

Finding Aid to The Black Company Records

The Black Company

The Black Company Records, 1922-1990

3 linear feet

Collection number: MSS 401 & Oversize 21

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OVERVIEW

Access: The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

Provenance: Donated by Kilbourne Group in 2017 (Acc. 2017-056irs; 2019-117irs).

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Citation: [Identification of item]. The Black Company Records, MSS 401, NDSU University Archives, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

BIOGRAPHY

In 1912, George M. Black moved to the Fargo area to expand his family's business. His father, Leslie Black, had already established a Black's Store in Little Falls, MN. As George was changing trains in Fargo during a business trip, he decided to take a quick tour around downtown to get a sense of whether business would flourish in this location. He was impressed by what he saw, and opened a Black's Store at 112 Broadway in Fargo on June 12, 1912.

As business thrived in Fargo for the Black's, George purchased more property on Broadway to accommodate a larger store. Black's Store had been in business for seventeen years before it was sold in

1929 to the Sears Roebuck Company. Instead of moving out of the Fargo area, George used the money he received in the sale of his store to build the famous Black Building sitting at 118 N Broadway in Fargo. The Black Building was constructed in 1930 by Fargo construction company named T.F. Powers and Company, designed by architects Lang, Raugland, and Lewis of Minneapolis along with Fargo associates Braseth and Houkom. When the building was complete, it was eight stories tall with the two lower levels occupied by the Black-Sears store while the remaining six were to be used as office space. WDAY had leased the eighth floor of the building for a number of years.

George M. Black ended his association with the Sears business in 1934 then decided to open another business after learning Sears had let several of his employees go. On September 1, 1934 he opened his new store on First Avenue called the Store Without a Name. The story behind the name is after George had lost his rights to use the name 'Black' when he sold the Black Building to Sears, he held a contest to find a new name for his store. While the names were being compiled for the contest, it was called Store Without a Name until Jean Fagerwick of Fargo came up with the acronym SWAN as the new name. Most people continued to refer to it as Store Without a Name, but the logo is that of two swans flanking 'Store Without a Name'.

The store remained on this site for twenty-seven years until George Black's nephew, William Bunce, took over management when it was moved back near the original Broadway location, where Scan Design is currently located. The name of the store was changed to Black's in 1961 and focused on women's apparel. Later, a branch of the store was opened in West Acres by George's son-in-law William Schlossman. After 1981, the downtown store was replaced by City Center, Inc.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The **Black Company Records** consist of paid invoices, ledgers, and statements from the early 1930s. Most of the transactions are from Fargo businesses operating during this time. There are also a number of blueprints related to the construction and remodeling of the Black Building and a few of the Black's Store.

The **Invoice Series** consists of paid invoices from various Fargo businesses between 1931 and 1934.

The **Ledger Series** consists of rent payment information made to the Black Company between 1920 and 1936.

The **Returned Checks and Statements Series** consists of returned checks and statements from the Merchant's National Bank & Trust Company of Fargo from 1930 to 1940.

The **Black Building Construction Series** consists of information pertaining to the cost and construction of the Black Building.

The **Black Company Blueprint Series**, located in Oversize 21, map cases, contains three folders with drawings of the original Black Building, Elm Tree Square, Sears, all located at 114-118 Broadway, in the

first folder. The second folder contains drawing of Blacks Store Without A Name, City Centre building located at 110-112 Broadway. The third folder are miscellaneous drawings for the original Blacks store located at 110 Broadway, an office space for Dr. Fercho, Boiler Addition to the Graver Inn, and the Eighty Niner Apartments. The final folder contains the Black Building newsletter "The Blue Print"

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder Content

Box 1

1/1 Finding aid

Invoice Series 1931-1934

1/2	A
1/3	Black Company Salaries, 1934
1/4	The Black Company Expense Bills paid by Black's Store, 1932-1933
1/5	B
1/6	C
1/7	Church Contributions, 1928-1933
1/8	D
1/9	E
1/10	F
1/11	F
1/12	G
1/13	H
1/14	I-J
1/15	K
1/16	L
1/17	M
1/18	M
1/19	N
1/20	N
1/21	Northwest National Life Insurance, 1934
1/22	O
1/23	P-Q
1/24	R
1/25	S
1/26	T
1/27	The Security Trust Company of Fargo, 1927-1932
1/28	U-V
1/29	W

- 1/30 Warner and Company
- 1/31 Warner and Company
- 1/32 X-Z

Box 2

Ledger Series

- 2/1 Two black leather ledger booklets with rent payment info, 1920-24, undated
- 2/2 Black leather *Walker Bros. and Hardy* ledger booklet with rent payment info, 1925-1931. Merchants National Bank of Fargo "petty cash" booklet, 1928. Merchants National Bank & Trust Company account booklet, 1933-1936.
- 2/3 The Merchants National Bank of Fargo Account Ledgers, 1930-1933. First National Bank of Valley City Account Ledger, 1926.

Returned Checks and Statements Series (The Merchants National Bank & Trust Co. of Fargo)

- 2/4 October 1930 - March 1931
- 2/5 April 1931 - September 1931
- 2/6 October 1931 - March 1932
- 2/7 April 1932 - Sept 1932
- 2/8 October 1932 - March 1933
- 2/9 April 1933 - Sept 1933
- 2/10 October 1933 - December 1933
- 2/11 General Check Stub Booklets stamped "George M. Black Co. Fargo, N. Dak.", December 15, 1938 to November 10, 1939 and November 10, 1939 to July 31, 1940.
- 2/12 Payroll Check Stub Booklets stamped "George M. Black Co. Fargo, N. Dak.", February 19, 1939 to May 27, 1939 and May 27, 1939 to September 14, 1940.

Black Building Construction Series

- 2/13 *Factual Appraisals* binder with information related to the description of Black Building, Elliott Building, and Newberry Building construction materials, structures, and costs, undated.
- 2/14 Black Building specifications for general contract, alterations, and additions to stores – Braseth & Houkom (successors to Braseth & Rosatti) Architects, 1922.
- 2/15 Black Building specifications for general contract, alterations, and additions to stores – Braseth & Houkom (successors to Braseth & Rosatti) Architects, 1925.
- 2/16 General Specifications – A Store Building for The George M. Black Co., 1961.
- 2/17 Architects Lang, Raugland & Lewis and Braseth & Houkom financial correspondence, 1931.
- 2/18 Contractors T.F. Powers & Company financial correspondence, 1930-1931
- 2/19 Invoices for building and fixtures, 1925-1930.

2/20 Catalogs for power tools and compressors, *Ziegler Co., Curtis, De-Walt, Gardner-Denver, Skilsaw, Ingersoll-Rand*, undated.

Black Company Blueprint Series

Oversize 21

- Folder 1 Floor Plan, Black Building, Suite 206. No date. (2 pages)
First Floor & Basement Plan, no date (2 pages)
Black Building – Fourth Floor, Design Intent Plan [U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services?], 1989, By G.S.N. (1 page)
Black Building, 3rd & 4th floors, G.S.A. Proposal, by Rogers, Perlenfein & Assoc., no date, (1 page)
Black Building Addition Beams & Columns, Mid America Steel, Inc. & Design 7 Ltd., Feb. 1990 (10 pages)
Proposed Office Space for Bureau of the Census, Black Building, Lower Level, by Design 7 Lts. (1 page)
Elm Street, by Albitz Design Inc., January 3, 1975 (14 pages)
Elm Tree Square, by Foss, Engelstad, Foss, Jul. 1975 (6 pages)
Boiler Addition – Black Building, by Foss, Engelstad, Foss, Aug. 96 (5 pages)
Sears – Balcony, Second Floor, and Main Floor, by Sornsin Co., no date, (3 pages)
Chilled Water System Piping Layout for Black Building, Sornsin Company, 7-1-1961 (1 page)
Store & Office Building for George M. Black, 114-116-118 Broadway, by Lang, Raugland & Lewis, ca. 1930. (11 pages)
- Folder 2 Blacks – Display Fixtures, by Goebel Fixture Co., 1961 (13 pages)
City Centre, by Architecture/Graphics Co., 1986 (2 pages)
Blacks – Front Elevation & Columns and Beams Plan, no date, (2 pages)
Blacks Store Without A Name, by Freed Wolf, designer & constructor, 1961 (3 pages)
Wiring of Controls, Store Without A Name, by Minneapolis-Honeywell Regulator Co., 1961 (2 pages)
Building for Store Without A Name, 110-112 Broadway, Kurke Associates, 1961 (10 pages).
- Folder 3 J.J. Newberry Co General Contractors Specifications for 110-115 Broadway, Fargo, ND, 1931.
Apartment Complex [Eighty Niner Apartments, 11 12th Street N.] (2 pages)
Dr. Fercho offices, third floor, [Medical Arts Building, 514 N.P. Avenue?], no date, (1 page)
Boiler Addition – Graver Inn, by Foss, Engelstad, Foss, 1969 (2 pages)
Unidentified office plan for #10, 110 ½ Broadway, no date (1 page)
AAB Type Duplex Vertical Air Compressors, by Gardner-Denver Co., 4-24-1929 (1 page)

Remodeling Black's Store, by Haxby & Braseth, no date, (8 pages)

Folder 4

"The Blue Print"

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