

Finding aid for the John Sehler papers Collection 016

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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Summary Information

Repository	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Title	John Sehler papers
Date [inclusive]	1889-1944
Extent	0.21 Linear feet One box
Language	English
Abstract	<p>John Sehler (1847-1918) moved to West Michigan in 1865. He was a co-owner of Brown & Sehler, an implement business. Sehler was an active member in the community and was involved with the Grand Rapids Credit Men's Association, the Board of Trade and Emmanuel Lutheran Church. The John Sehler Papers include the documents of Sehler (1847-1918) and records of Brown & Sehler (1904-1944). Included are receipts (all before 1900), bills, minutes of the stockholders' meetings, and other papers from circa 1889-1944. The collection also contains data collected on the Sehler family history and genealogy.</p>

Biographical/Historical note

John Sehler (1847-1918) was born in Niagara County, New York to German immigrant parents. During 1865 the family moved to Ottawa County, Michigan. John Sehler established a sawmill at Big Springs under the name of Greager & Sehler in 1871. That same year the mill burned and was rebuilt as John Sehler & Co. Two years later he operated a flour mill at Lisbon, Michigan, returning to his father's farm in 1878.

Sehler joined into a partnership with E.T. Brown and Frank Brown in 1882 who operated an implement business at 19 W. Bridge Street, Grand Rapids, Michigan under the name of E.T. Brown & Co. After moving to 8-10 N. Front the following year, E.T. Brown sold his share in the operation and the remaining partners under the name of Brown & Sehler organized a stock company. The firm's business expanded to include jobbing activities and eventually built a new plant on the northeast corner of Bridge and Front Streets. In 1900 the operation was changed over entirely to wholesale activity and added horse collars and harnesses to its product line. A fur dressing establishment was built in 1911 at the corner of Turner and Victoria.

Sehler was an active member in the community. He was a highly esteemed member of the Grand Rapids Credit Men's Association, holding numerous offices in the group including its presidency. He further served as a director of the Board of Trade and was a member of numerous other business groups. He was also an active member of the Emmanuel Lutheran Church. He served as its treasurer for 25 years, and later as a trustee and superintendent of its Sunday school.

Sehler married the former Barbara Miller in 1873. They lived at 99 Livingston Street during their entire time in Grand Rapids. The Sehlers had six children, three daughters and three sons.

Scope and Contents note

The collection contains records of the Brown & Sehler Co. and documents of John Sehler. The company records include minute books, advertisements, a copy of the firm newsletter *The Sunbeam* and other financial records. These detail the firm's growth to a high point about World War I of gross annual sales over \$300,000. The personal papers include receipts and bills that detail Sehler purchases of groceries, books, furniture etc. The collection also contains data collected on the Sehler family history and genealogy.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department 1986-1990

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Accession Number: 1984.005; Donor: Carl Friedrich, 1984

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Brown and Sehler Co..

Geographic Name(s)

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History

Personal Name(s)

- Sehler, John, 1847-1918

Subject(s)

- Business Enterprises -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids Region

Sehler genealogy

Collection Inventory

Sehler genealogy	Box	Folder
	1	1
Brown & Sehler		
	Box	Folder
Minutes 1904-35	1	2
Daybook 1918-34, 1944	1	3
The Sunbeam 1912	1	4
Receipts 1891, 1900	1	5
Stock certificates and advertisements 1940, n.d.	1	6
Receipts		
	Box	Folder
General 1889-1900	1	7
H.E. Barkley 1891, 1900	1	8
Grocers 1891-2, 1900, n.d.	1	9

Receipts

Miscellaneous 1877, 1891, 1897, 1900

1

10

German 1891, 1899, 1900

1

11

Box**Folder**

Bills, Grand Rapids Gas Co. 1891, 1900

1

12