



**Baker, Alfred Gustavus, 1831-1913.**

**Alfred G. Baker papers  
1837–1913  
(bulk dates 1837–1851)**

**Abstract:** The Alfred G. Baker papers comprise personal correspondence and business records of nineteenth-century Philadelphia businessmen Michael V. Baker and his son Alfred G. Baker, who became a prominent citizen and patron of the arts.

## Descriptive Summary

<b>Identification:</b>	MSS 585
<b>Creator:</b>	Baker, Alfred Gustavus, 1831-1913.
<b>Title:</b>	Alfred G. Baker papers
<b>Inclusive Dates:</b>	1837–1913
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	1837–1851
<b>Extent:</b>	1.3 linear feet (57 items)
<b>Language:</b>	Materials entirely in English.

## Administrative Information

<b>Citation:</b>	MSS 585, Alfred G. Baker papers, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.
<b>Shelving Summary:</b>	Boxes 1-3: Shelved in SPEC MSS manuscript boxes; Box 4: Shelved in SPEC MSS oversize boxes (17 inches)
<b>Location:</b>	Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 Phone: 302-831-2229 Fax: 302-831-6003 URL: <a href="http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/">http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/</a>
<b>Source:</b>	Purchase, 2008.
<b>Processing:</b>	Processed and encoded by Keith Minsinger, October 2008.
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## Biographical Note

The Bakers were an affluent Philadelphia family in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, including businessman and patron of the arts Alfred Gustavus Baker (1831–1913) and his father, Michael V. Baker (d. circa 1866), partner in the firm of Baker and Moss.

Alfred Gustavus Baker (1831–1913), the primary figure in this collection, was born in Philadelphia on December 17, 1831, the son of Michael V. Baker and Caroline Shaw. He entered the University of Pennsylvania with the sophomore class of 1848, where as a senior he was elected president of the University's Zelosophic Literary Society. After graduating with the class of 1851, he worked in the Philadelphia dry goods firm of David S. Brown & Co. He then went into business with Samuel Leonard in the firm of Leonard & Baker, with which he was involved until 1870. In 1862 he married Henrietta Rush Fales (1838–1897). In 1866, Alfred Baker administered the estate of his father, Michael V. Baker (d. circa 1866). In 1870, he was named president of the Franklin Fire Insurance Company of Philadelphia, a post which he held until 1882. During this period, Alfred Baker maintained the financial stability of the company despite the overwhelming claims that were the result of the great fires in Chicago and Boston in 1871 and 1872. Later during the period 1877–1880, he served as president of the National Building Fire Underwriters of New York City. Since 1858, Alfred Baker had also served as Director of Philadelphia's Commercial Bank, a post which he held until 1883 when he was named Director of Independence National Bank.

Complementing his professional life, Alfred Baker maintained a lifelong patronage of the arts. Atop the Baker building at 1520 and 1522 Chestnut Street in Philadelphia, Alfred Baker erected the first all-glass art studio space in America. This he lent to artists for free so they could draw and sketch at all hours and in all weathers. In addition to the visual arts, Baker was a patron of music and opera as well. In 1884 he became president of the American Academy of Music in Philadelphia, a post which he held until his death. It was his intervention in the Academy corporation that allowed for a greater yearly program of opera and symphony to be presented. During 1891 and 1913 Alfred Baker made two trips to Europe where he traveled widely in England and on the continent. He died in Philadelphia soon after his December 20, 1913 return.

Michael V. Baker, the son of Michael Baker, was a wholesale dealer and importer of hardware and cutlery on Market Street in Philadelphia. For a period of time, he was the partner of John Moss in the firm of Baker and Moss. In 1846, about twenty years before his death, he was said to be worth \$50,000.

### Sources:

Birch, Thomas R. *The First one hundred years of the Zelosophic Literary Society*. Philadelphia: [s.n.], 1929.

*A Biographical album of prominent Pennsylvanians*. Vol. 1. Philadelphia: The American Biographical Publishing Company, 1888.

Fales, de Coursey. *The Fales family of Bristol, Rhode Island*. privately printed, 1919.

*The financiers of Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: Financial, 1900.

Marion, John F. *Within these walls: a history of the Academy of Music in Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: Restoration Office, The Academy of Music, 1984.

*Memoirs and auto-biography of some of the wealthy citizens of Philadelphia, with a fair estimate of their estates-founded upon a knowledge of the facts*. Philadelphia: By the booksellers, 1846.

*University of Pennsylvania, biographical catalogue of the matriculates of the college*. Philadelphia: Society of the alumni, 1894.

## Scope and Content Note

The Alfred G. Baker papers comprise personal correspondence and business records of nineteenth-century Philadelphia businessmen Michael V. Baker and his son Alfred G. Baker, who became a prominent citizen and patron of the arts. The papers, the bulk of which relate to Alfred G. Baker, are divided into two series: Series I. the personal paper of Alfred G. Baker, businessman and patron of the arts, and Series II. books and ledgers of the Philadelphia dry goods firm Baker and Moss, co-owned by Alfred G. Baker's father, Michael V. Baker.

Series I. comprises the personal and professional papers of Alfred G. Baker. Materials include schoolwork from the University of Pennsylvania, documents resulting from the settlement of his father's estate, correspondence with banker George Baker, and legal papers related to Midwestern land sales. The collection also documents Baker's involvement with the Franklin Fire Insurance Company as one of its directors, including policies and a business report. One of the policies is for Remigius Weiss, a Philadelphia rare book dealer, insuring two thousand dollars worth of furniture. The final portion of this series hints at Baker's involvement in Philadelphia's arts community. It includes responses to an invitation at an American Academy of Music ball on March 15, 1890. Many of the responses are from prominent Philadelphians, such as Weiss, and include their addresses.

Series II. includes the books and ledgers of Baker and Moss, a dry goods firm in Philadelphia. Folder seven is a book of payments made by the firm to various other firms and individuals. These payments are typically for goods later resold by the firm. Some of the expenses noted are also for incidental expenses. The rear of the book is listed by commodity with family names below. Folder eight contains a book of receipts for payments by the firm. It does not list reason for payments, but simply amount and the name, place, and date. The book also has some entries starting from the rear. Folder nine contains a book of the accounts of customers: each name is assigned a number and then organized by date. The amount of money owed by each is marked next to their names. Folder ten contains a book with copies of all the letters sent by the firm, which are largely to suppliers of goods with requests and negotiations for more goods. All these cover different periods, with only some overlap.

## **Selected Search Terms**

### **Personal Names**

Baker, Michael V.

Moss, John.

Weiss, Remigus.

### **Corporate Names**

American Academy of Music (Philadelphia, Pa.)

Baker and Moss.

Franklin Fire Insurance Company of Philadelphia.

### **Topical Terms**

Dry-goods--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia---19th century--Sources.

Art patronage--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--19th century--Sources.

### **Geographic Names**

Philadelphia (Pa.)--History--19th century--Sources.

Philadelphia (Pa.)--History--20th century--Sources.

### **Form/Genre Terms**

Ledgers (account books)

Correspondence.

Insurance policies.

### **Occupations**

Businessmen.

Patrons.

## **Related Materials in this Repository**

MSS 311 Baker - Fales - Rush family papers (includes additional Michael V. Baker and Alfred G. Baker papers)

## **Arrangement**

Series I. Alfred G. Baker papers, 1851–1892

Series II. Baker and Moss record books, 1837–1852

Materials in both series are arranged chronologically.

## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I. Alfred G. Baker papers , 1851–1892

Analysis of *Butler's Analog*, 1851 [Box 1 F1]

2 volumes

Two leather-bound books with an academic analysis of *Butler's Anthology*, produced while Baker was a student at the University of Pennsylvania.

Michael V. Baker estate, 1866 [Box 1 F2]

2 items

A check and letter regarding the settlement of Michael V. Baker's estate.

Letter from George Baker, 1874 [Box 1 F3]

1 item

Letter regarding a check.

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Alfred G. Baker legal papers, 1871–1913 [Box 1 F4]

3 items

Two letters relating to legal business conducted by Alfred G. Baker in the Midwest.

Franklin Fire Insurance Company, 1877–1879 [Box 1 F5]

2 items

A policy and reminder from the Franklin Fire insurance company

Personal correspondence, 1890–1892 [Box 1 F6]

43 items

All but two items are responses to an invitation for a dinner the 15th of March, 1890 at 6:30 pm at the Academy of Music. Respondents include Remigius Weiss, a rare book dealer.

### Series II. Baker and Moss record books, 1837–1852

Receipt book , 1837–1852 [Box 1]

1 volume

Book of payments made by the firm to various other firms and individuals. These payments are typically for goods later resold by the firm. Some of the expenses noted are also for incidental expenses. The rear of the book is listed by commodity with family names below.

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Letter book , 1839–1843 **[Box 2]**

1 volume

Book of receipts for payments by the firm. It does not list reason for payments, but simply amount and the name, place and date. The book also has some entries starting from the rear.

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Account book , 1841–1850 **[Box 3]**

1 volume

Each named customer is assigned a number and entries are organized by date. The amount of money owed by each person is marked next to his name.

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Account book , 1846–1847 **[Box 4]**

1 volume

The book contains copies of all of the letters sent by the firm; they are largely to suppliers with requests and negotiations for more goods to be provided.

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