

Finding aid for the George R. Perry collection

Collection 208

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
December 1997- February 1998
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Summary Information

Repository	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Creator	Perry, George R, 1849-1927
Title	George R. Perry collection
Date [inclusive]	1897-1959
Extent	6.0 Linear feet 11 boxes
Language	English
Abstract	<p>George R. Perry (1849-1927) was a Grand Rapids, Michigan businessman and politician. He served as mayor of Grand Rapids from 1898 to 1902. The collection includes letter press books, newspaper clippings, correspondence, account books and accounting files. The material deals mainly with political affairs with the account books relating to Perry's business interests. During Perry's time as mayor he was involved in the Grand Rapids water scandal, relating to bonds issued to fund construction of a water pipeline from Lake Michigan to Grand Rapids. The correspondence in this collection deals mostly with questions regarding the water pipeline.</p>

Biographical/Historical note

George R. Perry (1849-1927) was the son of George H. Perry and Hannah Perry. George Sr. was “prominently identified” with the fur business in Detroit, but did not settle there until after the family had lived in Bridgeport, Connecticut, where George Jr. was born. George Jr. was educated mostly in the Detroit area public school system and completed his high school career in 1864, whereupon he was apprenticed in the druggist’s trade. Mr. Perry made the druggist’s business his own until 1874, when he married Miss Jennie Blake and moved to Chicago. Perry soon came to Grand Rapids for the position of a bookkeeper for a wholesale grocer firm, eventually becoming a member of the firm and later having his name tacked onto the firm’s title.

In 1891, Perry left the firm of Hawkins and Perry to run his own grocery business all throughout the remainder of his life, despite his political career. George R. Perry, a card-carrying Democrat, held the position of Grand Rapids city treasurer from 1886 through 1896. In 1898, Perry was elected mayor of Grand Rapids, serving until 1902, the duration of two terms. Perry’s claim to fame, however, came in a most unfortunate way, as he was supposedly involved in a public bonds scandal in the early nineteenth-hundreds. Perry was never convicted of the charge, and remained active in politics for much of the rest of his life, although he was never elected mayor again. Besides his political and business dealings, Perry was also a prominent member of the local chapter of the brotherhood of masonry, as well as of the Knights of Pythias. Perry died at the age of 78 in his Grand Rapids home, leaving behind, by way of children, a Miss Jeanette Perry.

Scope and Contents note

The collection’s content deals mainly with political affairs; the paper clippings and correspondences being, for the most part, political in nature. The bulk of the collection and its material dates from 1897 to 1904, except for the business accounts, which continue through 1959. The correspondences deal mostly with questions concerning the fraudulent water pipeline plan, although there are no incriminating papers to speak against the honor of mayor Perry. In addition to the correspondence, there is a file of miscellaneous papers, such as personal memos, that are undated.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department December 1997-February 1998

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Michael J. DeVries, accession number 1993.045

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

See collection 186, the Edwin Pettis family papers for additional information relating to the water scandal.

See also Collection 303, City of Grand Rapids (Michigan) Records at the Grand Rapids Public Library, for other information on Perry as Mayor or on the water scandal.

Controlled Access Headings

Genre(s)

- business records
- office files

Geographic Name(s)

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History
- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- Politics and Government

Personal Name(s)

- Perry, George R, 1849-1927

Subject(s)

- Municipal water supply -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- Political corruption -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids -- History

Correspondences

Collection Inventory

Series I Correspondences 1897-1904		
	Box	Folder
Correspondences 1897	1	1
Correspondences 1898	1	2
Correspondences 1898	1	3
Correspondences 1899	1	4
Correspondences 1900	1	5
Correspondences 1900	1	6
Correspondences 1901	1	7
Correspondences 1901	1	8
Correspondences 1902	1	9
Correspondences 1904	1	10
Correspondences, undated	1	11

Account Books

Letter Press Books

Box

Letter Press Books 1897-1898

8

Letter Press Books 1898-1899

7

Letter Press Books 1899-1900

10

Letter Press Books 1900-1901

9

Letter Press Books 1898-1902

9

Letter Press Books 1914

5

Series II Account Books**Box**

Account Books 1914-1926

2

Account Books May 1914-March 1922

3

Account Books July 1926-Dec. 1927

3

Account Books January 1928-February 1929

3

Account Books March 1929-December 1930

3

Scrapbooks and Miscellaneous

Account Books January 1929-October 1931		3
Account Books January 1955-October 1959		7
	Box	Folder
Oversized Loose Account Sheets 1938-1952	4	1
		Box
Small loose ledger sheets		7
Small loose ledger sheets		8
Small loose ledger sheets		10
Small loose ledger sheets		11
Series III Scrapbooks and Miscellaneous		
		Box
First Annual Message of Hon. George R. Perry, Mayor, to the Common Council of the City of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Together with Special Reports of the Council Committees. G.R. : West Michigan Printing Co., 1899. Formerly MKG352.G761.P4i, 00. [3091].1 Added 3/20/2008 May 1, 1899		3
Scrapbook 1912		11
	Box	Folder
Miscellaneous Papers. Unprocessed.	3	3

Scrapbooks and Miscellaneous

Box

6

Framed photograph of Perry and his comrades