

**Collection #**  
**M 1112**  
**BV 4980**

**ADOLPH GUSTAV WOLTER  
COLLECTION, CA. 1900–1981**

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Processed by

Dorothy A. Nicholson  
October 2014

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department  
William Henry Smith Memorial Library  
Indiana Historical Society  
450 West Ohio Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

[www.indianahistory.org](http://www.indianahistory.org)

## COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	<b>Manuscript Materials:</b> 2 document cases, 1 bound volume <b>Visual Materials:</b> 1 box of color photographs, 1 box of photographs, 8 graphic boxes, 1 OVA graphic box, 2 oversize graphic folders in flat file storage, 2 photograph albums stored together in one PAB size box, 1 bin of 35 mm acetate negatives <b>Artifacts:</b> 3 artifacts
COLLECTION DATES:	Ca. 1900–1981
PROVENANCE:	Evelyn C. Wolter, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1983
RESTRICTIONS:	Slides, negatives, and color photographs are in cold storage and must be requested in advance. Slides and negatives may be viewed with assistance of library staff.
COPYRIGHT:	
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.
ALTERNATE FORMATS:	
RELATED HOLDINGS:	Reminiscences of Adolph Wolter (SC 1958) Clipping File: Indiana Authors [Wj-Wz]
ACCESSION NUMBER:	1983.1011
NOTES:	Biographical Sketch researched and written by volunteer Robert W. Smith

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Adolph Gustav Wolter von Ruemelin, transplanted sculptor in Hoosierland, was born on September 7, 1903 in Reutlingen (Baden-Württemberg), Germany, in the southern region of that country. The second of three sons, he was educated in the local schools and confirmed in the town's Roman Catholic Church where his father Karl Wolter was chief sculptor. He graduated from the local school, and as a teenager attended the community's technical school (a *Gewerbeschule*) serving a three-year sculpturing apprenticeship with his father where he studied architecture, stone and metal. In due course he matriculated to the Academy of Fine Arts (now called *Die Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Kunst*) in Stuttgart where students enjoyed a reputation for their self-motivation and initiative.

Before his twentieth birthday Wolter immigrated (1922) to the United States and dropped the *von Ruemelin* following his arrival to this country. Wolter stopped first in Minneapolis, and later resided for varying lengths of time in Milwaukee and Chicago where he was commissioned to do stone carving and sculpture for churches and buildings in Milwaukee, Chicago, Cincinnati, and New Haven, Connecticut. Finally settling in Indianapolis in 1933, when the Indiana State Library hired him to carve symbolic relief sculptures for the library exterior.

In the Hoosier capital during the 1930s the hardworking sculptor studied at the John Herron Art Institute, where sculptor David K. Rubins was his primary teacher. Wolter himself later became an art teacher at the Indianapolis Art League, taught classes in his studios, and served as professor of Restorative Arts at the Indiana College of Mortuary Science for several years.

In central Indiana Wolter carried a heavy load of professional responsibilities in the classroom, lecture-demonstrations of his craft before varied audiences both within and outside the city, TV appearances, exhibitions, commissioned works, membership and activities with several art groups, including the Indianapolis Art League. He also wrote and illustrated articles for *Design Magazine*.

The 1940s and '50s were both the busiest and most productive of Wolter's life. He found time to serve as an art consultant for several companies in New York City, Vermont, Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana. These services involved designing trade marks, medallions, busts, reliefs, and advertising. In June 1946 Wolter married Evelyn C. Martz and started a family. But his life was wrapped up in his work, so much so that one suspects that his divorce from Evelyn in the early 1960s may have been at least in part due to his dedication to his art. They reunited and remarried after a separation of two years in November of 1963, so a local newspaper reported.

His studios were located variously at 1031 Carrollton Ave. (1959), 616 E. 58th St. (1960), in the Liberty Building at 107 S. Capitol Ave. (1964), 5677 N. Delaware St. (at the time of his death), and perhaps elsewhere.

After his years of working and teaching in Indianapolis he moved to Fort Lauderdale, Florida in 1969 for a brief time. He returned to Hoosierland and finished out his professional career.

In September 1975 he journeyed back to Reutlingen there to present an honorary Indianapolis key to the Bürgermeister (mayor) as a token of friendship between the two cities. On September 26, 1975 the local newspaper, the *Reutlingen General-Anzeiger*, expressed the city's appreciation to the citizens of Indianapolis for their friendship (*die Herzen*) to the German city.

Life came to a close for Adolph Gustav Wolter on October 15, 1980, when he died in Indianapolis' Methodist Hospital, survived by his wife Evelyn and two sons. A memorial service in Second Presbyterian Church followed two days later.

William Shakespeare's Marc Antony thought that the good which one does is buried with the individual. Not so with Adolph Wolter. Historians, students and art aficionados remember his lecture-demonstrations and exhibitions, his capturing several prizes, including the Forty-fifth Annual Exhibit of the Indiana Artists Club (1977) for his "Violinist," and his 24-foot tall "Four Freedoms" in the White Chapel Cemetery in Troy, Michigan. Moreover, extant literature notes that he has left for posterity even more creations. Among these works: the Louis Chevrolet masterpiece designed by Fred Wellman and sculpted by Wolter at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, commemorating the contributions of the auto designer and racer; Wolter's contributions to Second Presbyterian Church and to Broadway United Methodist Church; a Presidential Chain of Office presented to Butler University's President; the life-size bust of Crispus Attucks; two figures ("Spiritual Victory" and "Resurrection") on both sides of the door of the Mt. Vernon Mausoleum and the "Hand of God" above them at Washington Park East Cemetery (Indianapolis); and finally, his sculpted Greek mythological gods Pan and Syrinx to replace the stolen originals in University Park in Indianapolis. Wolter's artistic legacy continues to live on after him.

Sources:

Materials in the collection

"Adolph Wolter," Clipping Files, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, IN  
Mr. Dale Caldwell, Staff member, Second Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis, IN  
*Fort Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel*, May 17, 1970  
*Indianapolis News*, October 16 & 22, 1980  
*Indianapolis Star*, October 16, 1980  
*Indianapolis Times*, June 27, 1959 & November 12, 1963

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection includes drawings, sketchbooks, photographs, slides, architectural drawings, photograph albums, and manuscript material made and collected by Indiana sculptor Adolph Gustav Wolter. The photographs show Wolter at work in his studio, teaching, giving demonstrations, and document some of his works in process and completed, on public buildings, and on display. Not all of his work is documented in this collection.

**Series 1: Art Education and Career, 1913–1981:** includes Wolter's biographical information, report cards from Germany and John Herron School of Art, newspaper clippings, an album with images of his early stone carvings in America, notebooks on classical sculpture, anatomy studies, and drawings and photographs of finished works, and some drawings of works never completed.

**Series 2: Note Card and Figure Study Drawings, ca. 1930s–ca. 1970s:** The note card sketches were categorized by Wolter and kept in files, they include: Abstract Design; Figure Design; Male Figure; Female Figure; Plants/Animals/Birds; Florida; World War II; Incidentals, and Scenes. Wolter's drawings are largely pencil sketches on note cards, most are 5 x 7 inches. There are also larger figure study sketches of both male and female models made during life study classes.

It appears Wolter carried note cards with him through the years and sketched whatever interested him including candid portraits.

**Series 3: Color Slides of Wolter's Sculptures, 1963–1969:** Wolter gave talks to various groups in the 1960s and used these slides to illustrate some of his work. The slides were found in disarray so the processor numbered each one and listed them in the collection guide along with the titles and dates that were written on each slide. The processor's comments and descriptions are in square brackets.

**Series 4: Wolter Personal Photographs and Papers, ca. 1900–1974:** Contains mostly photographs of Wolter and family and friends and a few papers. The three albums document Wolter's family life in Reutlingen, Germany, and his early years in America with his younger brother Erwin and friends. A number of snapshots show Wolter socializing with friends before moving to Indianapolis when he was in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

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### **Series 1: Art Education and Career, 1913–1981**

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John Herron School of Art, Official Transcript, 1934–1938	Box 1, Folder 8
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“Anatomy and Drawing” [notebook, ca. 1935]	Graphics: Box 8, Folder 1
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[Anatomy studies notebook, ca. 1935]	Graphics: Box 8, Folder 3
[sketchbook with plants, animals, and figure studies, ca. 1935]	Graphics: Box 8, Folder 4

[sketchbook with notes, ca. 1935] (1 of 2)	Graphics: Box 8, Folder 5
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[sketchbook with notes on dancing, music, and art, ca. 1935]	Graphics: Box 8, Folder 7
[sketchbook with plants, animals, and figure studies, horses at Gregg Farms, ca. 1935]	OVA Graphics: Box 1, Folder 1
[art instruction notebook for elementary school grades 1 through 6, ca. 1940s]	OVA Graphics: Box 1, Folder 2
[art instruction notebook for advanced students, ca. 1950s]	OVA Graphics: Box 1, Folder 3
“The Four Freedoms Memorial” at the White Chapel Memorial Cemetery in Michigan, 1948	Box 1, Folder 9
<i>The Arch</i> , 1950 Indiana College of Mortuary Science yearbook [Wolter is Professor of Restorative Art]	Box 1, Folder 10
Indiana National Bank, 1955 [agreement to create sculpture for bank building]	Box 1, Folder 11
Indiana National Bank sculpture [symbolic of pioneers to the jet age]	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 2  35 mm negatives: Bin 1, Envelope 7
Indiana Employment Security Division, 1957, 1965 [newsletters featuring articles on Wolter]	Box 1, Folder 12
Eastgate Shopping Center, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Annual Art Festival, July 1959 [Wolter sculpting actress Norma Marla, star of “The Mummy”]	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 5
<i>Block’s Booster</i> , 1959, 1960 [company magazine featuring article on Wolter]	Box 1, Folder 13
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Second Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis, 1960s– 1980, n.d. [church newsletters and brochures featuring Wolter]	Box 1, Folder 20
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[Abraham Lincoln, statue model]  
“Coral Reef”  
“Father Jeremiah Treacy” plaque

Color Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 2

Identified Sculptures:  
\**Aiming High* [bowman]  
\**Jacqueline Kennedy* [standing figure]  
*St. Mary of the Woods*  
\**Gymnasium* [model]  
*Beurt and Cory Servaas* [medallion]  
\**First Nighter* [female head and shoulders]  
\**L. Strauss & Company* [plaque]  
*GI American Legion, Washington* [model]  
*Modern Water Nymph or Water Skiing*  
\**Dance*  
\**Pioneer Woman and Child*  
\**Milner* [grave marker]  
*Sueberkrop* [grave marker]  
*Charles Robert Croom* [plaque]

Photographs:  
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\*35 mm acetate negatives:  
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Identified Sculptures:  
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*Crucifixion*  
*The Good Provider*  
*William C. Stalaker* [medallion]  
*Stonewall Jackson*  
*Flight*  
*Swallow Tail Kites* [mobile]  
*Mr. Anderson* [portrait bust]

Photographs:  
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Broadway Methodist Church communion table [1954]

Color Photographs:  
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Unidentified Religious Sculptures:  
[angel]  
[Christ clay model with a saw, made for St. Joseph's]  
[Roman Catholic Church in Shamokin, Penn.]  
[Peace/God clay model with a dove]  
[winged saint in relief next to church door]

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 8

Unidentified Sculptures:  
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[male and female forms outlined in clay]  
[eagle upright with wings back]  
[male flamenco dancer]  
[woman carrying basket of fish on her head]  
[unicorn]  
[winged horse]  
[plaque with pioneers and Monument Circle]  
[\*pendant for an unidentified college]  
[man holding a fish]

Unidentified Sculptures:  
[\*birds at a fountain]  
[lions beside front door of house]  
[\*hawk]  
[\*man held by Satan]  
[\*portrait busts]  
[\*small works on a table]

Wolter teaching sculpture classes, ca. 1960s

Portraits of Wolter at events and working on sculptures, ca. 1940–1970s

[\*interior of Wolter's studio]  
[Wolter posing with some of his sculptures]  
[Wolter working on the *Renner's Express-Speedway Chief Steward's Safety Award* trophy]

[Wolter working on "Pan"]  
[Wolter and E.H. Adriance with Syrinx clay model]

"Indianapolis Community Award plans, n.d.

[Ruemelin Coat of Arms, sketches and templates]

Photographs:  
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negatives:  
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Various printed items, 1959–1972: Sculptors Guild, Indiana Federation of Art Clubs, Indianapolis Art League Foundation, WSMS TV 51 card announcing Wolter interview, “Touch Me” art show entry form, East Side Art Center, <i>Recent Accessions 1966–1972</i> Indianapolis Museum of Art, Briar Hill Stone Co. products,	Box 2, Folder 12
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Board of School Commissioners, 1953 [correspondence received after lecture at school #78]	Box 2, Folder 17
“Design for Living” Winter, 1969–70 [article in <i>Design</i> magazine written by Wolter]	Box 2, Folder 18
Indiana Artists Club, 1977, Merit Award [ribbon]	Artifacts: 1983.1011
“ <i>Miracle</i> negative for Cayle-White, May 11, 1981” [abstract sculpture of pregnant female figure]	35 mm acetate negatives: Bin 1, Envelope 8
“Season’s Greetings” [Christmas card view of Indianapolis and the copper plate it was printed from, n.d.]	Graphics: Box 7, Folder 4  Artifacts: 1983.1011
Entrance to and St. Joseph Catholic Cemeteries	35 mm acetate negatives: Bin 1, Envelope 5

**Series 2: Note Card and Figure Study Drawings, ca. 1930s–ca. 1970s**

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Florida: [scenes and people]	Graphics: Box 6, Folder 4
Florida: [scenes and people, plants, sea life]	Graphics: Box 6, Folder 5
World War II: [American soldiers, sailors, weapons, ships, aircraft]	Graphics: Box 7, Folder 1
World War II: [American soldiers, sailors, weapons, ships, aircraft]	Graphics: Box 7, Folder 2

Incidentals, Scenes:  
[architectural elements, musical instruments,  
wheelchairs and crutches, scenery, etc.]

[figure study drawings, ca. 1960]

[figure study drawings, ca. 1960]

[figure study drawings, ca. 1960]

[figure study drawings, ca. 1960]

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OVA Graphics:  
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### **Series 3: Color Slides of Wolter's Sculptures, 1963–1969**

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Slides 3 & 4:  
*Angelfish*  
Dr. Battersby,  
[full round sculpture of a fish exhibited at the 38<sup>th</sup>  
Hoosier Salon]  
Aug. 1963

Slide 5:  
*Ballet “Apollo”*  
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Sept. 1965

#### CONTAINER

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Color Photographs:  
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Color Photographs:  
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Color Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 1



Slide 6: <i>Bather</i> [full round female figure, a clay model] Aug. 1967	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1
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Slides 14, 15: <i>Dignity of Labor</i> [full round female figure with bucket and scrub brush] Sept. 1963	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1
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*November 8, 1950*  
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Color Photographs:  
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Color Photographs:  
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Slides 50, 51: <i>Goodwill Industries Indianapolis</i> [relief sculpture of a plaster model on board with figures of a man with crutches and a woman in a wheel chair]	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1
Slide 52: <i>Lewis W. Gilfooy, 1911–1971, Educator, Scholar, Friend</i> [relief sculpture plaque with portrait and quotation]	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1
Slide 53: <i>The Lewis W. Gilfooy Outstanding Citizenship Award</i> [plaque with relief sculpture and name plates]	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1
Slide 54: [relief sculpture of a pioneer man and woman mounted on Indiana Bank building, 120 East Market]	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1
Slide 55: <i>Inland Cement</i> [relief sculpture of a crown, sword, orb and cross] Sept. 1963	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1
Slide 56: <i>Jacqueline Kennedy</i> [full round sculpture of Mrs. Kennedy dressed for a formal occasion] Sept. 1963	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1
Slide 57: <i>Lt. (jg) Wells McGurk 1922–1944 Fighting Squadron Nine USN</i> [full round sculpture of a standing sailor at the Naval Armory] Sept. 1963	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1

Slide 58:

*Milner Monument*

[carved limestone grave marker at Crown Hill Cemetery]

Oct. 1965

Color Photographs:

Box 1, Folder 1

Slides 59, 60, 61:

*Walter Myers, Jr., Indiana Supreme Court Judge*

[full round clay model of Judge Myers in his judicial robe]

Dec. 1961

Color Photographs:

Box 1, Folder 1

Slide 62:

*Civil Engineering Purdue University*

[plaster model of a relief sculpture of construction scene with steel girders, buildings, and highway]

Color Photographs:

Box 1, Folder 1

Slide 63:

*Memorial Union Building, Purdue University*

[limestone relief sculpture mounted on west wall of Purdue Memorial Center depicting teachers and students]

Color Photographs:

Box 1, Folder 1

Slide 64:

*Ruemelin Coat of Arms*

[relief bronze plaque of a coat of arms, written on slide "A.W.'s mother's"]

Sept. 1963

Color Photographs:

Box 1, Folder 1

Slides 65, 66:

*St. Mary of the Woods*

[plaster model of relief sculpture]

Aug. 1963

Color Photographs:

Box 1, Folder 1

Slide 67:

*St. Mary of the Woods*

[relief sculpture casting on board]

Aug. 1963

Color Photographs:

Box 1, Folder 1

Slides 68, 69:

*St. Mary of the Woods*

[limestone relief sculpture on exterior of building]

Color Photographs:

Box 1, Folder 1

Slides 70, 71, 72: <i>Door of the Angels</i> , Second Presbyterian Church [high relief plaster sculpture of an angel, two views of the finished door] Aug. 1963, July 1963	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1
Slides 73, 74: <i>Stonewall Jackson</i> [full round equestrian statue] Sept. 1963	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1
Slide 75: <i>Since 1853 / L. Strauss &amp; Company</i> [relief plaque for store] July 1963	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1
Slide 76: <i>Triumph of Communications</i> [relief model for CASPER Award, heroic male figure flying with towers behind him, created for Community Service Council] July 1962	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1
Slide 77: <i>Pan and Syrinx</i> [full round clay models for two statues]	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1

#### **Series 4: Wolter Personal Photographs and Papers, ca. 1900–1974**

##### CONTENTS

Early Portraits of Adolph Wolter, ca. 1904–ca. 1920s

Wolter family photograph album, ca. 1900–1920s  
[snapshots of Wolter and his family and school mates  
in Germany]

“Karl Wolter” [written at bottom of photograph of a  
small child standing next to a statue of an idealized  
female figure, possibly Adolph’s older brother and a  
sculpture created by their father, ca. 1900]

##### CONTAINER

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 12

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 13

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 14

Wolter's German passport 1923,  
Affidavit of Support 1923,  
United States Citizens Service Corps card 1944,  
Indianapolis Service Men's Centers card, n.d.

Box 2, Folder 19

Photograph Album 1: the front pages contain photos of Adolph's father and mother, the Wolter home in Germany, and portraits of Adolph and his brothers Karl and Erwin, the rest are snapshots of Adolph and friends in Milwaukee, Chicago, Evanston, and Wilmette, 1924–1926

Album Storage:  
PAB

Photograph Album 2: portrait of Wolter at the front, the rest of the album contains snapshots of Wolter and friends and his brother Erwin in Chicago, on Mackinac Island and at other unidentified lakes and vacation spots, view of a working stone quarry, and several views of Cincinnati Union Terminal under construction, 1924–ca. 1930

Album Storage:  
PAB

Erwin Wolter [Adolph's younger brother]  
[Karl Wolter seated with Adolph's mother and father]  
"Karl Wolter (A's older brother) with Hilde (his wife)"  
[Karl Wolter and his wife Hilde and daughter]  
[2 snapshots of Karl Wolter's daughter]  
[studio portrait of Adolph's mother Elizabeth]  
[Christmas card photo of Adolph and Evelyn's grandchildren, Brian and Ann]  
[2 snapshots of an elderly man wearing a laurel wreath, possibly Elmer Taflinger]

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 15

Letters and cards from Germany, 1963, 1974  
[in German]

Box 2, Folder 20

[Wolter family children or grandchildren at Easter and Christmas]

35 mm acetate color  
negatives:  
Bin 1, Envelope 10

Wolter with other men and women, one view is in front of the Second Presbyterian Church]

35 mm acetate color  
negatives:  
Bin 1, Envelope 11

Hypnotism: notes, clippings, and publications on hypnotism, 1948–1965

Box 2, Folder 21

## CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:  
<http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 1112).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.