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**H88-0039.** Diekema, Gerrit J. (1859-1930).  
Papers, 1868-1989. 3.50 linear ft.

### Abstract

Personal papers of Gerrit John Diekema, Mayor of Holland, member of the Hope College Council, state representative, United States Congressman, Chairman of the Republican State Central Committee, and United States Minister to the Netherlands. Collection includes correspondence, scrapbooks and father's diary, William Schrier book and materials: *Gerrit J. Diekema: Orator—Excerpts & Reviews*, 1947-1952, and Diekema's speeches, 1887-1928.



Accession No.: H88-0039  
Provenance: Gerrit J. Diekema  
Donor: See Accession File  
Processed by: Craig G. Wright, November, 1990  
Ramona Angelscu, June 1999

### Biography

Gerrit John Diekema was born in Holland, Michigan, in 1859. His father was Wiepke Diekema, a farmer who had immigrated from the Netherlands in 1848 at the age of eighteen. Wiepke was active in local government, serving as a Roadmaster, a Holland supervisor, a member of the county poor commission, and chairman of the relief committee of the township following the fire of 1871.

Diekema received his bachelor's degree from Hope College in 1881, his law degree from the University of Michigan in 1883, and an honorary law degree from Hope College in 1913. After passing the bar exam in 1883, he set up practice in Holland and formed the law firm of Diekema and Kollen in 1901 with his brother-in-law George E. Kollen. The firm later grew to Diekema, Kollen and Ten Cate with the addition of Daniel Ten Cate.

The year 1885 was important for Diekema. He married his college sweetheart, Mary E. Alcott, and began his long political career with his election to the first of four terms as state representative. Diekema was Chairman of the Judiciary Committee during the 1887 session, Speaker of the House in 1889 and minority leader in 1891. He continued to be active in state politics, serving as Chairman of the Republican State Central Committee from 1900 to 1910, and again from 1927 to 1929.

Locally, Diekema served from 1893 to 1930 as a member of the Hope College Council (later called the Board of Trustees). He also served one term as Mayor of Holland from 1895 to 1896. From 1897 to 1898 he was President of the Michigan State Sunday School Association.

On the national political scene, Diekema was an active speaker in every campaign, beginning with his support of McKinley in 1896. President McKinley showed appreciation for Diekema's efforts by appointing him to the Spanish Treaty Claims Commission in 1901. Diekema had to resign this position in 1907 in order to run for the Fifth Michigan District Representative to the U.S. House of Representatives. The vacancy was created when William

Alden Smith was elected to replace the late Senator Russell A. Alger. Diekema won the election and was re-elected for the next full term in 1908. He was defeated in the 1910 election by Democrat Edwin F. Sweet. During his tenure as congressman, Diekema served in the House Judiciary Committee. It was while in Washington that Mrs. Diekema died in 1910.

Diekema continued to be an active speaker, serving as Chairman of the Speaker's Bureau, Chicago office, for the Republican National Committee. He also was Taft's campaign manager for the state, ran for governor in 1916, and an active speaker during World War I. Diekema married Leona Belser in 1920. Holland honored Diekema with a civic banquet and the presentation of a silver loving cup in 1923.

It seemed that the pinnacle of Diekema's career was attained in 1929 when President Herbert Hoover appointed him as the United States Minister to the Netherlands. Diekema proved to be extremely popular with the Dutch people and served successfully in this capacity until his untimely death at The Hague on December 20, 1930.

It is estimated that approximately 8,500 people paid their respects to Mr. Diekema as he lay in state at Hope Memorial Chapel (later named Dimnent Memorial Chapel) on January 4, 1931, and that nearly 3,000 attended the funeral the next day. The funeral sermon was delivered by Reverend John M. Vander Meulen and Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg also paid tribute at the service. A memorial plaque honoring Diekema was placed in Dimnent Memorial Chapel and dedicated during Holland's 125th anniversary celebration in 1972.

### Scope and Content

The Gerrit J. Diekema papers consist of materials from 1868 to 1989. Included are correspondence, newspaper clippings, his father's diary, essays, sermons, speeches, and *The Holy Bible* translated into the Telugu language (Telugu is a major language of southern India), and materials used by William Schrier (speeches) to write his monograph *Gerrit J. Diekema: Orator*. The folders have been arranged alphabetically by topical headings and the material within the folders has been arranged chronologically. Due to their format and size, the Telugu Bible and four volumes of scrapbooks have been placed at the end of the collection.

The strength of this collection is its documentation of Diekema's political activities through the scrapbooks and correspondence. The researcher is advised to be thorough when using the scrapbooks since they have been compiled in a very rough chronological order. The correspondence primarily illustrates Diekema's activities as Chairman of the Republican State Central Committee, and also relates to his business activities. Correspondents include: Dennis E. Alward, Senator Julius C. Burrows, Franklin C. Cappon, William P. Frye, George F. Getz, Edward L. Hamilton, James C. McLaughlin, Carl E. Mapes, Charles S. Osborn, Vice President Theodore Roosevelt, Senator Charles E. Townsend, Governor Fred M. Warner, and Wynard Wichers. Also of interest is Wiepke Diekema's 1880 diary, illustrative of local farm life at the time.

### Container List

#### Box 1

Biographical Materials, 1928-1989

Biography by William Tappen Jr., 1939 (student paper)

Clippings, 1903-1911  
Death, 1930-1931  
General, 1928-1931, 1972, 1989  
Publications

“A Dutch-American Returns to the Netherlands,” by C. Warren Vander Hill, *Michigan History*, Spring 1969

*Gerrit J. Diekema, Orator: A Rhetorical Study of the Political and Occasional Address of Gerrit J. Diekema*, by William Schrier, 1950

“Holland Emigration to Michigan,” by Gerrit Diekema, *Michigan History*, October 1917

“Representative From Holland: Gerrit John Diekema” by C. Warren Vander Hill, *Michigan History*, Winter 1967

Correspondence, 1903-1909, 1912-1916, 1924, 1927-1930  
Partial Index, n.d.  
A, 1904-1908, 1924, 1927-1929 (2 folders)

Box 2

Correspondence (cont.)  
B, 1904-1909, 1916, 1927-1930 (4 folders)  
C, 1904-1908, 1927-1929 (2 folders)  
D, 1904-1908, 1913, 1927-1930 (2 folders)  
E-F, 1904-1908, 1916, 1927-1929 (2 folders)  
G, 1904-1908, 1927-1930 (2 folders)

Box 3

Correspondence (cont.)  
H-I, 1904-1908, 1927-1930 (2 folders)  
J, 1927-1929  
K, 1904-1908, 1927-1929 (2 folders)  
L, 1904-1908, 1927-1929 (2 folders)  
M, 1904-1908, 1914-1916, 1927-1930 (3 folders)

Box 4

Correspondence (cont.)  
N-Q, 1904-1909, 1915-1916, 1927-1930 (3 folders)  
R, 1901-1908, 1915-1916, 1927-1930 (3 folders)  
S, 1904-1908, 1915-1916, 1927-1929 (3 folders)  
T, 1904-1908, 1915-1916, 1927-1930 (3 folders)

Box 5

Correspondence (cont.)

V, 1904-1908, 1915-1916, 1924, 1927-1929 (3 folders)  
Vanhoon, Hendrik, n.d. (illustrated)  
W, 1903-1908, 1915-1916, 1927-1929 (3 folders)  
Y-Z, 1904, 1912-1913, 1916, 1927-1928  
Minister to the Netherlands, 1929

Box 6

Diekema, Wiepke, 1868-1903  
    Diary and Citizenship Papers, 1868, 1880  
    Funeral Sermons for Wiepke and His Wife, 1900, 1903  
Essays and Sermons, n.d., 1883 (D/E)  
Holland Furnace Company - Half Yearly Report, 1929  
Miscellaneous, 1917-1918, 1927-1929  
Programs, 1897, 1906-1911  
Questionnaire by William Schrier and Tabulated Answers, n.d.  
Schrier, William. *Gerrit J. Diekema: Orator* pamphlet, n.d.  
Speeches, 1883, 1903-1923  
Schrier Materials (see also Box 6)  
    *Gerrit J. Diekema: Orator*--Excerpts & Reviews, 1947-1952  
    G. Diekema's Speeches: Michigan House Journal, 1887-1891  
    G. Diekema's Speeches, 1901-1908  
    G. Diekema's Speeches: Congressional Record, 1908-1911

Box 7

Schrier Materials (cont.)  
    G. Diekema's Speeches, 1911-1928  
    Michigan Bankers' Association--18th Annual Convention, June 1906  
Vander Hill Research Materials, C. Warren  
    Leona Diekma, 1966  
    Willis A. Diekema, 1965  
*The Holy Bible*, translated into the Telugu Language under the auspices of The  
    British and Foreign Bible Society, 1920  
Guest Book, 1924-1930

Box 8

Schrier Materials  
    Note Cards: records of all speeches, 1881-1930

Box 9

“Speeches and Remarks made by G. J. Diekema upon the floor of the House of  
    Congress, 1907-1911”  
Scrapbooks, 1900-1905 (2 items)

Box 10

Scrapbook, 1907-1909

Box 11

Scrapbook, 1909