

Finding Aid for the Kent County bridges collection Collection 132

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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	Kent County bridges collection
Date [inclusive]	1903-1998
Extent	1.71 Linear feet Five boxes
Language	English
Abstract	<p>This collection consists of historic and photographic information on select bridges in Kent County, Michigan. The bulk of the material relates to the Bridge Street, North Park and Sixth Street bridges. Included are brief histories, maps, schematics, construction plans and images. Material is also included for the Fulton Street, Leonard Street and Pearl Street bridges as well as general information on Grand Rapids bridges.</p>

A brief history of bridges in Grand Rapids, with reference to Kent County bridges

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 and 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 February 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 August 9, 1845, and the bridge was finished November 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 October 21, 1858, and made free in 1873 when purchased by the City. Seven stone piers, truss pattern with shingled roof.

Pearl St. Bridge, completed November 25, 1858. 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 the 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>

Scope and Contents note

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.

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 and 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.

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".

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

City of Grand Rapids. Accession numbers 1988.013; 1991.007; 1998.071; 1998.082; P2002.024

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

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

Series I. Bridges in General

Collection Inventory

Series I. Bridges in General		
	Box	Folder
General Reference Information, including Etten (1926) Bridge Across Grand River.	1.5	1
Illustrated Pamphlet of Wrought Iron Bridges built by Wrought Iron Bridge company, Canton, Ohio / R.D. Wheaton, Charlotte, Eaton Co., Michigan. Canton, Ohio : T.W. Saxton & co., 1884. 1 CD with JPEG digital scans of each page. 2009.042	1.5	2
Grand Rapids Bridge Company Scrip. 1852. 1986.272	1	15
Series II. Specific Bridges		
Scope and Contents note		
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.		
Bridge St. Bridge		
	Box	Folder

Fulton Street Bridge [M-45]

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

Fulton Street Bridge [M-45]

	Box	Folder
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. 00.[5732].1	1	5.5

Leonard Street Bridge [US-131]

	Box	Folder
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. 00.[5733].1	1	5.6
Leonard Street Bridge. Formal Opening, 1913. 1986.272	1	17

North Park Bridge.

North Park Bridge.		
	Box	Folder
Engineering record of North Park Bridge, maps and picture index, [1988] / HAER No. MI-46.	1	6
Views of North Park Bridge, 1990. (10 5 x 7 b/w)	1	7
Views of North Park Bridge, 1962, 1910. (6 5 x 7 b/w)	1	8
Schematics for masonry of North Park Bridge. 1903 (3 8 x 10 on photo paper?)	1	9
Proposed plans and erection plans of North Park Bridge, 1903. (8 8 x 10 on photo paper?)	1	10
Plans for trusses on North Park Bridge. (7 8 x 10 on photo paper) 1903	1	11
Plans for the partial rebuilding of North Park. Bridge, [1933]. (6 8 x 10 on photo paper?)	1	12
		Box
OVE Engineering Drawings, Old North Park Bridge / Riverside Park. 1998. (18 drawings, copy) / Williams & Works, G.R., Scott Civil Engineering Co. 1998.071		3
New North Park Bridge Construction, 1991.		
	Box	Folder

Pearl Street Bridge. Old Covered.

New North Park Bridge in construction, ca. 1991 (17 5x7 color photos from City Manager's office). 1998.082	1	13
		Box
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.		2

Pearl Street Bridge. Old Covered.

	Box	Folder
Gezicht aan de overzijde van de rivier op Grand Rapids / Lith. Emrik & Binerg., [1886?] P2002.024. Dutch lithograph of Grand River, showing a covered bridge with stone supports, near "Belting Manufactory"	1	14
Drawing. Pearl Street Bridge. 1886. 1986.272	1	16

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

	Box	Folder
Correspondence. 1975, mostly 1976. Primarily to the Mayor Abe Drasin, but also to City Engineers. Mostly photocopies. Includes: Note and envelope. To Hon. William A. Johnson ... From "Buck" on stationary for "The Buck Matthews Shows" WOTV8, Mar. 1976.	4	1

Newspaper clippings [photocopies]

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	2
Packet of photocopies, mostly correspondence, but with top sheet "Financial Data: Sixth Street Bridge", "Johnson"—top right.	4	3
Report and Analysis, Sixth Street Bridge, Grand Rapids, Michigan / Robert M. Darvas & Associates, Consulting Structural Engineers, Ann Arbor, Mi. Mar. 15, 1976. [copy]	4	4
Reference articles, photocopies (3)		
	Box	Folder
West Michigan Environmental Action Council. Action Alert, March 23, [1976]	4	5
GR Board of Public Works. Annual Report 1886, pg. 32	4	5
GR Board of Public Works. Annual Report 1887, pg. 30	4	5
Michigan Municipal Review. V. 48, no. 4, May 1985. "Restoration of an Elderly Bridge" / John L. Hornbach, City Engineer, GR.	4	5
Newspaper clippings [photocopies]		
	Box	Folder
Raspberry Red Span Wins Crowd Plaudits. GR Press, June 6, 1981.	4	6

Newspaper clippings [photocopies]

Bridge on Borrowed Time : City's Oldest Far Past 'Normal Lifetime'. GR Press, July 15, 1953.	4	6
Bridge Decision Will Sun Up How We View American's Past, Present and Future / Jan Blaich. GR Press, Mar. 11, 1976.	4	6
Spanning 88 Years. GR Press, May 28, 1974. "The City and State" section	4	6
An Example of Keeping a City Vibrant : Grand Rapids combining best of past with progress / by David Cooper. Detroit Free Press, Apr. 4, 1976.	4	6
	Box	Folder
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	4	7
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. 00.[5731].1	4	8