

# **Finding aid for the Rogers family papers Collection 410**

**Finding aid prepared by Julie Tabberer**

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department  
September 2014  
111 Library Street NE  
Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49503  
616-988-5400  
[localhis@grpl.org](mailto:localhis@grpl.org)

## Table of Contents

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<u>Summary Information</u> .....	3
<u>Biographical/Historical note</u> .....	4
<u>Committee Studying Racial Imbalance</u> .....	4
<u>Buchanan school</u> .....	5
<u>Scope and Contents note</u> .....	5
<u>Administrative Information</u> .....	6
<u>Controlled Access Headings</u> .....	6
<u>Collection Inventory</u> .....	7
<u>Series I: Buchanan school</u> .....	7
<u>Series II: Committee Studying Racial Imbalance in the Grand Rapids Public School System</u> .....	8

## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
<b>Creator</b>	Rogers, Charles
<b>Creator</b>	Rogers, Eniz
<b>Title</b>	Rogers family papers
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1949-1967
<b>Extent</b>	1.5 Linear feet
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>Charles (1909-1998) and Eniz (c. 1911-1986) Rogers lived in the Buchanan Elementary school neighborhood in Grand Rapids, Mich. and were active in local civic affairs. This collection contains papers and newspaper clippings kept by them during the 1950s-1960s. Eniz and Charles were both active in the PTA at Buchanan school. Newspaper clippings and some papers document safety concerns due to the condition of the building, the hiring of the first school crossing guard in Grand Rapids and a proposal to create a buffer strip to separate residential and industrial neighborhoods during the construction of U.S. 131. In 1965 and 1966, Charles Rogers served on the Committee Studying Racial Imbalance in the Grand Rapids Public School System. His papers from the committee include reports, reading material, meeting minutes and newspaper clippings. The committee studied the effect of de facto segregation and resulted in a 31-point proposal for correcting the effects of racial imbalance in Grand Rapids public schools.</p>

## Biographical/Historical note

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Charles (8/14/1909 - 2/20/1998) and Eniz Holben (c. 1911 - 3/30/1986) Rogers lived near Buchanan Elementary School and were active in the school and in local civic affairs.

Charles graduated from Grand Rapids South High School in 1930. He was a salesman for Blackmer Pump Company, retiring in 1972. His obituary (GRP 2/26/1998) states that he was "active in civic affairs, school organizations and was a leader in credit union and labor affairs during his tenure at Blackmer." Charles served on the Committee Studying Racial Imbalance in the Grand Rapids Schools in 1965-1966 and was also on the steering committee.

Eniz was a graduate of South High School (1929), Grand Rapids Junior College and Michigan State Normal College at Ypsilanti. She taught physical education for 6 years, at Godfrey school in Galewood and Lee school in Urbandale.

Charles and Eniz married in the early 1940s. They had two sons, Charles A. Rogers III and Joseph A. Rogers. Charles and Eniz were both active with the Parent-Teachers Association at Buchanan Elementary School. Eniz was the PTA president and served on the Buchanan Safety Committee. The family lived at 1816 Palace Avenue SW from the 1940s into the 1990s.

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## Committee Studying Racial Imbalance

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On November 1, 1965, a 52 man committee was appointed by the Board of Education of Grand Rapids to study the effect of de facto segregation in the public school system. Four consultants were also enlisted to provide professional help during the study. The committee was formed in response to a joint letter from the NAACP and the Urban League, as well as the Board's "own interest in abiding by recent court decisions."

The philosophy of the Grand Rapids schools at the time was based on the idea that the neighborhood school served the needs of children best. A report showed that 98% of non-white children attended only 10 of the 50 Grand Rapids public elementary schools, called the Campau Area schools. Although this reflected the residential pattern, it resulted in de facto segregation.

The role of the committee was fact finding and advisory. They reported their findings to the Board of Education, which was to review and utilize the information. The committee studied, among other things, statistical data on teachers and students, the quality of buildings and equipment, hiring and personnel assignment practices and the compensatory education program already started by the Board of Education. Three sub-committees were organized to study specific topics: evidence of racial imbalance, equality of educational facilities and compensatory education.

The work of the committee resulted in a 31-point proposal for correcting the effects of racial imbalance in the Grand Rapids Public Schools. Among other things, the committee recommended that the Board of Education issue a public statement that de facto segregation existed and that the Board had a responsibility to do something about it. The report was expected to be a model for other communities.

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## **Buchanan school**

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Buchanan school was first opened in 1896. The building was closed in 1930 and sat empty for approximately 20 years. It was re-opened in September 1948 to relieve overcrowded conditions at Burton school. The Buchanan Mothers' club organized when Buchanan School re-opened. In March 1950 they decided to affiliate with the Parent-Teachers Association.

### **Safety concerns at Buchanan Elementary:**

After being closed for a number of years, there were concerns about the safety of the building (crumbling bricks, fire hazards). Buchanan parents lobbied for these conditions to be addressed.

The Buchanan PTA was also concerned about the safety of children crossing Buchanan Avenue at Griggs Street, particularly after a student was struck by a car in November, 1950. The work of the Safety Committee of the Buchanan PTA led to the hiring of the first crossing guard in the city, Mrs. Katherine Myers.

### **Fox Street buffer:**

The construction of U.S. 131 pushed railroad tracks and an industrial neighborhood to the east, butting up against the residential area surrounding Buchanan School. Charles Rogers served as the chairman of a committee working to conserve the neighborhood by creating a buffer strip between industrial and residential properties and a truck route for the industrial area. A buffer strip was used in the Dickinson area and garnered national interest from federal housing authorities.

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## **Scope and Contents note**

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This collection contains papers and newspaper clippings kept by Charles and Eniz Rogers.

The first series pertains to the Rogers' involvement in Buchanan Elementary school. Topics include safety concerns and preserving the neighborhood during construction of U.S. 131. The work of the Buchanan PTA resulted in the hiring of the first crossing guard in Grand Rapids. The material is primarily newspaper clippings, with some correspondence, fliers and other papers.

The second series includes material relating to the Committee Studying Racial Imbalance in the Grand Rapids Public School System. The bulk of this section consists of the reports, reading material and meeting minutes kept by Charles Rogers in the course of serving on the committee. Newspaper clippings related to the committee are also included. The papers give insight into the education system in Grand Rapids in the 1960s, both generally and relating to race. The material also reflects national attitudes and philosophies towards de facto segregation and ideas on how to address educational equality.

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## **Administrative Information**

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### **Publication Information**

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department September 2014

### **Immediate Source of Acquisition note**

Charles Rogers, accession number 1984.012

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## **Controlled Access Headings**

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

- Garfield Park neighborhood (Grand Rapids, Mich.)

### **Subject(s)**

- Express highways -- Michigan -- History -- 20th century
- Neighborhood planning -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- Public schools -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- Segregation in education -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids

## Series I: Buchanan school

## Collection Inventory

### Series I: Buchanan school 1949-1957

#### Scope and Contents note

The material in this series primarily covers two main topics - safety concerns at Buchanan school and the Fox Street buffer zone. See the historical note on Buchanan school for more information. Newspaper clippings are from the Grand Rapids Press, Grand Rapids Herald and Burton Heights Record. Also included are articles on the Mothers' club and PTA at Buchanan School and profiles of Mrs. Bernice Hagerman, principal of Dickinson School and Mrs. Charles Rogers.

			<b>Box</b>	
Buchanan scrapbook 1949-1956			2	
			<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Photocopies - please use before accessing the original scrapbook.			2	4-5
Support Our Schools campaign, photograph (From scrapbook. Includes Carolyn Winslow, Charles Rogers, Blanche Steenbergen, Eniz Rogers, Ribert Steketee)			1	1
<b>Newspaper clippings 1952-1957</b>	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
	1	2	2	3
			<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Scrapbook, Fox Street area 1955-1956			1	3
Miscellaneous papers 1949-1956			2	1

## Series II: Committee Studying Racial Imbalance in the Grand Rapids Public ...

## Series II: Committee Studying Racial Imbalance in the Grand Rapids Public School System 1965-1967

### Scope and Contents note

Charles Rogers served on the committee and his papers are included here. Included are reports, data used by the committee, correspondence, minutes and reading material.

A three-ring binder with Charles A. Roger's name on the front was included. The items from the binder were transferred to four archival folders with the original order retained.

The majority of the newspaper clippings were found folded and in an envelope. The clippings were photocopied.

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Charles Rogers' binder (four folders) 1965-1966	1	4-7
The Educational Dimension of School Segregation, Selected Readings	1	8
Minutes, April 12, 1966 and Report of discussion group # 4 1966	1	9
Final Report of the Committee Studying Racial Imbalance May 27, 1966	1	10
Final Report of the Committee Studying Racial Imbalance June 13, 1966	1	11
Resolution, adopted by the Board of Education, expressing appreciation to committee, recognizing chairmen and accepting the report for careful study June 13, 1966	2	2
Status of the Thirty-One Committee Recommendations October 9, 1967	1	12

**Series II: Committee Studying Racial Imbalance in the Grand Rapids Public ...**

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Newspaper clippings 1965-1966	1	13
Miscellaneous papers	1	14
De Facto School Segregation, by Arnold Rose [book] no date	1	15
Crisis in Black and White by Charles E. Silberman [book] 1964	1	16