

Collection #  
M 0424  
OM 0761

**HUGH D. STUDABAKER  
COLLECTION, 1886-1943**

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Processed by

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## **COLLECTION INFORMATION**

**VOLUME OF COLLECTION:** 19 manuscript boxes, 1 half-sized manuscript box, 1 half-sized box of photographs, 2 oversized folders, 1 flat file folder, 3 artifacts

**COLLECTION DATES:** 1886-1943

**PROVENANCE:** Arthur L. Studebaker, 1985

**RESTRICTIONS:** None

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**ALTERNATE FORMATS:**

**RELATED HOLDINGS:** John Studabaker Notebook 1836-1839, BV0818  
Lawrence F. Orr Family Papers, M0506

**ACCESSION NUMBER:** 1985.0615

**NOTES:**

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Hugh Dougherty Studabaker Sr. was born to Sarah Morgan Studabaker on a farm near Bluffton, Indiana on September 10, 1869. His father Peter Studabaker was county treasurer, a banker, and veteran of the Civil War. Hugh was the youngest of six children.

After graduating from Bluffton High School in 1886, Hugh made several attempts to enter the world of business. Perhaps due to sustained deflation during this time, each of them, from a basket business to furniture, insurance, and a meat market partnership, ended in failure. In 1891, Hugh married the daughter of family friends, Mary Rebecca “Bessie” Cook (née Koch). Bessie’s mother Eliza (“Mother Cook”) would live with the couple for many years. Three children were born to the couple in the 1890s: Alden K. in 1892, Mildred in 1894, and Hugh Jr. in 1896.

A devoted lifelong Democrat, Studabaker was elected Wells County clerk beginning in 1902, where he kept court records and issued marriage licenses until he was replaced at the end of 1906. During this time Hugh pursued more business ventures and worked to invent a new type of engine, to little success. This led the family to purchase a farm near Matthews, Missouri, which they attempted to work from 1910 to 1913. The experience was a miserable one and created dissension within the family. Hugh authored a pamphlet about his difficulties titled “What They ‘Showed Me’ in Southeast Missouri”.

From there, the family went to the Calumet Region of Indiana, where things improved for them. Hugh obtained a job as a field examiner for the State Board of Accounts, a fairly new field at the time, which he kept for nearly thirty years. Hugh and Bessie lived in Valparaiso from 1913-1915, Gary until 1920, and then Whiting until 1943. Meanwhile, Alden (Bakery Co. 330) and Hugh Jr. (70<sup>th</sup> Artillery CAC) served during World War I. Alden later became a contractor, Mildred attended Valparaiso University and became a teacher, and Hugh Jr. got a job with Standard Oil and later became a Hammond city councilman. The family was related by marriage to William A. Wirt, a well-known educator and superintendent of schools in Gary. Through this association, Alden became involved in Wirt’s “Dune Acres” development along the Lake Michigan shoreline and built several buildings and homes there.

Studabaker retired in 1941 and received a newly established pension for his service. His time thereafter was occupied in caring for the bedridden Bessie, who had suffered a stroke some years before. She passed away in early 1943. After that Hugh went back to Bluffton and remarried in 1944. He died in November of 1949 at the age of eighty.

Sources:

Materials in the collection

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists of Hugh D. Studabaker's diaries and related papers. Hugh's daily diary entries briefly detail his and his family's movements from the time they rose each morning, through the workday, and until they went to bed at night. As an accountant, he is exact in his relating of times and figures. Each entry begins with his current home address and a list of the family members there that day or their whereabouts otherwise. In general, the entries concern the family and their immediate surroundings and rarely include comments on national or world events. [there are some gaps, see below for dates] In later years, the entries provide a close account of the care he provided to his wife ("our Bessie") after her stroke. He kept a strict page-per-day habit for his diary entries. On particularly eventful days, he simply filled the margins and if necessary, wrote smaller. In some cases, he used shorthand symbols in the margins. This practice was probably to avoid running into the records he kept towards the back of each volume.

In the back sections of the diaries, Studabaker kept close records about his current business ventures, bank accounts, and the family's finances in general. During the years in which he was employed by the State Board of Accounts, he also kept there a daily log of his auditing work. The back sections could be considered secondary, more detailed reports on his daily activities, particularly from a financial standpoint. In some cases, there are also photographs pasted into the last pages of a diary.

In his words, Studabaker had a "yen" for saving things. The collection also includes the ephemera, letters, and other miscellaneous items he saved over the years. Most of this material is related to Studabaker's life outside of work, but he would also occasionally save things he found at the courthouse. A small part of this material is family correspondence. Beyond that, the saved ephemera includes anything from business cards to theater and recital programs (Mildred was an accomplished pianist), political handbills, and ticket stubs. The 1924 folder includes some foreign currency, the 1926 folder a Ku Klux Klan application form, and the 1938 folder some unused Cole Bros. Circus tickets. Studabaker also had a habit of taking clippings from the various newspapers to which he subscribed. Many have Studabaker's own comments written or typed onto them, showing his thoughts on or insights into current events.

Beginning in 1936, there is a significant amount of personal correspondence, mostly to Studabaker's friend Walter D. Schreeder of Evansville. These are carbon copies of typed letters on onion skin paper.

In addition to those pasted into diaries, a significant number of family photographs are also present. In most cases, Studabaker has provided identifications of individuals and places. The photographs are arranged by year according to their perceived original placement within the diaries.

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