

Grand Rapids History and Special Collections

Archives

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Finding Aid for

Charles H. Bender Correspondence

Collection # 024

September 2009 version

Abstract

Charles H. Bender Correspondence collection, 1917 and 1923, consists of humorous incoming and outgoing letters of Bender, a well-known Grand Rapids banker. The letters relate to a practical joke instigated by Frederick W. Stevens, a friend of Bender and a nationally known lawyer, diplomat and financier. The practical jokes pertain to Bender's refusal to run for the governorship on the Democratic ticket and his return from a tour of Europe.

Collection #: 024

Accession #: 1985.033

Donor: Josephine Bender, 1984

Span dates: 1917, 1923

Processor: Original processing, Wendy K. Walker, 1986.

Inventory, Andrea Stadt, Oct. 1999.

Box Summary, Marcella Beck, Aug. 25, 2000.

Updates & revisions, R. Mayne, Aug. 2002.

Size: .21 linear ft. (2.5 inches) including the other collection in the box

Box Summary

Box No.	Description of Contents	Box Description
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Box inventory 8/2009		
1	1 folder Shared with Coll. 22	slim

NOTE: This collection consists of 1 folder, and is boxed in the same box with collections #022, in one slim flip box. 2/25/2003

Biography

Charles H. Bender was born at Batavia, New York, on September 11, 1860, to German-born parents. He was the youngest of ten children. He received some education there, leaving it early to pursue the field of court stenographer. In 1881 Bender moved to Grand Rapids to the employ of Melbourne H. Ford, then the foremost among West Michigan court reporters. Ford and Bender formed a partnership that lasted two years until Ford's retirement at which time Bender brought in Dar Luther.

Bender was named director of Grand Rapids National Bank in 1907 and immediately became a member of the executive committee due to his extreme talent for the profession. He became vice president in 1910, an office he held through the merger with National City banks and until he left to accept the same position at the Michigan Trust Co. in 1931. He served as president of the Michigan State Bankers Association for the 1914-15 term.

He was extremely active in the community including being the leading Grand Rapids Democrat of the time. Bender ignored a large amount of encouragement to run for various political offices. He was chairman of the local chapter of the Red Cross for nine years, which included World War I, and chairman of the state emergency relief commission from its inception. He helped organize and advance the Kent Country Club and was appointed to the local police and fire board on which he served ten years beginning in 1890. He was also a member of the Grace Episcopal Church, the Men's University Club, the Detroit Club and the Masonic Order. At the time of his death on March 28, 1936, he held directorates at many companies.

Bender married Sallie Knapp on February 2, 1891. They had two children.

Scope and Content

The collection (1917, 1923) contains only a correspondence series. The correspondence includes the letter requesting participation of 25 of Bender's friends, 20 of the participants' letters, and 12 photocopies of Bender's copies of his replies to various participants (1917). It also includes 8 letters to Bender concerning the second joke in 1923 on his return trip from Europe.

Contents

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	1	Correspondence, 1917, 1923.