

Felix A. Berner Collection
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Finding aid prepared by Ian Stade

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Table of Contents

<u>Summary Information</u>	3
<u>Biography</u>	4
<u>Collection Description</u>	4
<u>Controlled Access Headings</u>	5

Summary Information

Repository	James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library
Creator	Berner, Felix A., 1890-1993
Title	Felix A. Berner Collection
Date	1926-2011
Extent	1.04 Linear feet
Language	English

Biography

Felix A. Berner was born November 21, 1890 in Le Mars, Iowa. His father, Otto, was a fourth-generation Swiss watchmaker that moved to Le Mars in 1881. Felix attended school in Le Mars and watchmaker's school in St. Louis, Missouri. He worked for his father before and after World War I when he served in the United States Navy. He married Margaret Nicholson in Le Mars.

In 1926 Felix and Margaret moved to Minneapolis and Felix worked in the diamond and silver department at J.B. Hudson Jewelry. Berner later was department head and retired as general manager with a staff of 30 in 1955. Berner was an internationally recognized expert on period silver. He was responsible for the place setting and registry idea in selling silverware. He noticed as a boy at his father's jewelry store that no consideration was given to matching patterns. The idea of coordinated place settings was new and novel then, and Berner arranged for the store to register brides and their patterns for the customers buying their gifts. This practice spread throughout the United States and has been extended to china and crystal. In Minneapolis Berner also introduced the idea of having girls register for a pattern and have utensils given to them at each birthday. If the girls and their gift-givers stuck to the registry, they would have a service for 8 by age 18.

After retirement the Berners moved to Laguna Beach, California where Felix worked part-time at B.D. Howes Jewelry Store. He was working there one day when two men held up the store at gunpoint and calmly scooped \$127,000 worth of diamonds into a briefcase. Berner described it as the most harrowing experience he had during his 50 years of retail jewelry. The robbers did not harm anybody and were never captured.

Margaret died in 1977 and soon afterward Felix moved to Fort Dodge, Iowa where his brother Edwin resided and lived there until his death on October 31, 1993.

Collection Description

One box. Scrapbook of photos of J.B. Hudson Jewelry mostly from 1926-1955. also included are some biographical newspaper clippings about Mr. Berner.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- J.B. Hudson Jewelry Store. (Minneapolis, Minn.)

Subject(s)

- Jewelry Stores.
- Silverware.