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Finding aid for the George W. Welsh collection

Collection 317

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections
Department

111 Library Street NE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

localhis@grpl.org

URL: <http://www.grpl.org>

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Summary Information

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Repository: | Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department |
| Title: | George W. Welsh collection |
| ID: | Collection 317 |
| Date [inclusive]: | Circa 1940s-1970s |
| Physical Description: | 3.6 Linear Feet Six boxes |
| Language of the Material: | English |
| Abstract: | This is a devised collection which brings together various accessions and found materials related to George W. Welsh, a former Mayor and City Manager of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Welsh served first as City Manager from 1929-1932, later returning to that position briefly in 1954-1955. He held the position as Mayor from 1938 to 1950. Some of Welsh's most significant contributions came during the Depression years. As City Manager, he instituted a scrip system of wage payment, providing work and food through operations such as the municipal food store and providing housing for single men. The collection includes newspaper and magazine clippings, scrapbooks, photographs and images from an exhibit. |

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Biographical / Historical

George W. Welsh was a former Mayor and City Manager of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Welsh served first as City Manager from 1929-1932, later returning to that position briefly in 1954-1955. He held the position as Mayor from 1938 to 1950.

One of Welsh's significant achievements is considered to be during the Depression years, when with the support of the City Commission, all manner of support was provided to destitute local families and individuals, before the federal welfare systems were established. Acting as City Manager, Welsh instituted a scrip system of wage payment, provided work and food through operations such as the municipal food store or one of the other thirty work operations and provided housing for single men.

One of the projects to provide work that Welsh pushed through was the construction of the Civil Auditorium Building. With his leadership, voters passed a 1.5 million dollar bond issue for construction,

Apr. 7, 1930. The Civic Auditorium, built in 1931/1932 and mostly razed in 2002, was renamed the George W. Welsh Civic Auditorium in 1974, in his honor.

During his administration as Mayor, Welsh worked to build a pipeline to Lake Michigan, in 1939-1940. He also worked with statewide lobbies to see that part of the State sales tax was returned to the local level. He was active in state politics for many years, but never won the higher offices he sought. Welsh was a power seeker and was often opposed in his bids for positions, at both the state and local level. He was outed from his mayoral position by the Citizen's Action movement, while being sought nationally and internationally at the same time, for his ideas and leadership.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department

111 Library Street NE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

localhis@grpl.org

URL: <http://www.grpl.org>

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Accession numbers 1986.311, 1986.293

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Related Materials

Related Materials

Coll. 029-14-48/49, Grand Rapids Typographical Union No. 39 Records. Correspondence (1944-1956) and contract with the George W. Welsh Printing Co.

Coll. 043, Morris Photo Coll. Image #1 Grand Rapids American Legion Delegation RE Conference Planning. Image includes George Welsh and Thomas Walsh. Also image nos. 471 and 497.

Coll. 046-20A-52, Chamber of Commerce Collection

Coll. 051, Grand Rapids Citizens League Papers.

Coll. 059, Hooper. Includes an image of George Welsh on a houseboat.

Coll. 067, Grand Rapids City Welfare Department. Scrip Labor Collection.

Coll. 075, Tom Walsh Collection, images of Welsh RE the airport.

Coll. 104, Dorothy Judd Collection, RE her law suit vs Welsh.

Coll. 125, various images, including those taken for articles in the Grand Rapids Herald.

Coll. 158, Helen Meade George Welsh Scrapbook

Coll. 164, GRPL Oral History Collection. Contains three different oral tapes, either presentations or interviews, including reminiscences in general, and information on annexation, and the Scrip program.

Coll. 175, GRPL Moving Images Collection. See Welsh segments on a couple of films, including "Grand Rapids presents its Mayor, George Welsh" on the Grand Rapids Film Sampler.

Coll. 185-3-30. Welsh images with copy negatives, most also found in this collection.

Coll. 203, Thomas J. Majchrzak Collection provides information on Majchrzak's experience managing the Social Center which, along with the Scrip program, were Welsh developed welfare programs during the 1930's.

Coll. 216, Welsh political ephemera.

Coll. 239-98.5, GRPL Scrapbook Collection. Welsh Recall Scrapbook.

Coll. 263, George Welsh and the ship the USS Grand Rapids.

Coll. 273, Father Dennis Morrow Coll. Image of George W. Welsh Company Building.

Coll. 303, GRPL City of Grand Rapids Collection, for city documents authored by Welsh as City Manager or as Mayor.

Coll. 326-P1, Colorama Studio Collection. Photo of Welsh seated at his desk.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Depressions - 1929 -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids

- Politicians -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- Mayors -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History
- Welsh, George W

Collection Inventory

Series I. Biographical & Miscellaneous.

| Title/Description | Instances |
|---|-----------|
| Audio tape. Reel to Reel. George Welsh's remarks at City Commission meeting on Mar. 7, 1967. Regarding Annexation. 1999.087 | Box 6 |

Biographical Materials

Processing Information:

Processing Information

Biographical materials transferred to Archives 2004 and Vertical File materials transferred to Archives 2002

| Title/Description | Instances | |
|---|-----------|----------|
| Obituary clippings | Box 1 | Folder 1 |
| Clippings related to Dorothy Judd libel suit | Box 1 | Folder 2 |
| Misc. clippings | Box 1 | Folder 3 |
| "Reminiscences of Grand Rapids by George Welsh, 1930 to the present ... GR Historical Society Newsletter, Dec. 1972. See audio tape in Coll. 164. | Box 1 | Folder 4 |
| "George Welsh: the man who built the Civic Tim Goodwin. Grand Rapids Magazine. V. 3, no. 10, Oct. 1975. | Box 1 | Folder 5 |
| [Partial typed manuscript, no identification. Pg. 22-42]. On Welsh, McKay, others | Box 1 | Folder 6 |

Peninsular Club Magazine articles

| Title/Description | Instances | |
|---|-----------|----------|
| George Welsh Discusses Consolidation. The Peninsular Club Magazine, v. 27, no. 10, oct. 1958. | Box 1 | Folder 7 |
| Story of the Airport : parts played by G.J. Johnson, George Welsh, Elvin Swarthout, Governor Groesbeck, W.B. Stout and other. Peninsular Club Magazine, Dec. n.d. | Box 1 | Folder 7 |
| Speaking of Campaign Expenditures ... Famous Newberry Trial of the 20's Studded with Big Names. Peninsular Club Magazine, Nov. n.d. | Box 1 | Folder 7 |

| | | |
|---|-------|----------|
| An Interview with George Welsh. Peninsular club Magazine, Oct. n.d. | Box 1 | Folder 7 |
| "The Gentleman from Utah.' Penclubber Welsh Recalls his Lone Vote for Mormon Speakers / by George W. Welsh" Peninsular Club Magazine, Jan. n.d. | Box 1 | Folder 7 |
| Recollections of A.J. Groesbeck : a public servant / by George W. Welsh. Peninsular Club Magazine, Aug. n.d. | Box 1 | Folder 7 |
| George Welsh Tells the Story of Houseman Coats in Europe. Reprinted from the Peninsular Club Magazine, March, 1957 | Box 1 | Folder 7 |
| Welsh Memorial page. Interpreter. v. 6, no. 40, July 5, 1974. Pg. 1 | Box 5 | |

"Open Letters"

| Title/Description | Instances | |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| "There, but for the Grace of God, Go I" : the story of a political Vendetta. [Jimmie Hoffa] Offprint. | Box 1 | Folder 8 |
| To a YMCA Secretary as he enters Politics. Commissioner elect Westerman. May 1, 1958. | Box 1 | Folder 9 |
| To the Mayor and City Commission of Grand Rapids. Aug. 20, 1963. | Box 1 | Folder 10 |

Unprocessed Articles.

| Title/Description | Instances | |
|--|-----------|---------|
| America's Number One Mayor / by Dubois Morris, Jr. [Poor condition] Source unknown. Make usage copy & put original in plastic sleeve. VF transfer. | Box | Unknown |
| The Big Splash : former Mayor and City Manager George W. Welsh personally relates how he built Richmond Pool ... without watering down his plan!" Source & date unknown. | Box | Unknown |

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Series II. Scrapbooks

Immediate Source of Acquisition:

Immediate Source of Acquisition

1986.311

| Title/Description | Instances | |
|---|-----------|--|
| Scrapbook 1. "George Welsh Your City Welcomes Your, January 27, 1947"—embossed on cover. Scrapbook, including photos. Black notebook, spiral binding. Clippings, correspondence, b/w photos mostly. | Box 2 | |

| | |
|---|-------|
| Scrapbook 2. "Mayor George W. Welsh, elected president of U.S. Conference of Mayors in January 1947", inside front cover. Clippings, correspondence, ephemera, blank pages at back. Black scrapbook, with left ties. | Box 2 |
| Large folder of unfiled scrapbook materials. | Box 2 |
| Unfiled Scrapbook materials. George Welsh Scrapbooks and collection of clippings, Charles Moore, donor. | Box 1 |
| General | |
| <p>Envelop has printed: Proofs from Peninsular typesetting. Handwritten note: City Manager Story, G.W.W., Interpreter. Agreements.</p> | |
| The Truth – the Whole Truth and Nothing But the Truth" / Independent Publishers, Peninsular Bldg., G.R. ca. 1962. | Box 1 |
| Civic Auditorium letterhead, with graphics on left margin, in green & blue. "The George W. Welsh Civic Auditorium Committee Announces the Dedication ... Dedication Committee [members listed] Manila envelop. "Voice of the People, State of Michigan" return. | Box 1 |
| Bundle of galley proofs | Box 1 |
| Letter. State of Maine, Office of the Governor, Augusta. Jan. 15, 1964. To Adrian H. Scolten, Portland, Maine, from John H. Reed, Governor. + a copy, annotated. | Box 1 |
| Our Christmases in Pioneer Kansas / by Adrian H. Scolten. No sources | Box 1 |
| Foreword to this Compendium / by Bradford Hodges, no sources. Contains much Adrian Scolten stuff. | Box 1 |
| Manila envelop. Labeled in red ink: Fulton park. Shopping News, Press Newsboys. | Box 1 |
| A Tribute to a dedicated Christian and a political martyr. Former Mayor George Veldman. (Mar. 17, 1958) [leaflet] | Box 1 |
| An Open Letter to a Y.M.C.A. Secretary : as he enters Politics / G.w.W., May 1, 1958[flyer] Found with above. | Box 1 |
| The Story of an Unfinished Libel Suit. Independent Publ., ca. 1962. | Box 1 |
| Transparency of Fulton Street Park Veterans monuments, with a corner of the YMCA. | Box 1 |
| Various types manuscript sections & a letter regarding Fulton St. Park. | Box 1 |
| Return envelop with George W. Welsh Co. return. Has: | Box 1 |
| A Radio Torchlight parade : being a speech by George W. Welsh. Feb. 16, 1950. GR radio stations. | Box 1 |

| | |
|--|-------|
| The Story of Two Doors : a radio address by George Wilson Welsh ...WFUR, Feb. 1952. | Box 1 |
| Newspaper clippings | Box 1 |

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Series III. Probate Records.

| Title/Description | Instances |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| Unprocessed. 1986.293 | Box 4 |
| Unprocessed. 1986.293 | Box 5 |

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Series IV. Welsh Exhibit materials

Welsh Exhibit Images. Oversized.

| Title/Description | Instances |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Portrait photo of old Welsh. | Box 5 |
| 2. Welsh Auditorium. Interior. View toward stage. | Box 5 |
| 3. Welsh Auditorium. Interior. Lobby or main hall, with high windows, double doors, palms, Deco décor. | Box 5 |
| 4. "Civic Auditorium" Exterior. Double lamp street lights. | Box 5 |
| 5. Group photo, workmen seated on a brick wall or standing behind the seated men, with Welsh in his straw hat standing in the street. Appears to be at the side of a theater, suggested by the marquee in the upper right corner., 1931-06-19 | Box 5 |
| 6. Bird's eye of demolition, with smoke stack standing toward river at left. Bissell Factory on the river in the background., 1931-06-20 | Box 5 |
| 7. View of site from the Grand River. Bissell factory at left, Heyman's in background., 1931-09-01 | Box 5 |
| 8. View of site toward Bissell factory from the south with the river left. Sign on stripped pole in the foreground has: S.E. corner, Auditorium., 1931-10-26 | Box 5 |
| 9. Group image. Ground Breaking. Men in suits & hats, standing around the site, one with a shovel. Digging equipment with shovel at left., 1931-10-26 | Box 5 |
| 10. Equipment with pulleys in a trench. 5 men standing behind, most with axes. Man to front left may be a foreman giving directions. Smoke stack in background upper left. | Box 5 |

11. Sign: By January 2, 1933, the Civic Auditorium was a reality
...

Box 5

12. View of site from the Grand River before the demolition.
Shows Railroad tracks leading under a building. Panoramic
image is pieced together in an irregular manner at the right, new
the Yellow Cab Co. billboard. Sign for "101 Ranch | Wild West"
Heyman's in background left, and Bissell corner seen at far left.
"June 5, 1931" lower left corner.

Drawer
FF.IX.A

Welsh Exhibit small items

Title/Description

Instances

13. Political poster(?) excerpt: George W. Welsh, Candidate for
Re-election as State Representative

Box 2

14. Head shot of young Welsh.

Box 2

15. Evening Press Newsboys image excerpt, presumed to be the
child Welsh.

Box 2

16. Two men standing on steps of an unidentified building,
Welsh in straw hat at left, Govern Groesbeck on the right. From
an unidentified publication.

Box 2

Related Materials:

Related Materials

See Coll. 185 for copy print. Neg. 3347.

17. Two men seated, in front of a portion of a large hanging
flag, a man is just visible peeping between them. Welsh at right,
Wendell Wilkie on the left.

Box 2

Related Materials:

Related Materials

See Coll. 185 for copy print. Neg. 3345.

18. Three men consulting a piece of paper. President Harry
Truman left, Baltimore Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro center, and
George Welsh, right. 1948.

Box 2

Related Materials:

Related Materials

See Coll. 185 for copy print. Neg. 3344.

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Series V. Other Graphics

Title/Description

Instances

George W. Welsh for Governor. [poster]. Blue. Artists initials in the image are T.S. 00.[0256].2

Physical Location: Located in Collection 224, Box 16

George W. Welsh for Governor. [poster]. Black version. Artists initials in the image are T.S. 00.[0256].1

Physical Location: Located in Collection 224, Box 16

Recall George W. Welsh blank petition form. [May 1949] no. 2560. 00.[0360].1

Physical Location: Located in Collection 224, Box 16

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