

# **Finding Aid for the Kenneth C. Welch architecture and design collection Collection 151**

**Finding aid prepared by Katie M. Visner**

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This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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October 1992  
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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
<b>Creator</b>	Welch, Kenneth C.
<b>Title</b>	Kenneth C. Welch architecture and design collection
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1944-1984
<b>Extent</b>	1.3 Linear feet Four boxes
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>Kenneth C. Welch was an architect and city planner in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Included in the collection are magazines, magazine articles, brochures and manuscripts dealing with architecture; photographs primarily of the buildings designed by Welch; and correspondence and information about specific projects on which Welch was working. There are also sketches, calculations and cost estimates of his projects; as well as manuscripts that Welch wrote on architectural topics. Also contains Welch's views of Grand Rapids' urban renewal plans of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Welch materials cover both Grand Rapids as well as national architecture. A small box of World War I photographs has also been found and attributed to this collection.</p>

## Biographical/Historical note

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Kenneth C. Welch (ca. 1881-1973), a native of Sparta, Michigan, was a 1912 graduate of the University of Michigan, and received a masters degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1916. That same year he received the Architect's Medal of the Ecole de Beaux Arts, Paris, Frances.

During his career as an architect and urban planner, he lectured at Harvard Graduate School, Yale Traffic School, University of Michigan School of Architecture, University of Illinois, M.I.T., Carnegie Tech., and University of Kansas. He also contributed to a work entitled "Forms and Functions of 20th Century Architecture," published by Columbia University. He designed various types of buildings including parking ramps, churches, apartments, supermarkets, schools, hospitals, and shopping centers.

He was particularly well known and held in high professional regard for his work with shopping centers. His shopping centers include: Mondawnin, Baltimore; the "Center," Omaha; Newton, Spencer, Iowa; North Star Center, San Antonio; The Mall, Kentucky; Westland and Eastland, Jacksonville, Florida; and 100 acre Westroads Center, Omaha.

From 1943 through 1952, Welch served as Chairman of the Grand Rapids City Planning Commission. During the 1950s he became experienced in downtown rehabilitation and revitalization. He served as one of the leading voices in the urban renewal planning and implementation in Grand Rapids.

He resided in Grand Rapids with his wife Lila M. They had four sons: P. Craig, R. Montgomery, Kenneth C. Jr., and A. William.

Note: Additional biographical information received June 23, 2009, from a Welch relative, Susan Linden, provides this additional information:

Lila was Kenneth Welch second wife. Sons P. Craig and R. Montgomery were her children by her first marriage, adopted by Kenneth Welch. Kenny and Bill were Welch sons from his first marriage to Dorothy Hompe. Also from his first marriage was a daughter, Diana Welch, who is the mother of Susan Linden. She was the middle child of the five children from the two combined families.

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## Scope and Contents note

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Contains various magazines, magazine articles, correspondence, photographs, brochures, sketches, calculations, cost estimates and manuscripts. The correspondence details various business projects, particularly, St. Mary's parish church in Spring Lake and Church of the Nazarene (Fuller Street). The data provides insights into cost, client expectations and Welch's architectural views. The photographs depict various shopping malls from the 1950s. An experienced urban planner, the collection also details Welch's views of Grand Rapids' urban renewal.

## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department October 1992

### Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Lucia Skuja, 1986, accession number 1986.080

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## Related Materials

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### Related Archival Materials note

Coll. 255, Jessup Furniture Collection includes a shopping center photo with Welch given as the photographer. 255-1-19

Coll. 354, Arleigh C. Hitchcock Homestyle Center Collection, RE Welch as a member of the Design & Standard Committee for this proposed 1950s Center.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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### Genre(s)

- personal papers

### Geographic Name(s)

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History

**Subject(s)**

- Architects -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- Shopping centers -- United States
- Urban renewal -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids

## Series I. Files and Correspondence, 1958-1980,n.d.

## Collection Inventory

### Series I. Files and Correspondence, 1958-1980,n.d.

#### Scope and Contents note

This diverse series includes graphics, ephemera, correspondence, and other types of materials for different design projects or general architectural topics.

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Calculations and Cost Estimates - building projects, 1960.	1	1
Church of the Nazarene, 1958-1962.	1	2
Government Records, Report, 1960-1984.	1	3
Kent County International Airport - designs, n.d.	1	4
Professional correspondence (Building projects), 1960-1963.	1	5
St. Mary's Parish (Spring Lake, MI), 1964-1965.	1	6
Shopping Centers - designs, n.d.	1	7
Sketches - preliminary designs, n.d.	1	8

**Series II. Manuscripts, 1946-1953, n.d.**

Urban Renewal - design, article, brochure, 1960-1980, n.d.	1	9
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**Series II. Manuscripts, 1946-1953, n.d.****Scope and Contents note**

Contains small documents written to different topics.

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Manuscripts	1	10

National Retail Recentralization	1	10
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Lighting and Brightness for Selling	1	10
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The Regional Center and Downtown, 1946-1953, n.d.	1	10
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The Case for Sloping Windows. "Brightness Engineering and Architecture."	1	11
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**Series III. Articles and Brochures, 1942-1969,n.d.****Scope and Contents note**

Arranged in folders by broad topic, not specific citations for the articles included is available at this time.

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Apartments, n.d.	1	12



**Series IV. Newspaper Clippings, 1951-1964.**

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Church, 1961, n.d.	1	13
Hospitals, n.d.	1	14
Parking ramps, 1950-1960.	1	15
Schools, 1949-50, n.d.	1	16
Shopping Centers, 1949-1969, n.d.	2	1
Shopping Centers, 1950-1963, n.d.	2	2
Supermarkets, 1953-1955.	3	1
Television Studio, 1952.	3	2
Designs, 1942-1947, n.d.	3	3
Magazines, 1959-1961.	3	4
Magazines, 1948-1969.	3	5
<b>Series IV. Newspaper Clippings, 1951-1964.</b>		
	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Newspaper clippings, 1951-1964	3	6

**Series V. Photographs, n.d.**

<b>Series V. Photographs, n.d.</b>		
	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Airports (models), n.d. (8)	3	7
Baltimore church, 1959. (9)	3	8
Cafe (in California?), n.d. (1)	3	9
Churches. Interiors, n.d. (1)	3	10
House - at 50 College, SE, 1925 (1)	3	11
Jordan Marsh Mall, 1951. (12)	3	12
Knapp's store (Lansing, MI?), c.1959. (6)	3	13
Malls, n.d. (60)	3	14
Shopping Centers, 1951-1967, n.d. (8)	3	15
Stores. Interiors, n.d. (13)	3	16
Wards, n.d. (25)	3	17
<b>Series VI. Biographical Data, 1970-1973, n.d.</b>		
	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>

**Series VII. World War I Photographs.**

Biographical data, 1970-1973, n.d.	3	18
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Added biographical. 6/24/2009	3	19
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**Series VII. World War I Photographs.**

**Scope and Contents note**

Note: Box found unprocessed in 1999. According to the labeling on the acid free folders, this material was being processed as Box 1 of Collection 151. In the absence of any other information to the contrary, this box has now been added to the Welch Collection. Welch was in the service in 1917-1919 per his bio in Box 3, although it is not know if he actually made it to Europe. RM 7/19/1999

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
(1)	4	1
(3)	4	2
(1)	4	3
(2)	4	4
(2)	4	5
(2)	4	6
(2)	4	7

**Series VII. World War I Photographs.**

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(5)	4	8
(13)	4	9
(3)	4	10
(14)	4	11
(2)	4	12
(1)	4	13
(3)	4	14
(1)	4	15
(1)	4	16
(3)	4	17
(1)	4	18