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Retrospect

News from the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections at Winthrop University

July, 2008

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William H. Grier Scrapbooks



William H. Grier retired from Rock Hill Printing and Finishing Company (RHPFC), also known as “The Bleachery,” as president in 1972. He became associated with the company as a divisional superintendent in 1933. From 1936 to 1976 he kept scrapbooks relating to his activities and the activities of the company. These fascinating scrapbooks are housed in the Louise Pettus Archives and are an excellent



source for the history of “The Bleachery” and the textile industry in general. Grier was born on November 21, 1901 in Fort Mill, S.C. After graduating from Clemson College in 1923, Grier worked in textile operations in Massachusetts, Georgia, and Oklahoma for 10 years before joining RHPFC. He worked his way up the ladder to president of the Finishing Division of M. Lowenstein & Sons, Inc., the parent company of RHPFC. He also became an executive vice president of Lowenstein. Grier died in 1983. From 1953 to 1975, Grier served as chairman of the Winthrop College Board of Trustees, providing inspired leadership throughout a period of rapid change and controversy over coeducation. Winthrop honored Grier with an honorary doctorate in 1979. He was the first male to receive the honor.



Grier’s 24 bound scrapbooks contain plant memoranda, newsletters, photographs, newspaper clippings, postcards, correspondence, promotional material, fabric samples, and other material relating to RHPFC. The memoranda and correspondence include information about raises, incentives, the annual Christmas Tree Celebration for the children of the workers, and other topics. The newspaper clippings relate such information as advances by the plant as well as trouble with organized labor. The photographs are of the plant, the workers, Grier and other officers, the area around the plant, and Rock Hill. “The Bleachery” printed and finished the first Rayon woven and printed in the South in 1938. There are fabric samples of the rayon in one of the scrapbooks. RHPFC put forth a great effort on the home front during WWII. They not only had a large number of their workers volunteer for military service but they also printed American flags and contributed other textile products to the war effort. The 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were a time of change for the textile industry and these issues are reflected in the scrapbooks as well.

Any researcher interested in the history of “The Bleachery” whether for personal or professional reasons should take a look at Bill Grier’s wonderful scrapbooks

Digitized Collection

The Archives Digitized Collection keeps growing by leaps and bounds, thanks mainly to Assistant Archivist Andrew Johnston. This past fiscal year, he and the Archives staff have added a total of 1197 images to our website and online catalogue. We have also added a number of new finding aids to the web site, including Shaw Land Surveying Records, Martha Thomas Fitzgerald

Papers, and the Nathan Asch Papers just to name a few. If you haven't looked at the [digitized collection](#) page on our web site lately, please take a few minutes to peruse its content. I feel sure that you will not be disappointed. We are constantly adding new items. If you have any suggestions as to what you would like to see us digitize next, just let us know.

Through the Casement—Window on Winthrop's Past

“Interesting Description by a Bright Lady Visitor” part 1



In the June 5, 1896 issue of *The Yorkville Enquirer* there is a description of a visit to Winthrop by a lady with the initials M.A.G.

“A pleasant two hours' drive brought us within sight of the college. Several years ago I had taken the same drive in order to make railroad connections on my way to a Virginia college, and I could but think of the difference between then and now. Then it was necessary to leave the State, at an expense annually of several hundred dollars, in order to obtain first

class educational advantages; now we have at our very doors, at a nominal expense, a college for girls unequalled by any in the South and by few in the North.

Our object in this visit was to see the college in its workday garb, to try to gain an intelligent idea of the work really done there. All of your readers are doubtless familiar with the building through pictures and descriptions, so I will say nothing on that score except that I have never seen beauty and utility more wisely combined.

The courteous and dignified president, Mr. Johnson, welcomed us most pleasantly, and generously gave up his entire morning to accompanying us over the college. We visited the greater number of the recitation rooms, (exceedingly pleasant and well ventilated apartments) and were received by all of the teachers as guests whom they were really glad to see. Their work invites, and will bear, the most critical examination. Everything seemed to be running as smoothly as in a long established institution. I was everywhere impressed with the thoroughness of the work done.

In Prof. Kinard's room, the class was studying Burke's speech upon conciliation with America, and the searching questions and intelligent answers showed that nothing less than getting the root of the matter would satisfy both teacher and pupils.

In Miss Hughes's room the blackboard, covered with stenographic hieroglyphics, showed the work being done there. A pleasant sight was a young lady seated before a typewriter doing her work well; but with no apparent labor.

In Miss Woodrow's work, nature had been brought into the schoolroom as evidenced by the minerals and flowers seen there.

In Prof. Breazeale's room every young lady was at the blackboard and appeared to thoroughly understand the intricate problems they were demonstrating

Miss Souther was giving a class a vocal lesson. In truth, music is there 'taught as an industrial art and not as an ornament.' The effects of her work will be felt in the home, the schoolrooms, and the church.

In the art department, I was greatly relieved and happily disappointed not to see the regulation boarding school large pictures, painted for show; but studies from objects and nature. One young lady was immortalizing the basket of strawberries which had been sent her for the picnic.”

The lady's observations will be continued in the next *Retrospect* issue.

For information on the Archives' collections and holdings, how to donate historical material, or how you can help, contact:

Gina Price White, Director
Archives & Special Collections
Rock Hill, S.C 29733
(803) 323-2334

or Andrew Johnston
Assistant Archivist
Rock Hill, S.C. 29733
(803) 323-2302

E-Mail: archives@winthrop.edu

Website: www.winthrop.edu/dacus/About/Archives/archivesdept.htm