

Grand Rapids History & Special Collections

Archives

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Finding Aid for the

Friedrich Brothers Music House Papers

Collection # 015

September 2009 version

Abstract

The Friedrich Brothers Music House Collection includes the papers of a general music dealer in Grand Rapids, whose merchandise included pianos, organs, music, and musical supplies, ca. 1882-1929. The firm became recognized as the most extensive music business in the city and one of the largest in the state, serving all of Western Michigan. It was established by Paul W. and Otto D.T. Friedrich, as Friedrich Brothers in 1873, and later assumed by their brother, Julius A.J. Friedrich. This collection primarily illustrates everyday business proceedings through correspondence for the years 1881 and 1882. Also included are various programs, pamphlets, and advertisements, all which reflect the music business during later years. The collection contains correspondence, receipts, a contract, business forms, clippings, miscellany, memorabilia, theater programs, instruction booklets, trade catalogs, a musician's directory, ledgers, advertisements, pamphlets, sheet music, publications, a map, and photographs.

Collection #: 015  
Accession #: 1984.005  
Donor: Carl Friedrich, 1984  
Span dates: 1881-1952  
Original archival processing date: 1986  
Size: 2.23 linear ft. (26.75 inches)

Related Collections

Coll. 235 GRPL Michigan & Grand Rapids Music Collection has other examples of sheet music from the Friedrich time period.

Box Summary

<u>Box No.</u>	<u>Description of Contents</u>	<u>Box Description</u>
Box inventory 8/4/2009		
1	Correspondence	standard
2	Business records	slim legal
3	Photographs	Slim
4	Oversize	gray lidded window label - 3.5x16x20.5

## Biography

Paul W. and Otto D.T. Friedrich established Friedrich Brothers Music House at no. 30 and 32 Canal Street in 1873. Another brother, Julius A.J. Friedrich, took a position as clerk in 1875. In 1881 Paul W. retired, leaving Otto as the sole proprietor until he admitted Julius into partnership in 1884. In the same year Otto died, and Julius A. J. continued the business in his own name. Julius incorporated the store in 1914 as Friedrich's Music House upon bringing his sons Hugo, Julius, Jr., and Herman, into the business.

The Friedrich Music House occupied four floors in its own building and the third floor of the building adjoining on the north. The first floor contained sheet music, musical merchandise departments and the counting room. The second floor housed the piano sales rooms, that included such brands as Weber, A.B. Chase, Fischer, Franklin, Hobart M. Cable, Hoffman and others. The front portion of the third floor was maintained as an auxiliary piano salesroom. The rear of the third floor housed thousands of talking machine records. The corresponding floor of the building adjoining on the north was occupied in the rear by two large audience rooms where customers could listen to the playing of any record on either the Edison or Victor talking machine. The front part of the third floor was used as a wholesale department for records and talking machines. The basement of the building was also used for this purpose. The fourth floor was divided into studios, with a large reserve space for organs. In the rear of this floor was the repair shop.

The Friedrich Bros. Music House continued in the above location at 30-32 Canal Street until 1911. It was then located at 206 Monroe Ave., NW for 20 years. In 1931 it moved to 19 S. Division and again relocated to 44 S. Division in 1937 where it remained until closing in the 1950's.

John Sharps Robbins (1853-1929), whose correspondence as a salesman for the Friedrich Bros. is included in the collection, was manager of the piano department for 33 years. He came to Grand Rapids from Stewartville, New Jersey, already an accomplished pianist.

Series

Note: These series have been revised, with some items moving to other series. In some cases the notes below may not yet have been updated.

**Series I. Correspondence & Business Records.**

Correspondence, receipts, miscellaneous, contracts, business forms, clippings, memorabilia, theater programs, instruction booklets, trade catalogs, musician's directory, ledgers, advertisements, pamphlets, sheet music, publications, and photographs. The largest part of the collection concerns the business correspondence from the years 1881 and 1882. The correspondence includes letters from customers, suppliers, and their own salesmen. The collection also contains various items that document the different aspects of a music business from suppliers to competitors to advertising. The papers provide an interesting inside look at relations with their business associates, their customers, their salesmen, and even within the Friedrich family.

The correspondence series is divided into the following materials:

General Business, Payment Letters, Overdue Accounts, J. S. Robbins, E.H. Robbins, Organ and Piano Suppliers, Music Suppliers, Telegrams, Friedrich Brothers, Otto Friedrich, Miscellaneous, and Personal.

The General Business Correspondence (1881-1882) consists of letters from customers with complaints or orders, letters from businesses selling for the Friedrich Bros. on consignment, letters from potential employees, and other letters concerning business matters. It also includes correspondence from Roe Stephens Co., a competitor, concerning territorial disputes.

The Payment Letters Correspondence (1881-1882) consists of letters from customers with which payment on their account was enclosed.

The Overdue Accounts Correspondence (1881-1882) includes 11 letters from customers explaining why they could not make payment on their accounts. These letters reflect many hardships typical of the time.

The J. S. Robbins Correspondence (1882, n.d.) contains letters and telegrams Mr. Robbins sent to the Friedrich Bros. during his sales trips throughout western Michigan. The correspondence primarily charts his progress.

**Series I. Correspondence & Business Records.**

The E. H. Robbins Correspondence (1881-1882) consists of the letters and telegrams of another salesman, E. H. Robbins, to the Friedrich Bros. also on sales trips in western Michigan.

The Organ and Piano Suppliers Correspondence (1881-1882) is the correspondence from suppliers to the Friedrich Bros. concerning orders and payment on their account. It includes a folder of miscellaneous suppliers and separate folders for large suppliers A. B. Chase Organ Co., J. and C. Fischer, A. Weber, and the Music House of C. J. Whitney. The Weber and Whitney folders also contain telegrams.

The Music Suppliers Correspondence (1882) contains the correspondence from suppliers of sheet music and music books. It includes one folder of miscellaneous suppliers and one folder from S. Brainard's Sons. The first folder contains an advertising letter and promotional copy of the 12th Street Rag, dated 1920.

The Telegrams. Correspondence (1881-1882) includes miscellaneous telegrams from customers. The Friedrich Bros. Correspondence (1881-1882) includes 3 letters from the Friedrich Bros. to customers concerning payment or orders.

The Otto Friedrich Correspondence (1881-1882) contains 8 letters and 4 telegrams signed by Otto Friedrich. It includes correspondence from Otto back to the store during his business trips and correspondence to his "Friend Wagner."

The Miscellaneous Correspondence (1882, 1894, 1907) consists of 5 letters not directly related to the business of the Friedrich Brothers. Four are announcements and one is in reference to a credit rating.

The Personal Correspondence (1882) includes 2 letters from Alpha Childs, a friend of the Friedrich Brothers. One letter discusses Grand Rapids and the Germans.

Receipts and letter written in German. The Receipts (1891, 1917, 1920) contains three receipt that deal with a firm advertising order, and the personal grocery and freight receipts of Julius A.J.

Ledgers (1890, n.d.) consists of 2 ledgers imprinted with Star Clothing House with nondescript figures inside.

Business Forms (n.d.) contains examples of the firm's blank forms, including payment agreements, gift certificates, order forms (as well as an order form and envelope from Hinners Organ Co.).

**Series II. Miscellaneous**

The Miscellaneous (1881-19097) series contains

The Contract (1904) is between Julius A.J and Charles W. Smith dealing with royalties to be paid to Smith for publishing a song.

Clippings (1926, n.d.) describe a luncheon in honor of Julius A.J.'s 75th birthday and a full-page advertisement for the firm. Also contains Julius A.J.'s obituary from the Music Trade Indicator. Memorabilia (1917) consists only of a certificate of membership in the Michigan National Guard for J.A.J. Friedrich.

Theater programs (1886, 1890, 1902, n.d.) contains six theater programs including the Friedrich Bros. Grand Opening Concert, two Powers Theater programs, one in German, and other miscellaneous programs.

Instruction booklet (n.d.) consists of 2 instruction booklets -- one for Victor Talking Machines and the other for player piano rolls.

Trade catalogs (1924, 1925, 1927, 1929, n.d.) includes catalogs and price lists from various piano and organ companies and a player piano rolls company. It also contains a fireworks catalog and price list.(missing 6/13/2007)

Musicians' directory (1916-1917) contains the Musicians Directory for Grand Rapids for the 1916-1917 arts season.

Sheet music (1920) includes one piece of sheet music, "I Hear the Cumberlands Calling," published by Frank Baker of Muskegon, Michigan.

Oversized [formerly called Realia](1881, c. 1920) contains: one railroad map including rate tables and advertisements on the back, 1881; and one copy proof advertisement for Friedrich's Music House, c. 1920.

### **Series III. Advertising**

Advertising (1929, n.d.) is divided into the following subseries: Advertising Pamphlets and Friedrich Bros. Advertisements.

Advertising Pamphlets (1929, n.d.) includes 5 advertising pamphlets from various music-related companies sent to the Friedrich Music House.

Friedrich Bros. Advertisements (n.d.) contains 4 different advertising devices used by the Friedrich Bros. Music House including a contest coupon and business card.

### **Series IV. Pamphlets**

Pamphlet series (1917, 1929, n.d.) is divided into the following subseries: World War I Pamphlets and Miscellaneous Pamphlets.

World War I Pamphlets (1917, n.d.) consists of two World War I related pamphlets including one about the War Risk Insurance Act.

Miscellaneous Pamphlets (1929, n.d.) contains 3 items: an Eastern Star pamphlet, a Tonk Topics pamphlet, and a musical company promotional item.

### **Series V. Publications**

Publications (1882-1883) consist of two issues of the Friedrich Bros. Musical Journal which contain articles and musical pieces.

### **Series VI. Graphics.**

#### **Suberies A. Photographs**

Photographs (1926, c. 1920, n.d.) contains 31 photographs. They include: 8 of a parade; 1 of Friedman's Dry Goods store fire; 1 unidentified fire; 5 of Newberry St. reservoir washout; 4 of a flood; 3 of inside of Friedrich's Music House; 2 portraits of Julius A. J. Friedrich; 2 concerning Leitelt Bros. Co.; 1 of aerial view from Berkey and Gay Tower; 1 photo reproduction of Berkey and Gay Furniture Co.; 2 of southwest corner of Lyon St. and Monroe Ave.

#### **Subseries B. Printed Graphics.**

1 of Grand Rapids Central High School Football Squad, 1926. Concordia Orchestra.

**Contents**

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
<b>Series I. Correspondence</b>		
1	1	General Business, 1881.
1	2	General Business, 1882.
1	3	Payment Letters, 1881-1882.
1	4	Overdue Accounts, 1881-1882.
1	5	J.S. Robbins, 1882, n.d.
1	6	E.H. Robbins, 1881-1882.
1	7	Organ and Piano Suppliers, 1881-1882.
1	8	A.B. Chase Organ Co., 1882.
1	9	J. & C. Fischer, 1881-1882.
1	10	Music House of C.J. Whitney, 1882.
1	11	A. Weber, 1882.
1	12	Music Suppliers, General, 1882.
1	13	S. Brainard's Sons, 1882.
1	14	Telegrams, 1881-1882.
1	15	Friedrich Bros. Business correspondence, 1881-1882.
1	16	Otto Friedrich correspondence, 1881-1882.
1	17	Miscellaneous correspondence, 1882, 1894, 1907. (5 + 3 postcards 1999.040) 1894 item has a bird's eye illustration of the Western Michigan Agricultural & Industrial Society fair grounds in the letterhead.
1	18	Personal - Alpha Childs, 1882.
1	19	Receipts, 1891, 1917, 1920.
1	20A	German, 1881-2, 1893, 1906-1907.
1	22	Business Form Samples, n.d.
1	22.5	The Friedrich Piano Manufacturers' Certificate & Warranty. Blank.
2	5	Handwritten account books. [Ledgers], Star Clothing House ads on covers. 1890, n.d. (2)

**Series II. Miscellaneous**

1 20B

Clippings

- 2 graphic clippings of interiors of store, source unknown

Photocopies (6 sheets, 4 articles)

- GR Herald, n.d. "Half Century of Business Growth, Friedrich Record"
- GR Herald, May 1962(?). "An Old Name Will Pass"
- GR Herald, June 21, 1912. "Friedrich Store on Division Ave."
- GR News, Mar. 11, 1913(?) "Forty Years in Music Business"

1 23

Clippings, 1926, n.d. (1 original, others photocopies)

1 20C

[History] "The Friedrich Music House" / by M.H.F. (2 handwritten sheets)

1 21

Contract, May 20, 1904 with Charles W. Smith for song.

1 24

Certificate. Honorary Membership, Michigan National Guard, Company G., 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, Oct. 31, 1917. For J.A.J. Friedrich. WWI

2 3

Trade Catalogs, 1924, 1925, 1927 1929, n.d. (11)

Note: Only 2 found here 6/13/2007, with others found at 015-2-9, and now reassigned here, as listed below:

- 1. QRS Player Rolls, Jan. Supplement, 1927. QRS Co., Chicago.
- 2. Hinners Pipe Organs, Reed Organs, Pianos. Catalog of High Grand Pipe-Tome Reed Organs. Pekin, Il. n.d.
- 3. Catalogue and Price List for 1929 of Firewods ... Masten & Wells Fireworks Mfg. Co., Boston, Mass.
- 4. Tonk Topics. V. 10, no. 6, Nov.-Dec. 1929. Tonk Manufacturing Co., Chicago. Piano benches.
- 5. Henry F. Miller, Piano. Price List (Blue card)
- 6. Mehlin & Sons, Art Pianos. Oct. 1, 1924 Price list (crème card)
- 7. Schumann Piano Co., Chicago. n.d. (blue booklet)
- 8-11. Baldwin Piano Co. (4 items)
  - 8. Pianofortes (Blue booklet)
  - 9. Characteristic Styles ... n.d.
  - 10. Price List, n.d.
  - 11. New Howard Grand, n.d.

**Series II. Miscellaneous continued ...**

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 2 | 1 | Theater Programs, 1886, 1890, 1902, n.d. (6)<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1.-2. New Powers Theatre</li> <li>● 3. Parade &amp; Open Air concert by Squires Bank, May 22, 1886.</li> <li>● 4. Redmond Grand Opera House. Apr. 18, 1890. Silk mounted on paper. Romeo and Juliet.</li> <li>● 5. Musicale. Union Musical society, Union School, June 26, 1902.</li> <li>● 6. Polnhnmnia. Mannerchor Bolnhnmnia ... Concordia Orchesters.</li> </ul> |
| 2 | 2 | Instruction Booklets, n.d. (2)   |
| 2 | 4 | Musician's Directory, 1916-1917.   |

**Series III. Advertising**

- |   |    |  |
|---|----|--|
| 2 | 6  | Advertising Pamphlets, 1929, n.d. (3, 6/13/2007)<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1. Kranich &amp; Bach Pianos. 1929 poster (oversized, folded)</li> <li>● 2. Victor: a Smashing Success! 1929-1930</li> <li>● 3. Voice of the Victor. v. 24, no. 1, Early Fall 1929</li> <li>● 4. Announcing the new Starr Grand Style 45 / Starr Piano Co., Richmond, In. + Envelop w postal date, Sept. 3, 1929.</li> <li>● 5. Lyon &amp; Healy, Chicago. n.d. Trade flyer.</li> </ul> |
| 2 | 7  | Advertisements - Friedrich Bros., n.d. (4)<br>One item include three published views of interior listening & filing rooms.   |
| 2 | 8  | World War I Pamphlets, 1919, n.d. (2)  |
| 2 | 9  | Miscellaneous, 1929, n.d. (2, 6/13/2007)   |
| 2 | 10 | Sheet Music, 1920.<br>"I Hear the Cumberlands Calling" / Music by Robert Van Sickle, words by Frank Baker. Published by Baker, Muskegon, Mich.   |
|   |    | Oversized Advertising  |
| 4 | x  | "Hurry. Hurry. ..." One copy proof advertisement for Friedrich's Music House, ca. 1920.  |
| 4 | x  | Map. One railroad map including rate tables and advertisements on the back, 1881.  |

**Series IV. Publications**

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|---|-------|---|
| 2 | 11-12 | Friedrich Bros. Musical Journal, 1882-1883. |
|---|-------|---|

**Series V. Graphics**

**Subseries A. Photographs**

**Photographs** [25 total, 9/99; 28 items 5/2001, 6/13/2007)

- |   |    |  |
|---|----|--|
| 3 | 1  | 1.-2. Julius A. J. Friedrich. (2)  |
| 3 | 2  | 3. Friedrich Brothers, ... Pianos & Organs, wholesale & retail. Exterior.  |
| 3 | 3  | 4. Friedrich Brothers, Julius A.J. Friedrich, successor. Exterior view of 30-32 Canal (Monroe) St., June 29, 1895. Includes Louis Hornburg.  |
| 3 | 4  | 5. Friedrich Music House, 206 Monroe Ave., Display Window. N.d.  |
| 3 | 5  | 6. Friedrich Music House, 206 Monroe Ave., Interior with counters & clerks.  |
| 3 | 6  | 7. Friedrich Music House, Interior with counters & staff.  |
| 3 | 7  | Fire. (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 8. N. &amp; M Friedman's Dry Goods Store, corner Monroe &amp; Ottawa Sts., n.d. M.H. Friedrich, photographer.</li><li>● 9. Fire, unlabeled.</li></ul>  |
| 3 | 8  | 10. Interior. A. Leitelt Bros. Co., machinery and 4 men. (1)   |
| 3 | 9  | 11-18. Parade. (8) [July 4th, ca. 1920?] on Monroe Ave. Bird's eye from Friedrich Music Store window.  |
| 3 | 10 | 19. Bird's eye view from Berkey & Gay Tower, including Buckwheat and Graham, Wolverine Brass Works, and Piano Factory / M.H. Friedrich, photographer.  |
| 3 | 11 | 20.-23. Grand River flood (4), including images of Grand Rapids, Berkey & Gay, Valley City Milling Co., Munson Co., Alexander Dodds, and other views.  |
| 3 | 12 | 24.-28. Reservoir washout, Newberry St. NE (5)   |
|   |    | Oversized Photographs (4, 6/13/2007)   |
| 4 | 1  | Leitelt Bros. Co. group shot with each man holding a tool. Sign has: A. Leitelt Bros. Co., Mill. Machinery. Machine Oils. Saws. Belting & All Mill Supplies.   |
| 4 | 2  | Bird's Eye view of Etching of Grand Rapids from the River, at the Berkey & Gay Furniture Co.   |
| 4 | 3  | 2 Louis C. Tower photos on board. Southwest corner of Lyon St. and Monroe Ave. (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● showing future site of Kent State Bank, George A. Fuller Co., Builders.</li><li>● showing constructed Kent State Bank and neighboring businesses.</li></ul> |

**Series V. Graphics**

**Subseries B. Printed Graphics**

Miscellaneous clippings.

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 4 | 4 | Grand Rapids Central High School Football Squad, 1926. (1)   |
| 4 | 5 | Concordia Orchestra, Grand Rapids, including Julius Friedrich. (2 copies)<br>Another copy at 315-2 |