

Collection #  
P 0404

## JOSEPH CONRATH COLLECTION CA. 1900–1937

[Collection Information](#)

[Biographical Sketch](#)

[Scope and Content Note](#)

[Series Contents](#)

[Cataloging Information](#)

Processed by

Barbara Quigley  
15 July 2003

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department  
William Henry Smith Memorial Library  
Indiana Historical Society  
450 West Ohio Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

[www.indianahistory.org](http://www.indianahistory.org)

### COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	2 folders
COLLECTION DATES:	Ca. 1900–1937
PROVENANCE:	John J. Small, 937 N. Bolton Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46219, 24 September 1999
RESTRICTIONS:	None

**COPYRIGHT:**

**REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:** Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.

**ALTERNATE FORMATS:**

**RELATED HOLDINGS:**

**ACCESSION NUMBER:** 1999.0679

**NOTES:**

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Joseph Conrath (ca. 1865–27 November 1937) was born in Ohio to immigrant parents, his mother having come from Germany, and his father from Alsace-Lorraine. He performed onstage as a tenor first in Cincinnati, and later appeared in many musical productions throughout the country. It appears that his family moved to Indianapolis around 1887.

He was widely known among Indianapolis musicians as a violin maker. He established his business in 1889, making, repairing, and selling violins and other stringed instruments. He opened his shop at 347 Virginia Avenue in the late 1890s, moving his operation to nearby 39 Virginia Avenue around 1914, where he conducted business for about twenty years.

On 11 June 1896, Conrath married Amelia Bush in Indianapolis. They resided at 1811 Cottage Avenue.

Jay Small (30 October 1917–27 January 2000) was an Indianapolis antiques dealer. His personal interests included collecting postcards and books related to Indiana history.

**Sources:**

Items in collection, including business cards and an obituary from the *Indianapolis Star* dated 28 November 1937.

Indiana Marriages, 1845–1920 (<http://www.gale.ancestry.com>). Accessed 6 June 2003.

*Indianapolis City Directory*. Taylor, Mich.: R.L. Polk & Co. 1887–1937. General Collection: F534.I55 A18

Jay Small Postcard Collection Guide (P 0391).

U.S. Census, 1920 (<http://www.gale.ancestry.com>). Accessed 6 June 2003.

**SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

This collection consists of photographs, postcards, business cards, a notice of payment due, and an obituary, all related

to violin maker Joseph Conrath, and collected by antiques dealer Jay Small. The photographs and postcards are held in one folder, and the other items are housed in a second folder.

In the first folder, there are five different postcard scenes of Joseph Conrath in his stringed instrument shop, two of which show a woman beside him, presumably his wife, Amelia. One postcard was sent through the mail in 1909 to Conrath from his nephew, Fred. E. Wheatley, who printed the card. Four of these postcards are real photographs; the other was printed by the halftone process and bears the message, "Compliments of Joseph Conrath, 39 Virginia Avenue, Up Stairs, Indianapolis." Another real photo postcard shows Conrath with three other men standing in what appears to be a butcher shop. A note found with this card indicates that it was taken during the period when Conrath had his shop at 347 Virginia Avenue, and identifies one of the men as Otto A. Hofer of 349 Virginia Avenue, but does not specify which man he is. There are two small photographs showing Conrath with a woman who is probably his wife, Amelia, and some other unidentified people.

The second folder contains an advertising card for Conrath's shop at 347 Virginia Avenue, emphasizing that guitars and mandolins were a specialty. A later business card, for his shop at 39 Virginia Avenue, emphasizes violins. This folder also includes a notice of payment due addressed to Miss [Vivian?] B. Ely. The notice is dated 1925 and is on paper printed with the 347 Virginia address, although Conrath had moved his shop to 39 Virginia Avenue around 1914. Also included is a photocopy of a 1937 obituary for Conrath from the *Indianapolis Star*.

## **SERIES CONTENTS**

### **Series 1: Photographs and Postcards**

#### **CONTENTS**

Photographs: Joseph Conrath standing outside by a house with a woman who is probably his wife, Amelia, and an unidentified younger woman; Joseph Conrath standing outside by a staircase with [Amelia] and two unidentified young children.

Postcards: Joseph Conrath seated, looking at the back of a violin (three copies, and one 10 x 8 reprint); [Amelia] and Joseph Conrath looking at a violin (two copies); Joseph holding a violin, [Amelia] standing beside him; Joseph working on a mandolin (this card was printed and mailed by Conrath's nephew, Fred E. Wheatley, in 1909); halftone of Joseph showing several violins (two copies); Joseph Conrath of 347 Virginia Avenue and Otto A. Hofer of 349 Virginia Avenue standing with two other men in a butcher shop.

#### **CONTAINER**

Folder 1

Folder 1

### **Series 2: Advertising and Business Cards, Payment Due Notice, Obituary**

#### **CONTENTS**

Advertising card: for Jos. Conrath, manufacturer of stringed instruments, guitars and mandolins a specialty, 347 Virginia Avenue, Indianapolis (two copies). Business card: for Joseph

#### **CONTAINER**

Folder 2

Conrath, Est. 1889, maker, repairer of and dealer in violins and other stringed instruments, 39 Virginia Avenue, Indianapolis.

Payment due notice: "Miss [Vivian?] B. Ely, your check of Feb 14 has been returned, not sufficient funds, kindly remit the amount" dated 6 March 1925.

Folder 2

Obituary: "Joseph Conrath, Violin Maker, Dies" from *Indianapolis Star*, 28 November 1937.

Folder 2

## CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://157.91.92.2/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, P 0404).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.