

McLean County Museum of History

Hirst-Vogel Family Collection

Processed by
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2025-2026

Collection Information

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	2 boxes
COLLECTION DATES:	1910-2025
	Contains fragile items; consult with archivist about handling.
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives
NOTES:	

Brief History

Michael and Hannah Hirst first came to Towanda, Illinois from Liverpool, England in 1868. They originally landed in New York in April 1868 and arrived in Illinois later that month. They had 12 children, several of whom died in infancy. Several other families from their village settled in Towanda including Michael's younger brother, George. Michael died in December of 1910 and Hannah died December of 1923.

Ruby Mae Aspel Vogel (1908-1984) was born in Towanda, and died in Melrose, Florida. She was the granddaughter of Michael and Hannah Hirst. In 1933, Aspel married Joseph G. Vogel. They lived on farms in Woodford, Livingston, and McLean counties, and finally in Bloomington, while raising eight children. She is buried in Holy Cross Cemetery.

Ruby Aspel graduated from Eureka High School in 1926 and began teaching in a one-room country school. She received her master's degree from Illinois State Normal University and taught for twenty-four years in area elementary schools. After a hiatus to raise her children, in 1954, she began teaching seventh grade at Unit Five's Houghton School, then at Brigham School. In 1967 she began teaching special education in Octavia Unit schools.

She was active in many community, church, and school organizations. In May 1981 and 1983, she was a judge for *The Pantagraph's* Flying Horse contest, representing the American Association of Retired Person.

Scope

This collection contains materials collected by several generations of the Hirst family. including postcards, arranged in an album, and photographs as well as biographical materials.

The valentines in this collection are divided into two major categories: those from friends and classmates sent to Ruby Aspel when a child, 1917-1922, and valentines from her students when she taught in a one-room school during the late 1920s and 1930s.

Box and Folder Inventory

Box 1

Folder 1: Hirst Family Documents

- 1.1.1 Gift Agreement, McLean County Historical Society and Joan R. Vogel, October 15, 2025.
- 1.1.2 "The Post Card Album," handwritten description of album in Box 1, 2pp., no date.
- 1.1.3 "Mrs. Hannah Hirst Dies at Towanda," *Pantagraph*, December 4, 1923.
- 1.1.4 "Mrs. Hannah Hirst Is Buried AT Towanda," December 6, 1923.
- 1.1.5 "Mrs. Lucy Aspel," obituary, January 11, 1965.
- 1.1.6 Ruby M. Vogel,. Obituary, December 31, 1984.

Folder 2: Photographs

Thirty-four unidentified cased images, tintypes, and photographs.

Postcard album

The postcards were first collected by Hannah Lillford Hirst. After her death in 1923, her second youngest daughter, Lucy Hirst Aspel, continued the album. When she died in 1965, her daughter, Ruby Aspel Vogel, followed the tradition. And after she passed away in 1984, the album's donor Joan R. Vogel added a few more.

Box 2**Folder 1: General**

- 2.1.1 Gift Agreement, McLean County Historical Society and Joan Vogel, valentine's collection, December 27, 2024.
- 2.1.2 Ruby M. Vogel, obituary, *Pantagraph*, December 31, 1984.
- 2.1.3 Handwritten notes on valentine's collection, by Joan R. Vogel, 1 p. no date.
- 2.1.4 Handwritten notes on Towanda High School Class of 1902, prepared by Joan R. Vogel, 1 p., November 2024.
- 2.1.5 Two uprights (display case signage) for display on Ruby M. Aspel Vogel valentines collection.

Note: Valentines are organized by decade, loose within each folder and not itemized.

Folder 2: Valentines 1917-1924**Folder 3: Valentines 1927****Folder 4: Valentines 1928****Folder 5: Valentines 1929****Folder 6: Valentines 1930-1****Folder 7: Valentines 1930-2****Folder 8: Valentines Undated – 1****Folder 9: Valentines Undated – 2****Folder 10: Valentines Undated – 3****Folder 11: Valentines from Grandchildren**