

Wittkowsky, Samuel ^[1]

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by William S. Powell, 1996

29 May 1835–14 Feb. 1911



Photograph of Samuel Wittkowsky, circa 1893. From *A memorial volume of the Guilford Battle Ground Company*, published 1893 by Reese & Elam, Greensboro, N.C.

^[2]Samuel Wittkowsky, merchant and building and loan executive, was born in Schwarsenk, near Posen, east Prussia (now Poznan, Poland), the youngest child of Jacob and Mendel Wittkowsky. Misfortune had befallen his formerly comfortable parents, and he spent his youth in poverty, receiving only the free school education available in the neighborhood. In 1853, with the aid of a distant relative, he immigrated to New York and obtained modest employment. As soon as he had saved enough money for the voyage, he settled in Charleston, S.C., and found satisfactory work.

In 1855 he moved to Charlotte, N.C., and became a clerk in a store named Rintels. Towards the end of the next year Wittkowsky invested his savings in a partnership with Rintels, and they opened a store at Ellendale in Alexander County ^[3] with a branch in Caldwell County ^[4] that Wittkowsky managed. Soon after the Ellendale store was moved to Boone, Wittkowsky sold his interests and moved to Winnsboro, S.C., briefly. When he returned to North Carolina, he became a partner in Koopman, Phelps, and Company in Concord. Withdrawing in 1861, he again joined Rintels and they opened a store in Statesville. At the beginning of the Civil War ^[5] Rintels went to the North, and Wittkowsky began a business to manufacture hats, an undertaking that proved to be very profitable. With Rintels's return, the business came to be known as Wittkowsky and Rintels, and the partners opened a wholesale store and a retail store in Charlotte. Their business was good, new stores were opened, and after Rintel's death in 1876 a new partnership was formed with H. Baruch.

At the end of the Civil War Wittkowsky was living in Statesville, where Governor Zebulon B. Vance ^[6] and his family were located temporarily in a rented house. On 3 May 1865 Vance was arrested by Federal cavalrymen. They had only pack horses to take the governor away, so Wittkowsky volunteered to drive Vance in his carriage to the depot in Salisbury, where he was placed on a train for Washington and imprisonment. At Vance's death in 1894 Wittkowsky delivered a memorial address in his honor.

A very generous man, Wittkowsky aided various public causes and engaged in private charities. He served as an alderman of Charlotte ^[7] during the years 1878–79 and was an active member of the Chamber of Commerce. In 1883 he organized the Mechanics Perpetual Association with assets of one million dollars. This building and loan association ^[8] enabled a large number of people in Charlotte to buy homes.

In 1871 Wittkowsky married Carrie Bauman of New York City, and they had three children: Dr. Albert Wittson, Gerard Wittson, and Mrs. J. B. Harty. An active Mason ^[9], he held high office in that fraternal organization in Statesville and Charlotte as well as at the state level. His funeral was conducted by an Episcopal priest, and he was buried in Elmwood Cemetery, Charlotte.

References:

Charlotte Observer, 17 Apr. 1894, 15 Feb. 1911.

Jerome Dowd, *Sketches of Prominent Living North Carolinians*^[10] (1888).

Van Noppen Papers^[11] (Manuscript Department, Duke University Library, Durham).

The State magazine, 7 June 1941.

Additional Resources:

"N.C. Building And Loan Association League." N.C. Highway Historical Marker D-84, N.C. Office of Archives & History. <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?sp=Markers&k=Markers&sv=D-84>^[12] (accessed March 19, 2013).

"Samuel Wittkowsky 1835-1911." The Charlotte Mecklenburg Story. Charlotte Mecklenburg Library. <http://www.cmstory.org/content/wittkowsky>^[13] (accessed March 19, 2013).

"Samuel Wittkowsky Store." Life in a New South City: Charlotte, NC 1865-1929. Fall 2010 History in the Digital Age class. University of North Carolina at Charlotte. <http://digitalage.uncc.edu/items/show/174>^[14] (accessed March 19, 2013).

"Advertisement for Samuel Wittkowsky's Dry Goods Store," Life in a New South City: Charlotte, NC 1865-1929, Item #179, Fall 2010 History in the Digital Age class. University of North Carolina at Charlotte. <http://digitalage.uncc.edu/items/show/179>^[15] (accessed March 19, 2013).

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"Samuel Wittkowsky, Esq." Photograph. *A memorial volume of the Guilford Battle Ground Company. Organized May 6, 1887, at Greensboro, N.C. It contains a brief history of the battle of Guilford Court House, an account of the organization and progress of the Guildford Battle Ground Company, biographical sketches, and a full account of the Holt monument and its dedication, July the 4th, 1893.* Greensboro, N.C., Reece & Elam, printers. 1893. <https://archive.org/stream/memorialvolumeof00guil#page/38/mode/2up>^[2] (accessed March 19, 2013).

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Origin - location:

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[Charlotte](#)^[21]

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1 January 1996 | Powell, William S.

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