some of the materials are in German.

Series 6: Marie L. Schoenleber

Dates: 1890-1910; 1942; 1969

Scope and Contents: The series consists of Marie's baptismal certificate (in German), school records (including a kindergarten needlework book), commencement programs, a newspaper clipping about her work as a civil defense warden during World War II, and an obituary notice

Series 7: Gretchen B. Schoenleber

Dates: 1897-1954

Scope and Contents: This series primarily consists of school records, newspaper clippings regarding her philanthropic activities, several obituaries, and a booklet containing the signatures of guests at Gretchens funeral. The series includes a 63-page booklet on executive leadership presented by Shusters Department Store.

Series 8: Louise A. **Schoenleber**

Dates: 1893-1986

Scope and Contents: The series includes Louise's baptismal certificate (in German) and school records, correspondence, award certificates from various civic organizations, and newspaper clippings that document her social and philanthropic activities.

Series 9: **Schoenleber Sisters**

Dates: 1907-1978

Scope and Contents: This series contains an abstract of the title to the **Schoenleber** family home, the guest book at the sisters' cottage, and letters and newspaper clippings regarding their involvement with Children's Hospital, West Division High School, and the University of Wisconsin. The sisters, especially Marie and Louise, were active community volunteers and philanthropists.

Series 10: **Ambrosia Chocolate Company**

Dates: 1899-1974

Scope and Contents: This series consists of letterhead, an anniversary booklet containing a company history, a copy of the employee newsletter, and newspaper clippings, including a German newspaper account of the company's founding. Two clippings document Maxine Plate's selection as Milwaukee's Advertising Woman of the Year (1963); she spent her entire career at Ambrosia.

Series 11: **Schoenleber Foundation**

Dates: 1965-1968

Scope and Contents: The series includes the articles of incorporation, minutes, correspondence, and records of donations. Other records of the Foundations activities are in Series 12.

Series 12: **Schoenleber Memorial Clock Tower**

Dates: 1965-1970

Scope and Contents: The series documents the construction of the clock tower. It includes design proposals, architectural plans, operation manuals for the clock and carillon, correspondence, financial records, newspaper clippings, a scrapbook, the brochure prepared for the dedication, certificates of appreciation from Milwaukee County, and photographs.

Series 13: Louise A. Theede

Dates: 1868-1878; c. 1968-1969

Scope and Contents: The early records consist of report cards from the Deutsch-Englisch Academie and penmanship exercises in English, as well as an autograph book. The later materials document an historic quilt given to Louise by seamstresses at T. C. Chapman & Co. under her supervision. Louise **Schoenleber** donated it to the Milwaukee County Historical Society.

Series 14: Clauder-Harris Materials

Dates: ?

Scope and Content: This series consists of newspaper clippings and typescripts relating to Joseph Clauder, a Milwaukee bandleader and neighbor of the **Schoenleber** family and Charles Harris, a composer who had briefly played in Clauder's orchestra.

Series 15: Miscellaneous Publications

Dates: 1859-1981

Scope and Contents: This series consists of twenty-one miscellaneous publications that were not authored by any members of the **Schoenleber** family. They range from a genealogy of the McGee family to a Milwaukee Symphony concert program to a recipe booklet.

Schoenleber Family Papers File List:	Box #	Folder #
Series 1: Adolph and Margaretha (Kuhnmuensch) Schoenleber		
Personal Papers	1	1
Series 2: Adolph Schoenleber		
Business Records, 1866-1880	1	2
Legal Documents, 1852-1872	1	3
Series 3: Emma (Theede) Schoenleber		
Personal Papers, 1858-1931	1	4

Series 4: Otto J. and Emma (Theede) Schoenleber		
Personal Papers, 1858-1927	1	5
Series 5: Otto J. Schoenleber		
Personal Papers, 1858-1927	1	6
Personal Papers, Printed Works	1	7
Personal Papers, Social Activities	1	8
Business Records, 1879-1909	1	9
Civic Activities, Draft Board, 1917-1918	1	10
Civic Activities, Education	1	11
Milwaukee Auditorium, 1906-1921	1	12
Milwaukee Homecoming (1909); Juneau Centennial (1918)	1	13
Political Involvement, 1895-1923	1	14
Series 6: Marie L. Schoenleber		
Personal Papers, 1890-1910, 1942, 1969	1	15
Series 7: Gretchen B. Schoenleber		
Personal Papers, 1897-1954	1	16
Business Records, 1943	1	17
Series 8: Louise A. Schoenleber		
Personal Papers, 1893-1986	1	18
Civic Activities, 1917-1978	1	19
Series 9: Schoenleber Sisters		

Abstract of Title Lake Drive Home, 1936-1958	1	20
Guest Book, "Sandalwood," Oostberg, WI, 1940-1957	1	21
Children's Hospital Auxiliary, 1933 (Scrapbook)	1	22
University of Wisconsin, 1924-1978	1	23
West Division High School, 1907; 1958; 1965	1	24
Series 10: Ambrosia Chocolate Company		
Ambrosia Chocolate Company, 1899-1974	1	25
Series 11: Schoenleber Foundation		
Schoenleber Foundation, 1965-1968	1	26
Series 12: Schoenleber Memorial Clock Tower		
History, 1965-1970	1	27
Newspaper Clippings, 1965-1970	1	28
Scrapbook (dismantled), 1965-1970	1	29
Operations (carillon, clock, and final plans)	1	30
Series 13: Louise Theede		
Personal Papers, 1868-1878	2	31
Milwaukee County Historical Society, c. 1968-1969	2	32
Series 14: Clauder-Harris Materials		
Miscellaneous Materials	2	33
Series 15: Miscellaneous Publications		
Related to Milwaukee:	2	34

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anna McGee and Barbara Gutierrez, Bits of Family Lore, 1969 - Its Great to Live in Milwaukee, 1948 - Print, "Milwaukee-1853" - Milwaukee County Historical Center Dedication, 1966 - League of Women Voters Study Paper - Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Christmas Kinderkonzert program, 1967 - Anniversary Program, Old St. Mary's Church, 1971 - Prayers and Meditations, St. Paul's Mission House - Estate Sale Catalogue, Laura Uihlein Albright, 1968 - Faye McBeath Foundation Annual Report, 1977 - Institute for Local History brochure, 1967 - The Milwaukee Reader, scattered issues 		
<p>General Works:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advertisement for Marion Lawson, Proud Warrior - <i>Frozen Dainties</i>, by Mrs. Lincoln, 1859 - <i>Individualized Games for Hospital Veterans</i>, 1951 - <i>Das kleine Blumenbuch</i>, Leipzig, Insel-Bucherei Nr. 281 - L. Young Correthers, <i>These Blooming Friends</i>, 1934 - Booklet of Flower Prints - Christmas Card, Drawing of Wisconsin Club - Wisconsin Club Directory, 1981 - <i>The Zontoin</i>, 2 issues (1953) 	2	35
Oversize Items	Location	
Marie Schoenleber - certificate of appointment as an assistant air raid warden, Milwaukee County, December 14, 1942	OS SM "S"	
Marie Schoenleber - certificate of completion from 2 nd District School, June 26, 1902	OS SM "S"	
Marie Schoenleber - diploma from West Division High School, June 22, 1906	OS SM "S"	
Marie Louise Schoenleber – birth certificate (German text), Sept. 16, 1888	OS SM "S"	
Marie Schoenleber – diploma from State Normal School	OS LG "S"	

NOTE: See West Side Bank Collection for family finances