

[Archives & Special Collections, Columbia University Health Sciences Library](#)

[Charles F. Bodecker Papers](#)

**BODECKER, CHARLES F. (Charles Francis), 1880-1965.**

**Papers, 1876, 1880-1941, 1946-1970.**

**2.25 cubic feet (6 boxes, 4 oversize folders)**

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:** Charles F. Bodecker, dentist and dental researcher, was born Sept. 2, 1880 in New York City, the second and last child of Charles (or Carl) F.W. and Wilhelmina Himbeck Bodecker. At various times, family members spelled their surname "Bödecker" (the original spelling) and "Boedecker," before settling on "Bodecker" by the 1920s.

Charles F.W. Bodecker, a German immigrant, was a prosperous New York City dentist who was intensely interested in dental research, and who also served on the dental faculty of the University of Buffalo in the 1890s. His important collection of rare books on the history of the profession was later donated by his sons to Columbia University's medical library.

Charles F. Bodecker followed his father's path, receiving his dental degree from the University of Buffalo in 1900. Since his father had returned to Berlin in 1897 due to ill health, Charles joined the family there following his graduation and established a dental practice with his father and older brother, Henry. It was highly successful and both brothers remained in Berlin after their father's death in 1912. Charles also pursued further study at the University of Berlin, taking classes with Robert Koch, Willoughby D. Miller, and Heinrich Waldeyer and gaining wide experience in biomedical research.

He returned to New York in 1922 to start a dental practice and join the faculty of the Columbia University School of Dental and Oral Surgery. He was assistant professor of oral histology, 1923-1924; associate professor, 1924-1926; professor, 1926-1946; and professor emeritus, 1946-1965. He was a member of the New York State Dental Board, 1930-1950; associate editor of the *Journal of Dental Education*, 1939-1945; and editor of the *New York State Dental Journal* from 1948 until his death.

Bodecker's research investigated the relation of systemic health conditions to the welfare of the teeth, particularly as they influenced dental caries. He published over 160 scientific articles and three books: *Dental Histology and Embryology* (1926), *Elementary Histology for Dental Hygienists* (1929, 2d ed., 1933), and *Fundamentals of Oral Histology and Embryology including Clinical Applications* (1934, 2d ed., 1940).

Bodecker married four times. His first marriage was in 1907 to a woman in Berlin he refers to in his 1923 diary only as "L. H." She had died by 1910 when he married Josephine Steinback, a German-American who was the sister of the noted American church architect Gustave E. Steinback. She died in 1926. Bodecker married Florence Hoehn in 1928. After her death in 1957, he married Rose Marie Killian.

Charles F. Bodecker died Feb. 11, 1965 at "Happy Landing," his retirement home near Hickory, N.C., survived by his wife and several step-children.

**ORGANIZATION:** Organized in eight series: I. Biographical and family records; II. Correspondence and subject files; III. Educational records; IV. Dentistry; V. Photographs; VI. Diaries and other bound volumes; VII. Reprints; VIII. Oversize.

**SCOPE AND CONTENT:** The Bodecker Papers contain both personal and professional material. However, both his research interests and his time at Columbia University are not well-documented. Besides his own papers, there are some of his father, Charles (Carl) F.W. Bodecker (d. 1912).

**Series I. Biographical and family records:** curricula vitae; obituaries; birth, death, and marriage certificates; and other biographical material relating to Charles F. Bodecker and other members of the Bodecker family. The C. F. Bodecker autobiographical sketches, though undated, probably date to c.1940 and include much about his relationship with his father, his childhood, and his health. The C.F.W. Bodecker material includes correspondence with the University of Buffalo and with his Viennese publisher, and letters from colleagues commenting on his book, *Anatomy and Pathology of the Teeth* (1894).

**Series II. Correspondence and subject files:** Letters from family members and colleagues; documents relating to "Happy Landing," Bodecker's retirement home in North Carolina; letters received upon his retirement from Columbia; and correspondence with and royalty statements from his publishers.

The principal correspondents are William Lefkowitz, who had been Bodecker's research collaborator at Columbia, and Albert Schatz, the co-discoverer with Selman Waksman of the early antibiotic streptomycin. It is not known how Bodecker and Schatz met and the correspondence here appears to be incomplete. Much of it concerns Schatz's alternative theory of the cause of dental caries, but the two discussed a wide variety of scientific and personal topics. The Lefkowitz and Schatz correspondence includes many of Bodecker's replies.

**Series III. Educational records:** Correspondence and official records relating to Bodecker's education, mostly for his studies in Berlin and Jena, but also including a few items from his time at the University of Buffalo.

**Series IV. Dentistry:** Programs from professional meetings, 1920s-1930s; and correspondence relating to his tenure as editor of the *New York State Dental Journal*, 1944-1965.

**Series V. Photographs:** A few photographs of Bodecker, chiefly his Columbia University identification cards; and a few of unidentified individuals.

**Series VI. Diaries & Other Bound Volumes:** Diaries, address books, a log book of cruises taken in his boat, and a cash book. The early diaries, 1898-1902, are a chronicle

of Bodecker's daily activities and give a good picture of his life as a dental student in Buffalo and as a young dentist in Berlin.

The 1923-1926 diary, entitled "Personal Notes for Private Use," (Box 4:6) is brief but highly introspective. Begun not long after he returned alone to the US after 22 years in Berlin, it records his deep anguish and depression over his lack of affection for his wife, Josephine, who had remained behind in Germany, and his growing attraction to a woman only identified as "F," – possibly his third wife, Florence. Bodecker turned to spiritualist practices for solace: consulting mediums, attending Theosophical and spiritualist meetings, and using a Ouija board. The diary concludes with Bodecker breaking with Josephine, not long after her return to the US in 1925.

**Series VII Reprints:** Three volumes of Bodecker's scientific articles, 1905-1958. They appear to be a complete record of his publications.

**Series VIII Oversize material:** Includes German university documents, certificates, blueprints, passports, and other documents too large to be housed in standard boxes.

**LANGUAGES:** English and German.

**PROVENANCE:** Gift of Albert Schatz, an executor of Bodecker's estate, 2003 (acc. #2003.10.10).

## **SUBJECTS**

Bodecker, Charles F. (Charles Francis), b. 1880.  
Bodecker, Charles F.W.  
Lefkowitz, William.  
Schatz, Albert, 1920-  
Bodecker family.  
Columbia University. School of Dental and Oral Surgery.  
University of Buffalo. College of Dentistry.  
Dentistry – Study and teaching – United States.  
Dentistry – Periodicals.  
German-Americans.  
Spiritualism.  
Theosophy.  
Dentists.  
Education, Dental.  
Autobiographies.  
Diaries.

## **ADDED ENTRIES**

Bödecker, Charles F. (Charles Francis), b. 1880.  
Bödecker, Charles F. W.

Papers processed and finding aid written by Stephen E. Novak, 2005.

**Bodecker, Charles F.  
Papers, 1876-1970**

**Box Folder**

**Series I: Biographical and Family Records**

**1**

Bodecker, Charles F.

- 1 Autobiographical sketches (c.1940); curricula vitae
- 2 Other biographical material
- 3 Obituaries, 1965
- 4 Funeral, burial, burial plot, 1955, 1965

Bodecker, Florence

- 5 Naturalization papers, 1925; marriage certificate, 1928
- 6 Death certificate, doctor's bills, 1957

Bodecker, Josephine

- 7 Marriage license, 1910; death certificate and funeral bills, 1926

Bodecker and related families

- 8 Genealogical information

Bodecker, Charles F. W.

- 9 Correspondence, general, 1885, 1891, 1894-1912 and undated
- 10 Correspondence re: his *Anatomy and Pathology of the Teeth*, 1894-1896
- 11 Deed of sale between C.F.W. Bodecker and William Carr for a plot of land in Center Moriches, N.Y., Aug. 13, 1888
- 12 Correspondence with Wilhelm Braunmüller, publisher, Vienna, 1895-1908
- 13 Record of naturalization, 1876; death certificate, 1912

**Series II: Correspondence and Subject Files**

- 14 Correspondence, general, 1908-1965, and undated
- 15 Bodecker, Florence Hoehn: letters to Charles F. Bodecker from Berlin, 1926-1927
- 16 Bodecker, Henry & Sis: letters from Berlin, 1949, 1957, 1961, 1964
- 17 Bodecker, Rose K., 1960
- 18 Brophy, Truman W., Edmonds Midway Oil Co.: correspondence, newsclippings, 1911-1912

**Bodecker, Charles F.  
Papers, 1876-1970**

**Box Folder**

- 19 Cipher typewriter, c. 1940s
  - 20 German legal documents, 1901-1918
  - 21 German royalty, letters from, 1901-1915
  - 22 "Happy Landing," Hickory, N.C. (Bodecker home): deeds, leases, newsclippings, 1952-1963
- 2**
- 1 Lefkowitz, William, 1957-1965, 1968
  - 2 Library: disposition of Bodecker's dental library, 1965-1970
  - 3 Platt, James, 1958-1959 and undated
  - 4 Retirement from Columbia University: letters received, 1946
  - 5 Royalties: correspondence and financial statements, 1946-1957  
Schatz, Albert
  - 6 August, 1955
  - 7 1960-1963
  - 8 Jan. – May, 1964
  - 9 June 1964 – 1965
  - 10 Reprints by him or sent by him, 1945, 1961-1963
- 3**
- 1 Waugh, Leuman, 1946-1962

**Series III: Educational records**

- 2 Documents and correspondence, 1897-1915
- 3 University of Berlin, 1899-1904
- 4 University of Berlin: Anmeldebücher [registration books?], 1899-1907
- 5 University of Jena, 1911-1915

**Series IV: Dentistry**

- 6 Miscellaneous printed materials: meeting programs, articles, etc., 1920s-1960s
- 7 *New York State Dental Journal*: Correspondence, drafts of editorials, etc., 1944-1965, and undated
- 8 Scrapbook: largely programs from professional meetings, 1929-1933

**Series V: Photographs**

- 9 Photographs, c. 1920s-1950s

**Bodecker, Charles F.  
Papers, 1876-1970**

**Box Folder**

**Series VI: Diaries & Other Bound Volumes**

- |          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
| <b>4</b> | 1 | 1898  |
|          | 2 | 1899  |
|          | 3 | 1900  |
|          | 4 | 1901  |
|          | 5 | 1902  |
|          | 6 | 1923-1926, "Personal notes for Private Use" |
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- |          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
| <b>5</b> | 1 | Log of the cruiser "Whatsit," 1938-1941 |
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Loose in box:

3 address books, 1904 and undated  
Cash book, 1898-1900, 1903-1904, 1907

**Series VII: Reprints**

Loose in box: 1905-1933 (1 v.)

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|----------|--------------------------------|
| <b>6</b> | Loose in box: 1931-1958 (2 v.) |
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**Series VIII: Oversize**

Housed in Oversize Materials (25" x 21") Box 1:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | Universities of Berlin and Jena, [Certificates of Matriculation?], 1899, 1900, 1904, 1911 (4 items)  |
| 2 | Xi Psi Phi Fraternity: certificate of graduate membership, 1907                                      |
| 3 | "Happy Landing," Hickory, N.C. (Bodecker home): blueprints and lot surveys, c. 1952 (4 items)        |
| 4 | Passports: Charles F. Bodecker, 1902-1924 (5 items); Florence Hoehn Danziger Bodecker, 1921 (1 item) |
- Charles F. Bodecker baptismal certificate, St. Matthew's Lutheran Church ["Ev. Luth. St. Matthäus Gemeinde"], New York, N.Y., 1880
- Dental Society of the State of New York, Life Membership certificate, 1959
- Sociedad Odontológica de Concepcion [Chile], Honorary Membership certificate, 1963