

Grand Rapids History & Special Collections

Archives

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Finding Aid for the
Charles Merrill Photo Collection
Collection # 070

September 2009 version

Abstract

The Charles Merrill Photo Collection contains thirty-seven (37) original photos with views of Grand Rapids, Michigan ca. 1887. A stamp on the back of some the photos reads “C.L. Merrill & Co., Photographs and Views, Gallery, 93 Ottawa & 55 Monroe Sts., Grand Rapids, Michigan”. The views are predominantly downtown scenes and buildings, particularly along Monroe Ave., including North Monroe (then called Canal St.) and Campau Square. A few Merrill photos can also be found in other archival collections in the Grand Rapids History & Special Collections Center, received through separate accessions.

Collection #: 070

Accession #: 1984.008

Donor: H.E. Spicer, 6/12/1984

Span dates: ca. 1887 (Source of date unknown)

Original archival processing date: May 1988, Jan. 2004.

Size: .67 linear ft. (8 inches)

Total items in collection, 1/30/2004 = 37 + 1 stereocard + 1 copy print.

Box Summary

Box No.	Description of Contents	Box Description
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Box Inventory 9/2009		
1	Photos & 35 mm negatives	Standard
2	Usage copy photos	4x6 slim
Added 10/25/2005		

Processing Note

Negatives are to be removed when time allows to a separate file, as per preferred archival practice. Currently these are found accompanying the photos, which puts the image more at risk. Also, to be reboxed to standard document case.

Note, 10/25/2005:

Box 2 was added to house the usage copy photos, which were being damaged in their old housing due to bad plastic. Please use these reference images where possible, to save wear and tear on the originals.

Biography

Charles L. Merrill worked as a photographer in Grand Rapids, Michigan from ca. 1875 until 1893, per documentation in the city directories. He worked in partnership with his brother Leonard, who lived in Grand Rapids from 1865 until his death in 1904. The brothers worked under the name C.L. Merrill & Co. No evidence has been found as to Charles Merrill's destination when he left Grand Rapids.

Scope and Content

The Merrill Photo Collection contains thirty-seven original photographs of Grand Rapids, Michigan ca. 1887, including some duplicate images. The source of the "M-x" numbers and descriptive information on the back of the photos is unknown, but is now used as part of the description of the item.

The original of the negatives is not known, but these are to be moved to the copy negative file, for the better protect of the image information.

The views are predominantly of downtown scenes and buildings, particularly along Monroe and Campau Square.

Contents

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	1	Campau Square View (2 photos, June 2000) 1. "Monroe & Pearl St." "M-28" View to east with Monroe Ave. right & Pearl St. left. The Mercantile Agency, among other firms, occupy the building is shown on the SE corner of Pearl. A sign for "Morse's Bargain Store" is on the side of a building on Monroe St. People, horses & carriages, a telephone pole, and dirt streets are part of the scene. 2. "Campau Place". "M-29" View toward the NW, toward the Sweet's Hotel, later the Pantlind, and then the Amway Grand. Clock tower building across Pearl St. to the SW, Canal St., later Upper Monroe Ave., is between Sweet's and the building with the "Job Printing" sign.
1	2	Central High School (1) "High School" "M-10" Shown in it's early rural setting, with the bell tower, a large 3-story Italianate building with basement.
1	3	Crescent Park Fountain (1) Shows the "Crescent Park Fountain". "M-12" A large stone Gothic style house is atop the hill at right
1	4	"Division Street School" (1) "M-6" Shows boys standing in from of a large 2+ story stone(?) building with basement, and front tower. The attic story has windowed gables.
1	5	"Post Office", later Federal Building (1) "M-4" Two men standing in front of a large 3+ story brick(?) building with decorative arches, other Romanesque type elements. A faint view of houses in background. Fenced property.
1	6	Fourth National Bank (1) "M-11" "Fourth National Bank & Nelson Matter Furniture", "Eagle Steam Dye House" Corner view at Lyon and Monroe.
1	7	Grand Rapids "City Hall" (1) "M-7" Early perspective view with tower on near corner, people on street.

- 1 8 Grand Rapids Views (16)
1. View “from Gay Perkins House south west””M-32”
 2. View “from Gay Perkins House west”, on Lafayette(?) showing churches, houses, buildings. “M-33”
 3. “From Thos. Gilbert’s house, southwest” M-31
 4. “From Thos. Gilbert’s house, south” M-30 [Thomas Gilbert House]
 5. “From Crescent Park west” “M-27”
 6. “From Crescent Park [north] west” M-26”
 7. Probably from Crescent Park, SW, St. Mark’s Church towers center left. “M-13”
 8. “From School house west”. “M-20”
 9. -10. “Birdseye from the school house southwest. Ledyard Building center right”. “M-21” (2)
 11. “From Dennison House southwest”. I96 will cut a path through the reground of this scene in the next century. “M-19”
 - 12 -13. “From Dennison House south”. “M-18” (2)
 14. Pearl Street wooden bridge in foreground across Grand River. View to north. Belting Manufactory, F. Raniville factory at end of bridge right, i.e. east side of river. “M-15”.
 15. “1, 2, & 3 make a view of city from the West side” A furniture factory is center left in photo, with railroad(?) bridge spanning the Grand River. “M-17”
 16. View from the West side, 6th St. wooden bridge at left near Belting Manufactory. Michigan Iron Works. School on hill in background. “M-16”
- 1 9 “Houseman Building” (1) “M-3” Perspective corner view with people, carriages.
- 1 10 Ledyard Building / Ledyard Block. “M-22” (1) Perspective corner view, 1874. Street light.
- 1 11 Canal Street, later Monroe Street, Views (2)
1. “M-5” Canal North, later Monroe North at Pearl, showing view north up Monroe. Streetcars. People on street. “Job Printing” sign on building at 36 Pearl.
 2. “Canal St” north (later Monroe North) “M-23” Sweets Hotel at left. Tracks for streetcars in dirt street. Busy scene.
- 1 12 Morton House (hotel) “M-14” (1) View includes utility poles.
- 1 13 Park Congregational Church (1) “Congregational Church” “M-2” Across from park
- 1 14 “Pearl Street” View (1)

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M-1” View to west, with wooden Pearl St. Covered Bridge at end of block. Clock tower building in Campau Square is left, and Sweet’s Hotel, facing Canal St., is on the right. Pierce Clothing, Wm. Sears & Co. signs

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|---|----|--|
| 1 | 15 | “Peninsular Club, 1883-1914” (1)
“M-9” Telephone pole center left, tower in background perhaps for railroad? |
| 1 | 16 | “New Aldrich Block” “M-24” Monroe at Ottawa. Future site of Union Bank Trust Building (2 + Cropped copy print, 2/11/2003) |
| 1 | 17 | “Union Depot” / Union Station (1) “M-8” Old Union Depot. Passengers & carriages waiting. |
| 1 | 18 | Aldrich Block”, Later, the Van Hoecks Shoes Building(3 items)
Total 2 copies of Merrill photo, plus 1 stereocard by Schuyler C. Baldwin, in this folder. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “M-25” “this on Monroe St., which is ? than Canal. Both Sts. New, double track made(?). Canal St., later Monroe view at Ottawa.• “M-25”• Stereocard by Schuyler Baldwin. Added to this collection for reference purposes. “Aldrich Bank on corner Monroe & Ottawa, later the Grand Rapids National Bank. Voight Herposheimer Co. original location & Heath Hat Store occupying bal[ance] of building.” Shows flags hung, carpet store. People on street. |

Added Entry Index

Aldrich Block (new) - folder 16
Aldrich Block (old - folder 18

Bell Tower - folder 15
Bridge - folder 8

Canal St ... See Monroe St. views – folder 11
Churches- folders 8, 13
City Hall- folder 7
City Fire Bell Tower- folder 15
Covered Bridge- folder 8

Eagle Steam Dye House - folder 6

Fire Bell Tower - folder 15
Fountains - folder 3
Fulton Park- folder 8

Grand Rapids & Indiana Railroad Building - folder 18

Hotels - folder 12

Jail - folder 8

Kent County Jail - folder 8

Kent State Bank Building - folder 16

Monroe Center
Monument Square

These two later designations of been given to the area at the intersection of Monroe & Division, and Division & Fulton, which are early depicted in the Aldrich Block, folders 17 & 18.

Nelson, Matter Furniture Company- folder 6
Newman Building - folder 18

Parks- folders 3, 8
Pearl Street Bridge - folder 8
Pearl Street Covered Bridge - folder 8

Schools - folders 2, 4
Siegel Building - folder 18

Steketee Building- folder 16

Tower Clock Building- folder 1

United States Federal Building - folder 5

Veterans Park - folder 8

Wonderly Building- folder 1