

Finding aid for the Marius Rooks old City Hall images Collection 231

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Summary Information

Repository:	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Creator - pht:	Rooks, Marius
Title:	Marius Rooks old City Hall images
ID:	Collection 231
Date [inclusive]:	1969
Physical Description:	0.42 Linear Feet Two boxes
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	Marius Rooks was a commercial photographer in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This collection contains 25 color images of the interior of the 1888 City Hall building in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The images were taken shortly before its destruction during urban renewal in 1969. Also included are photographs of the circa 1885 architectural drawings by the architect, E.E. Myers (see collection 222 for the blueprints). The demolition of this building, near the end of the urban renewal phase in Grand Rapids, was a source of controversy. There was much reporting in the local press the building's demise was one of the catalysts toward more active historic preservation and legislation in Grand Rapids and Michigan. While most other images show only the outside of the building, Rooks captured interior and exterior details such as decorative tiles and fireplaces, ornate ceilings and wood work, the historical bell in the tower and the mechanics of the elevator.

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History of Old City Hall

After many years of planning and acquisition of land for the site, construction began on the Grand Rapids City Hall, completed in 1888. There were other buildings previously used for city government, but this was the first formally planned to bring all of the functions under one roof. The site settled on was on Lyon Street from Ottawa Avenue to Ionia Avenue

Elijah E. Myers of Detroit was the architect, with construction by W.D. Richardson of Springfield, Ill. The cost, including real estate, equipment and furnishings, totaled \$314,888.61. A copper box of

souvenirs was enclosed in the cornerstone on Sept. 9, 1885. The Hall was dedicated Sept. 26, 1888, with tours for the citizenry.

The building was three stories, with a full basement and a clock tower. Lighting was initially supplied by gas, until 1906 when Grand Rapids Electric Company installed that more modern utility. The elevator originally ran by water power, but was electrified in 1926. Many of the chambers had fireplaces.

As the government grew, various departments and operations were annexed to other buildings, with a return to the pre-City Hall problem of scattered city resources. Then in the 1950s and 1960s came urban renewal. Whole blocks of the structures shown in historical views of Grand Rapids were razed to make way for modern structures. Both the need for additional facilities and this new urban planning movement marked the end of what had now become "Old City Hall." Historic preservationists and interested citizens lobbied to save the whole structure and were prepared toward the end of the struggle to settle for the tower. But the destructors had their way and in November 1969, after the dedication of the new City and County buildings and the Alexander Calder stabile "La Grande Vitesse," the entire structure was razed. Its demise is documented in the photographs of many citizens, including a now famous photo record of a final act of protest, as Mary Stiles sat chained to the wrecking ball, before the final demolition took place.

While most of the images of the building document the outside, and its destruction, the quality color images in this collection, taken by commercial photographer Marius Rooks, provide a brief tour of the core of the interior of the building. Tile floor, ornate ceilings and other interior details are shown.

References

A. Image use from this collection

1. The Paper, v. 2, no. 4, Sept. 24-30, 1998. Rooks #2 on cover.

B. Other sources with information on Old City Hall

1. GRPL Local History Vertical File. City Hall.
2. Grand Rapids Sampler. Mary Stiles picture.
3. Seeley Collection. Copies of Architectural drawings by Myer.
4. 216-4-7 Poster for new City-County Building, with images of Old City Hall.
5. Urban Renewal Clippings
6. 254, Boxes 19 & 19.5. Grand Rapids Building Collection.
7. 125- . Robinson Studio urban renewal and the construction of the new city and county building by Skidmore Owings and Merrill.
8. Coll. 1, Nancy Mulnix Collection, including an image of Alexander Calder with the Old City Hall seen through La Grande Vitesse.

9. 224. New renderings of views of this building

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Administrative Information

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Marius Rooks, accession number 1991.033

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Related Materials

Related Materials

Coll. 230, Rooks Studio Negatives

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Controlled Access Headings

- Urban renewal -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- photographs
- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History -- Photographs
- Rooks, Marius

- Grand Rapids City Hall (Mich.)

Collection Inventory

Series I. Biographical / Historical

Scope and Contents

Information on Marius Rooks, and on Old City Hall.

Title/Description	Instances
Biographical information	Box 2
	Folder 3

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Series II. Slides. Master Slide Set (33 images)

Scope and Contents

This collection includes 33 images found in plastic sheet protectors, which have been defined by staff as the master set. 25 of the images are Rooks original photography of the interior of the building. 7 of the images are Rooks copy work to record the architectural drawings by Myer. The location of the original drawings photographed by Rooks is unknown, but may be owned by the City, and located either in their facilities offices, or in the City Archives. Also included are extra copies of some of the 33 images.

Rooks slides include a running description, as the viewer moves from one image to the other. The individual phrases are given with the slide numbers listed below. The entire "tour" script is as follows:

"The basement stairway leads to a grand staircase, which rises to third floor level, under a vaulted ceiling. This stairway leads to the bell tower, and to the spiral staircase, leading to the bell made in 1879, and to the clockworks. This whimsical pillar supports nothing and must contain the "crown jewels"? It runs between two upper floors. Everywhere there is hand-carver ornamentation. And some rooms have fireplaces with grates still intact. A possible bookshop entrance, with an ornate doormat? Looking up in, or looking down ... there are interesting details reminiscent of our early days of furniture carving. All scheduled for demolition, and any time after June 16, no later than August."

Marius Rooks Interior Photos, Nos. 1-25

Title/Description	Instances
1. The Basement Stairway	Box 1
	Folder 1
2. leads to a grand staircase	Box 1
	Folder 1
3. which rises to 3rd floor level	Box 1

	Folder 1
4. under a vaulted ceiling	Box 1
	Folder 1
5. this stairway leads to the bell tower	Box 1
	Folder 1
6. and to the spiral staircase	Box 1
	Folder 1
7. "6-A" [view down into the spiral staircase]	Box 1
	Folder 1
8. "7" leading to the bell	Box 1
	Folder 1
9. "8" [bell] made in 1879	Box 1
	Folder 1
10. "9" and to the clockworks	Box 1
	Folder 1
11. "10" This whimsical pillar supports nothing must contain the crown jewels? It ? between 2 upper floors	Box 1
	Folder 1
12. "11" Everywhere there is hand-carved ornamentation	Box 1
	Folder 1
13. "12" and some rooms have fireplaces	Box 1
	Folder 1
14. "13" [fireplaces] with grates still intact	Box 1
	Folder 1
15. "14" A possible book shop entrance?	Box 1
	Folder 1
16. "15" [entrance] with an ornate doormat!	Box 1
	Folder 1
17. "16" looking up... [ornate arch]	Box 1
	Folder 2
18. "17" on looking down [tile floor]	Box 1
	Folder 2
19. "18" There are interesting details [floor and bannister post]	Box 1

	Folder 2
Note: Rooks #'s 19-20 22 are missing from this collection.	Box 1
	Folder 2
20. "21" reminiscent of our early days of furniture carving	Box 1
	Folder 2
21. "23" All schedules for demolition	Box 1
	Folder 2
22. "24" no later than August (Neg. #2292)	Box 1
	Folder 2
23. "25" And any time after June 16 (neg. #2293)	Box 1
	Folder 2
24. [Ceiling view with corner]	Box 1
	Folder 2
25. [Ceiling view with partial wall]	Box 1
	Folder 2
E.E. Myers 1885 "Building plans"	
26. Plan [1]	Box 1
	Folder 2
27. Plan [2]	Box 1
	Folder 2
28. Plan [3]	Box 1
	Folder 2
29. Cross section [4]	Box 1
	Folder 2
30. Plan [5]	Box 1
	Folder 2
31. Exterior elevation	Box 1
	Folder 2
32. Exterior elevation	Box 1
	Folder 2
33. Cross section	Box 1
	Folder 2

Yellow Box "2", Slides 34-39, including 6 duplicates of #[9]

Title/Description	Instances
40.-45. 6 duplicates of #[11] These have turned pink.	Box 1 Folder 1
46. 1 variant of #4	Box 1 Folder 1
47-48. 2 variants of #[7]	Box 1 Folder 1
49. 1 duplicate of #[16]	Box 1 Folder 1

Yellow Box “3”, 50-57. Duplicates of 26-32 above,

Title/Description	Instances
58. with another copy of 29, but 33 is missing.	Box 1 Folder 1
19. The Basement Stairway	Box 1 Folder 1
20. leads to a Grand Staircase	Box 1 Folder 1
21. which rises to 3rd floor leve	Box 1 Folder 1
22. under a vaulted ceiling	Box 1 Folder 1
23. this stairway leads to the bell tower	Box 1 Folder 1
24. and to the spiral staircase	Box 1 Folder 1
25. “6-A” [view down into the spiral staircase]	Box 1 Folder 1
26. “7” leading to the bell	Box 1 Folder 1
27. “8” made in 1879	Box 1 Folder 1
28. “9” and to the clockworks	Box 1

	Folder 1
29. "10" This whimsical pillar supports noting must contain the crown jewels? It ? between 2 upper floors	Box 1 Folder 1
30. "11" Everywhere there is hand-carved ornamatation	Box 1 Folder 1
31. "12" and some rooms have fireplaces	Box 1 Folder 1
32. "13" with grates still intact	Box 1 Folder 1
33. "14" A possible book shop entrance?	Box 1 Folder 1
34. "15" with an orante doormat!	Box 1 Folder 1
35. "16" looking up...	Box 1 Folder 1
36. "17"	Box 1 Folder 1
37. The Basement Stairway	Box 1 Folder 1
38. leads to a Grand Staircase	Box 1 Folder 1
39. which rises to 3rd floor leve	Box 1 Folder 1
40. under a vaulted ceiling	Box 1 Folder 1
41. this stairway leads to the bell tower	Box 1 Folder 1
42. and to the spiral staircase	Box 1 Folder 1
43. "6-A" [view down into the spiral staircase]	Box 1 Folder 1
44. "7" leading to the bell	Box 1

	Folder 1
45. "8" made in 1879	Box 1
	Folder 1
46. "9" and to the clockworks	Box 1
	Folder 1
47. "10" This whimsical pillar supports noting must contain the crown jewels? It ? between 2 upper floors	Box 1
	Folder 1
48. "11" Everywhere there is hand-carved ornamatation	Box 1
	Folder 1
49. "12" and some rooms have fireplaces	Box 1
	Folder 1
50. "13" with grates still intact	Box 1
	Folder 1
51. "14" A possible book shop entrance?	Box 1
	Folder 1
52. "15" with an orante doormat!	Box 1
	Folder 1
53. "16" looking up...	Box 1
	Folder 1
54. "17"	Box 1
	Folder 1

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Series III. Fuji Color prints

Scope and Contents

Digital scans were made of the slides in August 2005, and Fuji color prints created. While these are not the high quality of a traditional color photographic print, they provide a suggestion of the colors and details in the older building, in a format which is easier to handle.

Title/Description	Instances
Interiors, Nos. 1-25. These prints were made from the "Master" slide set, Nos. 1-33, Aug. 5, 2005.	Box 2 Folder 1
E.E. Myers Architectural Drawings. (8) Location of the drawings from which these slides were made is not documented.	Box 2

Folder 2

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