

# **Finding aid for the Thomas J. Majchrzak collection**

## **Collection 203**

**Finding aid prepared by Richard H. Harms**

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This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

May 07, 2013

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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

June 1997

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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 - Collector</b> | Majchrzak, Thomas J, 1889-1981   |
| <b>Title</b>               | Thomas J. Majchrzak collection   |
| <b>Date [inclusive]</b>    | 1929-1940  |
| <b>Extent</b>              | 1.7 Linear feet Two boxes  |
| <b>Language</b>            | English  |
| <b>Abstract</b>            | <p>Thomas J. Majchrzak (1889-1981) ran the Grand Rapids Social Center from 1930 to 1933. The center was a city department that provided shelter and food to unemployed, single men during the onset of the Great Depression. The collection includes correspondence, photographs and issues of Our Gang, a newspaper published by and for people receiving various forms of welfare during the Depression. The manuscript material includes information on Majchrzak's injury received while working and on his appointment from the police chief as a special officer whose authority was limited to the Social Center.</p> |

## Biographical/Historical note

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Thomas Joseph Majchrzak (1889-1981), the son of Anthony Majchrzak and Pietronella Sarvok, attended Grand Rapids grade schools and (Boys) Catholic Central High School. Thomas worked for his father as a builder until Anthony died in the mid 1920s, and continued in the trade until 1930, when he was hired by the Grand Rapids Welfare Department. For the city he took charge of the Social Center, a program that provided shelter and meals to single, unemployed men. In exchange for the aid, these men were expected to work three four-hour shifts per week on tasks assigned by the city. Under Majchrzak's charge the men collected gifts at Christmas time for distribution to children, cut firewood, helped can food, delivered groceries, repaired clothing and other items.

City officials also used these men to post campaign bills and collect money for political campaigns. The Social Center and other programs were under the control of City Manager George W. Welsh, already a controversial local figure. Criticism of Welsh and his management of these programs, coupled with a lack of funds, caused the program to end during 1933.

Majchrzak returned to the building trades. Just before the United States entered into World War II, he was hired by the Army to make repairs at Fort Custer, near Battle Creek, Michigan. Later he did the same type of work in Galveston, Texas. After briefly returning to Grand Rapids in 1941, the family moved to Detroit, where Majchrzak worked as a builder, later for Detroit Diesel, and still later heading the Redford Township Building Department.

Majchrzak married Elizabeth Ziolkowski (1894-1991) on August 19, 1915. They had four children: Maria Elizabeth Munger, Thomas Joseph Majchrzak, Eugene S. Majchrzak, and Rose Virginia Alger.

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## Scope and Contents note

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Contains photographs that detail the Grand Rapids Social Center. Also included are several issues of *Our Gang*, a tongue-in-cheek but informative newspaper published by and for people receiving various forms of welfare in Grand Rapids during the Great Depression. The manuscript material includes correspondence, information on Majchrzak's injury received while working and appointments from the police chief as a special officer whose authority was limited to the Social Center.

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## Administrative Information

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## **Publication Information**

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

## **Immediate Source of Acquisition note**

Cindy P. Phelps, 1993; Maria E. Munger, 1995. Accession numbers 1993.008, 1995.008.

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## **Related Materials**

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### **Related Archival Materials note**

Collection 067, Grand Rapids City Welfare Department. Scrip Labor Collection.

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## **Controlled Access Headings**

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### **Corporate Name(s)**

- Grand Rapids. Social Center.

### **Geographic Name(s)**

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History

### **Personal Name(s)**

- Majchrzak, Thomas J, 1889-1981

### **Subject(s)**

- Depressions - 1929 -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids

- **Public welfare -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids**

## Collection Inventory

| <b>Series I Files 1929-1940, n.d.</b>   |            |               |
|---|------------|---------------|
|   | <b>Box</b> | <b>Folder</b> |
| Collection bottle locations, n.d.   | 1          | 1             |
| Correspondence 1932   | 1          | 2             |
| Duysen letter c.1932  | 1          | 3             |
| Social Center rosters 1932, c.1933  | 1          | 4             |
| Injury (on-the-job) 1933  | 1          | 5             |
| WPA 1940  | 1          | 6             |
| Barbers Trade Rules 1929  | 1          | 7             |
| Notary Public Appointment 1932  | 1          | 8             |
| Special Police Appointments 1930, 1933  | 1          | 9             |
| Booklets: 'Relief Expenditures,' 'Home Productio of Food Supply,'<br>'Temporary Shelters for Homeless,' 'Emergency Work,' 'Meals for<br>Homeless' 1931-33 | 1          | 10            |

## Photographs

**Series II Photographs 1931-1932**

|   | <b>Box</b> | <b>Folder</b> |
|---|------------|---------------|
| City Social Center building 1931                  | 1          | 11            |
| City Store - inventory c.1931                     | 1          | 12            |
| City Store - shops c.1931                         | 1          | 13            |
| Dug Out (217 Huron, NW, bar) c.1927               | 1          | 14            |
| "For an Empty Stocking Campaign" 1931             | 1          | 15            |
| Majchrzak, Thomas J., Welsh, George W. c.1931     | 1          | 16            |
| Scrip workers on roof of interurban building 1932 | 1          | 17            |

**Series III Newspapers 1931-1937**

|               | <b>Box</b> | <b>Folder</b> |
|---------------|------------|---------------|
| Our Gang 1931 | 2          | 1             |
| Our Gang 1932 | 2          | 2-10          |
| Our Gang 1933 | 2          | 11-14         |
| Our Gang 1934 | 2          | 15-17         |



**Newspapers**

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|                                     |   |       |
|-------------------------------------|---|-------|
| Our Gang 1935                       | 2 | 18-19 |
| Our Gang 1937                       | 2 | 20    |
| Grand Rapids Herald 7 February 1932 | 2 | 21    |