

Finding aid for the Harry P. Symes pictorials and advertising collection Collection 202

Finding aid prepared by James Winslow

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
March 1997
111 Library Street NE
Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49503
616-988-5400
localhis@grpl.org

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Summary Information

Repository	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Creator	Symes, Harry P, 1918-1997
Title	Harry P. Symes pictorials and advertising collection
Date [inclusive]	1900-1920, circa 1974-1980
Extent	6.1 Linear feet 10 boxes
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Harry P. Symes (1918-1997) was the owner of an advertising firm and publisher of the Grand Rapids Visitor. This collection includes images that Symes appears to have collected, as well as images relating to his advertising work. The 88 glass negatives depict scenes of Grand Rapids, Michigan during the first two decades of the 20th century. Additionally, 21 postcards give views of such locations as John Ball Park, Monroe Avenue, North Park, hospitals and the post office. Also, 32 oversized photo negatives exemplify Symes Advertising Agencies work for various Grand Rapids furniture companies, including Widdicomb, Irwin, Stow Davis, Superior, Hekman, Baker and Sligh.</p>

Biographical/Historical note

Harry P. Symes (1918-Oct. 30, 1997)* graduated in 1936 from Creston High School, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He began working in the advertising department of a local drug store. During World War II he served in the 10th Armor Division Surgeon's office and took correspondence courses from the American Technical University of Chicago, as well as the University of Wisconsin, in advertising. Later he worked for several local advertising firms until opening his own company in 1949. In addition to numerous Grand Rapids area clients, Symes also published the Grand Rapids Visitor (begun in 1939), from 1957 to 1986.

In 1949 Symes married Marcelline Lynch. They had two daughters: Nancy, married to James Walters, and Linda Symes Wisner, deceased.

*Obituary in GR Press Nov. 2, 1997.

Scope and Contents note

The images depict scenes from the Grand Rapids area during the first two decades of the 20th century. The postcards give views of such locations as John Ball Park, Monroe Avenue, North Park, hospitals and the post office. The glass negatives detail John Ball Park, street scenes, corner stores, the aftermath of the Powers and Walker Casket Co. fire, boats on Lake Michigan, as well as a family, fashions, house interiors, and home exercise equipment. The 32 oversized items appear to highlight the products of several different Grand Rapids furniture companies. They are all color, except [no. 27]. The Symes Advertising Agency address is given as 3501 Lake Eastbrook Blvd., Grand Rapids, Mi. 49506. Also given is the address of the firm evidently developing the negatives: Meisel Photochrome Corporation, P.O. Box 226067, Dallas, Tx. 75281.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department March 1997

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

See also the periodical title “Grand Rapids Visitor” or “ Visitor” produced by Symes on the Local History Periodical Shelves. A couple of additional issues of the Grand Rapids Visitor are included in the GRPL Periodical Collection 285.

Boxes 8-10 accompanying this collection are for accession 1989.025 and are still unprocessed materials given by Symes. Included are photos, flyers, publications, etc. See the Archivist for access to this material.

Controlled Access Headings

Genre(s)

- photographs
- postcards

Geographic Name(s)

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History -- Photographs

Subject(s)

- Furniture industry and trade -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids

Series I. Glass Negatives, ca. 1900.

Collection Inventory

Series I. Glass Negatives, ca. 1900.		
Boats		
	Box	Folder
“Lizzie Walsh” in Holland channel.	1	1
In Holland channel.	1	2
“Soo City”.	1	3
Sidewheelers docked.	1	4
Dogs.	1	5-6
F.T.Cranmer store, 319 Plainfield, NE.	1	7
Fulton Park celebration.	1	8-9
Grocery store bakery counter. [Probably Cranmer]	1	10
Harvesting wheat.	1	11

People indoors

Home gymnasium.	1	12-14
House.	1	15
John Ball Park fountain.	1	16
Leonard at Taylor view.	1	17
Parade (Monroe at Fulton).	2	18-19
Powers & Walker Casket Co. fire.	2	20-3
River.	2	24
Rural views.	2	25-7
VanDam Cigar Mfg. exterior.	2	28
Waterfall.	2	29
People indoors		
	Box	Folder
Child in a parlor.	2	30
Child in chair.	2	31

People outdoors

Child in highchair.	2	32
Children in parlor.	2	33
Man and child in a parlor.	2	34-5
Man and children in parlor.	2	36
Man and woman in parlor.	3	37
People in house.	3	38-40
Woman and child in a parlor.	3	41
Woman and children in parlor.	3	42
Woman in parlor.	3	43-6
People outdoors		
	Box	Folder
Child in backyard.	3	47
Children in side yard.	3	48
Children outdoors.	3	49

People outdoors

Family in backyard.	3	50
Hunters and dogs.	4	53-6
Man in backyard.	4	57
Man outside.	4	58
Man in backyard.	4	59
Man in military uniform with flag.	4	60-1
Man sitting on log.	4	62
Man and woman outdoors.	4	63-4
Man and woman and dog in front of house.	4	65
Man and woman in backyard.	4	66-7
Man, woman and child outside.	4	68
Men on side porch.	4	69
Men with sports items.	4	70
Men in woods.	5	71

Series II. Postcards, c1900-c1920.

People in backyard.	5	72-6
People in woods.	5	77
Woman in backyard.	5	78-9
Woman in yard.	5	80
Woman and children on porch.	5	81
Women in backyard.	5	82-3
Women in backyard with umbrella	5	84-5
Women in front of trees.	5	86
Women standing near house.	5	87
Women on porch with cigars.	5	88
Series II. Postcards, c1900-c1920.		
	Box	Folder
American Seating Corporation, c1910.	6	1
Butterworth Hospital, c1910.	6	2

Series II. Postcards, c1900-c1920.

Fulton Park, c1910.	6	3
Grand Rapids Osteopathic Hospital, c1960.	6	4
Grand Rapids Public Library, c1910.	6	5
John Ball park, c1910.	6	6
North Park Pavilion, c1910.	6	7
Livingston Hotel, c1910.	6	8
Masonic Temple, c1915.	6	9
Michigan Veterans Facility, c1910.	6	10
Monroe Center view, c1900.	6	11
Monroe Avenue views, c1920.	6	12
Monroe Filtration Plant, c1920.	6	13
Morton House hotel, c1910.	6	14
Pantlind Hotel, c1915.	6	15
Pearl Street view, c1900.	6	16

Series III. Oversized film negatives, ca, 1974-1980

Railroad car interior, c1955.	6	17
St. Joseph's Seminary, c1920.	6	18
Stratford Arms, c1910.	6	19
Wealth Street bridge, c1900.	6	20
United States Post Office, c1915.	6	21
Series III. Oversized film negatives, ca, 1974-1980		
	Box	Folder
Irwin Seating, March 1979. Auditorium chairs.	7A	1
Irwin Seating.	7A	2
Lowry [organ]. "Bergama(?)"	7A	3
Bergsma(?) brothar [sic, brother?]	7A	4
Rose. Landscape office furniture.	7A	5
Bergsma, 1981. Lowry organ.	7A	6
Widdcomb, 1981. Office interior.	7A	7

Series III. Oversized film negatives, ca, 1974-1980

Stow Davis. Detail of a chair(?)	7A	8
Kindel Furniture. Room interior, traditional furniture.	7A	9
Trend, 1980. Grandfather clock, bronze chest and light fixture.	7A	10
Superior Furniture 80. Small desk, a candlestick table, and a small wooden etagere.	7A	11
Johnson. Bedroom furniture.	7A	12
Hekman, 1978. [Dining Room]	7A	13
Hekman, 1974. [Hall furniture, including a console with mirror, a small desk, and a candlestick tape]	7A	14
Colonial clock, 1974. [Grandfather clock; 3 small European framed images]	7A	15
Johnson Furniture. Bedroom furniture.	7A	16
Trend Clock, Sligh, 1979. [Grandfather clock, painting of Cathedral church on easel, Elizabethan statue on floor, and tree stand candelabra]	7A	17
Kindel, old. [Living room setting]	7A	18
Baker, 1978. [Living room or study setting, with fireplace and bamboo chair]	7A	19

Series III. Oversized film negatives, ca, 1974-1980

Sligh Furniture, 1978. [Desk]	7B	20
Hubbell—on tape [Hall or end table]	7B	21
[Stuffed chair with ottoman]	7B	22
Widdicomb [Contemporary painted console, oriental scene, with oriental theme statuette, lamp and graphic]	7B	23
Baker. [Traditional bed/sitting room, with 4-poster bed, tiled fireplace, and other decorative objects and furniture]	7B	24
Baker. [Study setting, with backlit window backdrop.]	7B	25
West Michigan Furniture. [Contemporary sectional bookcase unit]	7B	26
Mas[ter] Craft. [Enclosed display cabinet with chair, end table and lamp]	7B	27
Pineshops—on tape [Dining room hutch, with side chairs and decorative mounted wall shelves]	7B	28
Howard Miller Clock, March-June 1979. [Contemporary tallclock]	7B	29
Pineshops. [...with chair?, and patriotic graphic]	7B	30
Brandt. [Wooden shaded hanging lamp fixture]	7B	31
West Michigan Furniture 1979, Front [Contemporary bedroom setting]	7B	32

Unprocessed material

Unprocessed material	Box 8	Box 9	Box 10
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