

Siebenthaler Nursery Records
(1870-Present)

MS – 44

Wright State University
Department of Special Collections and Archives

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Introduction

Mr. George Siebenthaler, upon reading in the newspaper about a symposium concerning business records, contacted Wright State University in reference to the conference. Following up this initial contact, Roberta Ritchie wrote Mr. Siebenthaler a letter concerning his family's business records on June 10, 1976. When Mr. Siebenthaler responded favorably to an examination of the records and their possible donation to the Archives, Mrs. Ritchie and Robert Smith conducted a preliminary examination and inventory. Upon determining the value and significance of the collection and approval by the board of Directors, it was donated to the Wright State University Archives. The collection was received on September 8, 1976.

The Siebenthaler collection is now owned by the Wright State University Archives. It is available for study and research to the public as there are no restrictions, legal or otherwise, on the collection. The Siebenthaler Nursery played an important part in the development of the nursery business in the United States. As such, it would prove valuable to any student of the nursery and landscape business, students interested in business history, or many aspects of local history. The business, founded in 1870, is still in operation today under the same family. The major strengths of the collection are its financial, employment, and operating records.

Agency History

The Siebenthaler Company was founded in 1870 by John Siebenthaler under the guidance of his father George. In the early years they specialized in grapes and fruit trees. They encouraged the general public to get involved with trees and nature in order to both beautify the area and to produce fruit. By 1920 fruit trees were largely replaced by the sale of shrubs and ornamental trees. Other aspects of the business taking on prominence during this period were the cultivation of roses and expansion into the field of landscaping. In the early 1930's the company originated over thirty varieties of oriental poppies which were in great demand then.

It was in the mid-twenties that the organization began to really expand and acquire more locations. The original location, Catalpa Drive and Siebenthaler Avenue, had expanded to eighty acres. Increased business and the desire to increase potential capacity led to the purchase of 140 additional acres in present day Moraine. Later, in 1956, they purchased more acreage in Beaver Valley bringing the total to 432 acres. This is their current amount of land from which they operate two modern garden centers and two nurseries which provide a source for lawn and garden needs and a complete landscape service.

George Siebenthaler immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1841. Under his guidance his son John organized the nursery in 1870. It was the children of John Siebenthaler who really provided the impetus needed to develop the business. John had seven children. Wilber Siebenthaler (1891-1940) succeeded his father as head of the firm. Following Wilber was Clarence (1894-1950) who developed the landscape aspects of the business. John Siebenthaler, another son, concentrated on plant material and was responsible for the cultivation of new varieties of lilacs and two new shade trees. At the present time, George and Mary, along with Robert Siebenthaler, son of Clarence, are responsible for the company's operation.

The Siebenthaler Nursery, although a prominent fixture in the local community, it also has far reaching influences. Their influence on the nursery business has been felt not only by their membership in important trade association but also by the development of unusual trees and shrubs. Most notably are the Moraine Locust (1949) and the Moraine Ash (1958). The Siebenthaler Nursery played an important role in the development of the nursery business in the United States.

This brief history of the Siebenthaler Nursery has been primarily compiled from the centennial publication of the company enclosed within this collection.

Scope and Content

The Siebenthaler Collection is divided into two series. The first series is comprised of the business records of the Siebenthaler Nursery. The types of material with the collection include sales records, payroll and employment records, cash and inventory records, and various ledgers and journals. Also contained is printed material and manuscripts relating to flowers plants, trees, etc. which are relevant to the nursery and landscape business. The date of the earliest record is 1877. The latest records (excluding a brief history of the firm) are 1944. The bulk of the material falls in the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth century. There are occasional gaps in the material. However, most of the collection is its records of the everyday financial operation and sales of the company. The collection is weak in material relating to the care and nature of various horticulture aspects of the firm although this information can be gleaned from several of the records.

The second section of the collection is comprised of personal material. It is primarily correspondence of some of the members of the Siebenthaler family. Also included are some of the members of the Siebenthaler family. Also included is some genealogical material, estate papers, i.e. wills, inventories and obituaries, receipts and bills and bank (both checking and savings) books. The earliest material is correspondence of John Siebenthaler which begins in 1881. The latest material dates 1911. Although some of the material is revealing, overall, it is weak in that it is not comprehensive nor does it tell us too much about the Siebenthaler's personal lives.

Container Listing

Series I: Business Collection

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	1	Sales and Cash	1877-1884
	2	Sales and Cash (indexed)	1887-1893
	3	Ledger (indexed)	1883-1888
	4	Ledger (indexed)	1891-1896
	5	Order and Stock Record	1906-1915
	6	Purchase Book	1897-1910
	7	Purchase Book	1890-1896
	8	Record of major contracts and obligations (indexed)	1926-1950
2	1	Sales Book	1884-1888
	2	Sales Book	Jan. 1916-Aug. 1917
	3	Sales Book	Apr. 1920-Dec. 1921
	4	Miscellaneous Sales	Sep. 1917-Dec. 1918
	5	Miscellaneous Sales	Jan. 1919-Jan. 1920
	6	Fruit Sales	1904-1905
	7	Fruit Sales	1914-1921
	8	Large Tree Sales	1925-1932
	9	Order Books	Fall 1894
	10	Order Books	Fall 1894
	11	Order Books	Fall 1894
	12	Sales (Also see Box 8 oversize)	1927-1928
3	1	Date Book	1922
	2	Date Book	1923
	3	Tax Collections – 2 Vols.	1890-1894
	4	Journal-Ledger	Dec. 1919-Aug. 1926
	5	Cash & Check Book	1915-1916
	6	Cash & Check Book	1917-1919
	7	Cash & Check Book	1919-1921
	8	Assorted Bank & Loan Payment Books (File)	1922-1944
4	1	Payroll Records	1890-1893
	2	Payroll Records	1894-1897
	3	Payroll Records	1898-1900
	4	Payroll Records (indexed)	1901-1904
	5	Payroll Records	1905-1909
	6	Payroll Records	1910-1912
	7	Payroll Records (indexed)	1914-1917
	8	Payroll Records (indexed)	1918-1921
	9	Payroll Records (indexed)	1922-1923
	10	Payroll Records (file)	Jun. 1930-May 1935

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
4	11	Payroll Records (file)	May 1935-Dec. 1944
	12	Monthly Time Book	1890-1900
	13	Monthly Time Book	1901-1904
	14	Monthly Time Book	1921
	15	Monthly Time Book	1922
	16	Weekly Time Book	1928
	17	Lists of Employees (file)	n.d.
	18	Records of Employment (War Food Admin.) (file)	May 1944-Jun. 1944
5	1	Printed Material – including a brief history of the Company, state regulations, and information on plants	n.d.
	2	Articles on nursery business and home beautification By John Siebenthaler	n.d.
	3	Promissory notes, noted charged to bad debts	1922-1940
	4	Business Cards	n.d.

Series II: Personal Collection

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
5	1	Wilber Siebenthaler – Personal Expenses	Nov. 1911-Dec. 1912
	2	Wilber Siebenthaler – Personal Checkbook	Aug. 1919-Aug. 1937
	3	Wilber Siebenthaler – Personal Checkbook	Aug. 1937-Jun. 1940
	4	Assorted bank books of John Siebenthaler (11 Vols.)	1882-1911
	5	John Siebenthaler – Correspondence from Jennie Olden	May 1881-Jan. 1884
	6	John Siebenthaler – Correspondence with Dorand Dorothy Yeazell	n.d.
	7	John Siebenthaler – Correspondence with George Siebenthaler (father)	Jun. 1896-Aug. 1896
	8	John Siebenthaler – Correspondence, Misc.	Nov. 1879-Jun. 1911
	9	John Siebenthaler – Bills and receipts – (notably to Build house in 1900)	1875-1903
	10	John Siebenthaler – Checkbooks; Tax receipts – Montgomery County Assorted Receipts	1909-1911; 1892-1897
6	1	John Siebenthaler – Printed Material, Certificates and Awards (see also Oversized Box 8)	n.d.
	2	John Siebenthaler – Numerous Poems, stories and Anecdotes	n.d.
	3	John Siebenthaler – Deeds, Records, and Inventories While acting as Executor	n.d.
	4	David Siebenthaler – Receipts and Bills	Jan. 1884-Nov. 1889
	5	David Siebenthaler – Estate Papers	1887-1888
	6	George Siebenthaler – Tax Receipts	1891-1898

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
6	7	Wilber Siebenthaler – From Clarence Siebenthaler	Sep. 1910-Jul. 1911
	8	Wilber Siebenthaler – Correspondence	Nov. 1910-May 1911
	9	Wilber Siebenthaler – Estate Papers – Includes Copy of Will, Obituaries, Inventories	n.d.
	10	Clarence Siebenthaler – Correspondence	Aug. 1910-Nov. 1911
	11	Mary Siebenthaler – Correspondence from Ida Boyce	1910
	12	Siebenthaler Genealogical Material	n.d.
	13	Miscellaneous	n.d.

Oversized Material

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
7		Sales Certificates and Awards – Notary Certificates – John Siebenthaler	1927 and 1928