

Grand Rapids History & Special Collections

Archives

GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC LIBRARY

Finding Aid for the
Kent County Bridges Collection
Collection # 132

October 2009 version

Abstract

The Kent County Bridges Collection consists of various small accessions of historic and photographic information on select bridges in Kent County, Michigan. A 1988 and 1991 accession from the Grand Rapids City Engineers includes recordation packages of the Bridge St. Bridge and the North Park Bridge. A brief history of each bridge and maps of the areas are given. The historical & economic importance of each bridge is assessed. Schematics and pictures of each bridge is also included, as are construction plans. The data was collected prior to demolition of both of these National Register of Historic Places eligible bridges, as required by federal law. Additional color photographs have been added, which show the 1991 construction of the new bridge, as well as 1998 engineering drawings, which show the plans for the old bridge installed in Riverside Park. However, the largest content currently in this general subject-related collection are the items for the Sixth Street Bridge, mostly from 1976, including correspondence and a structural report. Reference articles and newspaper clippings cover various time periods, and a 1981 dedication program and invitation are the most recent documents. A 2002 accession is a reproduction Dutch lithograph of the Grand River, showing a covered bridge with stone supports, near "Belting Manufactory".

Collection #: 132

Accession #: 1988.013 ; 1991.007 ; 1998.071 ; 1998.082; P2002.024

Donor: City of Grand Rapids

Span dates: 1903-1998.

Original processor, Mary S. Alfson. Additions & Revisions, R. Mayne, Dec. 1999 to 2005.

Size: 1.71 linear ft. (20.5 inches)

Related Collections

Coll. 033, Anderson Photographs Collection. Includes the Grand River Bridges Series.

Coll. 054, Grand Rapids Public Library Photo Collection.

Coll. 078, Grand Rapids Public Library Postcard Collection, for images of the new Bridge St. Cement bridges, and others, as these become available.

See also Website: Historic Bridges of Michigan and Elsewhere

<http://www.historicbridges.org/>

Box Summary

Box No.	Description of Contents	Box Description
<hr/>		
Box Inventory 9/2009		
1	Historic Recordations Bridge St. North Park	standard
1.5 Added 4/7/2009	Bridges in General	slim
2	Photos/Negatives. Box not found in 9/2009 inventory. Check if integrated into other boxes in this collection.	small 5x2.5x6
3	Oversized	oversize print box(located in first floor oversize storage area).
4	6 th St. Former VF items	slim legal 5/30/2002

Scope and Content

This collection began with an accession of information on one bridge, and has continued to grow as more information on bridges has been identified and processed. The bridges included to date are those spanning the Grand River, in the area of Grand Rapids, Michigan proper.

For other information on area bridges, see Coll. 033, the Anderson Photo Collection.

History

A Brief history of Bridges in Grand Rapids, with reference to other Kent County

As with other conveniences of civilization in the new settlements in Kent County, the means for crossing rivers developed more permanence over time. At the beginning of the 19th century, individuals kept canoes or rafts, forded shallow areas by foot, or built semi-permanent foot bridges in low water areas as the seasons allowed. Wagons & teams crossed at will on the frozen ice during the winter months. Some forded during other seasons in areas of low water, others crossed by ferry. Ferry St. between Pearl St. and Fulton St. was the location of an early Ferry landing on the East side, with the West side landing almost directly opposite.

The first real river bridge in the county was built in Ada in 1844, paid for with State funds. Efforts to construct a free bridge in Grand Rapids began with a meeting in Feb. 1842. A foot bridge was constructed near Bridge St., and the Supervisors of Kent County were given authority to build the first real bridge across the Grand River in Grand Rapids. The stone was completed Aug. 9, 1845, and the bridge was finished Nov. 27. A separate bridge across the canal was also completed then. This bridge lasted only about 7 years. The second bridge, a shingle roofed lattice bridge, was built in 1852 at the same location. This bridge was a toll bridge. It burnt in April 1858 and a replacement toll covered bridge was constructed by September. The toll was not ended until 1874 when it was purchased by the City. It was replaced by a wrought iron bridge in 1884, and then by a new cement bridge during the early part of the 20th century. By that time, there were several other bridges along the Grand River at Grand Rapids.

The other early bridges included the:

- Leonard St. Bridge, a toll bridge completed Oct 21, 1858, and made free in 1873 when purchased by the City. 7 stone piers, truss pattern with shingled roof.
- Pearl St. Bridge, completed Nov. 25, 1958. Truss on massive stone abutements. This one crossed the island still part of the river at that time. It was also a toll bridge until purchased by the City in 1873. It was replaced in 1886.
- Fulton St. Bridge, wrought iron with high trusses was built in 1885.
- Sixth ST. Bridge, at Newberry St, was also started in 1885, and was wrought iron with high trusses.
- Also, the Canal ST. Gravel Road Co. Bridge was built in 1884, crossing near Soldier's Home.

Separate bridges for railroads were also constructed beginning with wooden bridges in 1857 and then iron. They were lower, and a couple were destroyed or damaged by the July 1883 flood.

http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/1,1607,7-151-9620_11154_11188---,00.html

<http://www.michmarkers.com/startup.asp?startMenu=Kent.htm>

Series Descriptions

Series I. Grand Rapids and Kent County, Michigan area bridges in general.

In construction

Series II. Specific Greater Grand Rapids area bridges.

As currently created, this collection was a small collection about one bridge. As of 2008, it is still a small collection, but contains information and documents about several bridges, including a couple of generations of bridges at the same location. Included are Bridge St., North Park, Pearl St., and 6th Street bridges.

Contents

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
1.5	1	Series I. Bridges in General General Reference Information. <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Etten (1926) Bridge Across Grand River.
1.5	2	Illustrated Pamphlet of Wrought Iron Bridges built by Wrought Iron Bridge company, Canton, Ohio / R.D. Wheaton, Charlotte, Eaton Co., Michigan. Canton, Onio : T.W. Saxton & co., 1884. 1 CD with JPEG digital scans of each page. <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Pg. 20-21 lists Michigan bridges, including one in Grand Rapids, Kent Co., 39x23 ft with two 8 ft. walks.● An image near the back of the publication shows “192 foot swing and 160 foot railway bridge, on iron piers, East Saginaw, Michigan. 2009.042 Added 4/7/2009

Series II. Specific Bridges

Bridge St. Bridge.

Historic Preservation Recordation Packet

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | Engineering record of Bridge St. Bridge, maps, and picture index, 1988. |
| | | Images (Photographs, negatives) |
| 1 | 2 | Views of Bridge St. Bridge. (8 5 x 7 b/w) |
| 1 | 3 | Views of Bridge St. Bridge. (8 5 x 7 b/w) |
| 1 | 4 | Schematics of Bridge St. Bridge. (8 8 x 10 bw microfilm prints on photo paper?) |
| 1 | 5 | Negatives of schematics (Bridge St. Bridge). (8 8 x 10, interleaved with paper) |

Fulton Street Bridge [M-45]

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | 5.5 | Engineering Report 1830 : location-design study report M-45 [Fulton St.] over Grand River, City of Grand Rapids, Kent County. Jan. 1972 / Michigan Department of State Highways
Includes maps & drawings.
00.[5732].1 Added 4/14/2009 |
|---|-----|---|

Leonard Street Bridge [US-131]

- | | | |
|---|-----|--|
| 1 | 5.6 | Engineering Report 1843 : a location-design study report, structure carrying US-131 [Leonard St.] BR over the Grand River, Grand Rapids, Kent County. July 9, 1975 / Michigan Dept. of State Highways & Transportation.
Includes five maps & drawings.
00.[5733].1 Added 4/14/2009 |
|---|-----|--|

North Park Bridge.

Historic Preservation Recordation Packet

- | | | |
|---|----|---|
| 1 | 6 | Engineering record of North Park Bridge, maps and picture index, [1988] / HAER No. MI-46. |
| | | Images |
| 1 | 7 | Views of North Park Bridge, 1990. (10 5 x 7 b/w) |
| 1 | 8 | Views of North Park Bridge, 1962, 1910. (6 5 x 7 b/w) |
| 1 | 9 | Schematics for masonry of North Park Bridge. 1903 (3 8 x 10 on photo paper?) |
| 1 | 10 | Proposed plans and erection plans of North Park Bridge, 1903. (8 8 x 10 on photo paper?) |
| 1 | 11 | Plans for trusses on North Park Bridge. (7 8 x 10 on photo paper) 1903 |
| 1 | 12 | Plans for the partial rebuilding of North Park. Bridge, [1933]. (6 8 x 10 on photo paper?) |
| | | New North Park Bridge Construction, 1991. |
| 1 | 13 | New North Park Bridge in construction, ca. 1991
(17 5x7 color photos from City Manager's office)
1998.082 |
| 2 | | New North Park Bridge in construction, ca. 1991
(16 4x5 color photos from City Manager's office)
1998.082 |
| 2 | | 4 x 5 Negative, MI-27-1 to MI-27-17, with one 4 x 5 print for MI-27-5. |

Series II. Specific Bridges

Old North Park Bridge, Engineering Drawings.

- 3 x OVE Engineering Drawings, Old North Park Bridge / Riverside Park.
1998. (18 drawings, copy) / Williams & Works, G.R., Scott Civil
Engineering Co. 1998.071

Items formerly in LH VF, 5/30/2002

Pearl Street Bridge. Old Covered.

- 1 14 Gezicht aan de overzijde van de rivier op Grand Rapids / Lith. Emrik &
Binerg., [1886?]
P2002.024 Added 2/26/2002
Dutch lithograph of Grand River, showing a covered bridge with stone
supports, near "Belting Manufactory".

Series II. Specific Bridges

Sixth Street Bridge

(6th) Sixth St. Bridge Demolition/Preservation, 1976

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | 1 | Correspondence. 1975, mostly 1976. Primarily to the Mayor Abe Drasin, but also to City Engineers. Mostly photocopies. Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note & envelope. To Hon. William A. Johnson ... From “Buck” on stationary for “The Buck Matthews Shows” WOTV8, Mar. 1976. |
| 4 | 2 | Packet of photocopied correspondence, John C. Cary letterhead at top, but including copies of letters from Reynold Weidenaar, Joseph E. Kinnebrew IV, Armand Merizon, and area architects. |
| 4 | 3 | Packet of photocopies, mostly correspondence, but with top sheet “Financial Data: Sixth Street Bridge”, “Johnson”—top right. |
| 4 | 4 | Report and Analysis, Sixth Street Bridge, Grand Rapids, Michigan / Robert M. Darvas & Associates, Consulting Structural Engineers, Ann Arbor, Mi. Mar. 15, 1976. [copy] |
| 4 | 5 | Reference articles, photocopies (3) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• West Michigan Environmental Action Council. Action Alert, March 23, [1976]• GR Board of Public Works. Annual Report 1886, pg. 32• GR Board of Public Works. Annual Report 1887, pg. 30• Michigan Municipal Review. V. 48, no. 4, May 1985. “Restoration of an Elderly Bridge” / John L. Hornbach, City Engineer, GR. |
| 4 | 6 | Newspaper clippings [photocopies] <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raspberry Red Span Wins Crowd Plaudits. GR Press, June 6, 1981.• Bridge on Borrowed Time : City’s Oldest Far Past ‘Normal Lifetime’. GR Press, July 15, 1953.• Bridge Decision Will Sun Up How We View American’s Past, Present and Future / Jan Blaich. GR Press, Mar. 11, 1976.• Spanning 88 Years. GR Press, May 28, 1974. “The City and State” section• An Example of Keeping a City Vibrant : Grand Rapids combining best of past with progress / by David Cooper. Detroit Free Press, Apr. 4, 1976. |

Series II. Specific Bridges

Sixth Street Bridge

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | 7 | Invitation. 6th Street Bridge dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony, with cover graphic by Adrian Swets. |
| 4 | 7 | Program. Dedication. [booklet] June 5, 1981.
c. 1
c. 2 2007.040 Added 9/12/2008 |
| 4 | 8 | 6th Street Bridge, Crossing the Grand River, City of Grand Rapids.
Engineering Report / Prein & Newhof, G.R. Dec. 1975
Appendix A contains 15 color photos, 3 images each attached to yellow paper in plastic sheet protectors. Color is fading.
00.[5731].1 Added 4/14/2009
1. East Abutment
2. East Abutment
3. West Pier
4. West Abutment & West Truss Deck and Floor Beams
5. West Truss, Floor Beams
6. Bottom Chord and Floor Joist of West 151' 1/2" Truss
7. Walk Support showing dislodged sleeper beam
8. Typical railing support member
9. Typical truss bearing at pier
10. Floor beam and cantilevered sidewalk truss support
11. Walk support showing deteriorated sleeper beam
12. Typical vertical truss compression member
13. Hip vertical upper pin connection
14. East truss
15. 6 th Street Bridge looking northwest |