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H91-1128. Vandenberg, William C., Sr. (1884-1971).
Papers, 1904-1971. 9.00 linear ft.



Abstract

Michigan state senator (1944-1950) and lieutenant governor (1950-1952). Correspondence concerning politics and with local businesses as a leader in the Holland Chamber of Commerce; biographical material, personal correspondence with many well-known individuals, both local and national, like Earnest Brooks, W. A. Butler, G. J. Diekema, E. D. Dimnent, George Getz, and Willard Wichers; records and correspondence from the various companies and officials with which he was associated, such as the Sugar Beet Factory, Benjamin Hanchett, Holland Furnace Company, and Parke Davis and Company; political material including local, state senate, lieutenant governor, and his unsuccessful campaign for governor in 1952, as well as his connections with many national political personalities throughout his lifetime, such as Gerald R. Ford, Jr., Rep. Bartel Jonkman, Rep. Carl Mapes, Sen. Arthur Vandenberg, Gov. Harry F. Kelly, Gov. Kim Sigler, Gov. G. Mennen Williams, and Sen. Homer Ferguson; corporation record books from the Wolverine Advertising Company and the Vandenberg Brothers Oil Company.

Accession No.: H91-1128, H04-1534
Provenance: William C. Vandenberg, Sr.
Donor: Mrs. Jack (Florence) Daniels, Terry Vandenberg
Photographs: 59 images (Box 2)
Processed by: Lee Witteveen, July 1998
Catherine Jung, June 2007

Biography

William C. Vandenberg, Sr. was born in Holland, Michigan, on October 3, 1884, and with the exception of the period from 1904 to 1919, lived in Holland his entire life. After graduating from Holland High School in 1904, he entered Voorheis' Business College in Indianapolis and began his active business career in Grand Rapids in 1906.

In 1909, he married Florence Fairbanks, granddaughter of Isaac Fairbanks, an early pioneer of the Holland area. They had a daughter, Mrs. Jack (Florence) Daniels, and a son William C., Jr.

Mr. Vandenberg began working in 1909 in the office of the former Grand Rapids Street Railway Company and later was assigned to the office of Benjamin S. Hanchett, president and general manager. Hanchett was active in Republican politics and it was here that Vandenberg became interested in Republican affairs. Hanchett later became president of the old Grand Rapids, Holland and Chicago Railroad and headed both the Ottawa Beach Hotel Co. and the Ottawa Beach Resort Co. Vandenberg became treasurer of the interurban operation and secretary and treasurer of the hotel and resort companies.

In 1919, Vandenberg left Grand Rapids to enter the wholesale and retail oil business in Holland and during the next few years expanded the operations to cover five counties in Western

Michigan. In 1934, he helped promote the Burnips oil field and later promoted and developed the Fillmore oil field.

In 1923-1924, Vandenberg spearheaded a group to organize the Holland Chamber of Commerce, whose first assignment was to help Holland Furnace Company in building Hotel Warm Friend. He became a charter member of the Rotary Club in the early 1920s and around the same period was a member of the South Ottawa and West Allegan County Fair Association. In 1931, he set up the Holland Community Chest and headed the first two campaigns. He then served as chairman of the Ottawa County Chapter of the American Red Cross.

Vandenberg served as a Holland city councilman in the 1930s, was elected in 1944 as a Republican state senator from the 23rd district and was reelected in 1946 and 1948. During his six years as a state senator, Vandenberg remained very active in local projects, one of which was arranging for the Parke Davis and Company plant to locate in Holland in 1949. He also aided in negotiations to establish Baker Furniture Company in Holland, and was active in the early studies of a bridge over the Straits of Mackinac. In 1950, he was elected lieutenant governor, serving under Democratic Governor G. Mennen Williams. In 1952, he was unsuccessful in a bid for the Republican gubernatorial nomination.

For many years Vandenberg was a member of the Methodist Church in Holland and in 1958 was one of a group of six attempting to organize a second Methodist Church in Holland. Obstacles which he encountered in the organizational process resulted in him becoming one of the founders and charter members of First Presbyterian Church.

At the time of his death, Vandenberg served as vice president of Vandenberg Motors, where he had been since establishing the business in 1946. He died in Holland Hospital on June 9, 1971, after suffering a heart attack in his home.

Scope and Content

The papers of William C. Vandenberg cover his time as a Michigan state senator and his term as lieutenant governor, as well as his involvement in the community of Holland. There is a considerable amount of political correspondence, and correspondence with many local businesses with which Vandenberg was associated through his involvement in the Holland Chamber of Commerce.

Much of the correspondence is from voters urging Vandenberg to vote one way or another on particular legislation. The fact that Vandenberg's responses were attached to the letters is particularly helpful in revealing Vandenberg's stance on political issues of that time.

The material is divided into three main series: **Personal**, **Business**, and **Political**. The **Personal** series contains biographical material, personal correspondence with many well-known individuals, both local and national. Correspondents include Earnest Brooks, W. A. Butler, G. J. Diekema, E. D. Dimment, George Getz, and Willard Wichers. It also contains photographs of Vandenberg and others.

The **Business** series includes correspondence with many local businesses, records from the various companies with which he was associated, particularly his involvement with the reopening of the Sugar Beet Factory in 1933. Correspondents include Benjamin Hanchett, Holland Furnace Company, and Parke Davis and Company.

The **Political** series is subdivided into local, state senate, lieutenant governor, and his unsuccessful campaign for governor in 1952. This is the largest of the three categories and

includes large amounts of correspondence with political figures. The local subsection details his involvement in local politics, but also reveals his connections with many national political personalities throughout his lifetime. Correspondents include Gerald R. Ford, Jr., Rep. Bartel Jonkman, Rep. Carl Mapes, Sen. Arthur Vandenberg, Gov. Harry F. Kelly, Gov. Kim Sigler, Gov. G. Mennen Williams, and Sen. Homer Ferguson.

There are three corporation record books from the Wolverine Advertising Company and the Vandenberg Brothers Oil Company. These are located in Box 6. The oversize materials are a memorial resolution from the state senate and the certificate of election to his first term as state senator.

Container List

Box 1

PERSONAL

Biography and Genealogy, 1960-1965

Articles, Beliefs and Philosophy, 1907, 1935, 1940, 1951

Award of Recognition, China Relief Legion, n.d.

Clippings

Biographical, 1937, 1947, 1949

Tulip Time, 1935-1938

Correspondence

Personal, 1905-1971 (12 folders)

American Red Cross, 1934-1946

Appeals Board, 1946

Bachelor, C. C., 1951

Bates, Bion L., 1947-1964

Brooks, Earnest C., 1930-1961

Brouwer, Rev. Bert, 1926-1949

Brouwer, Edward, 1933-1935

Butler, W. A., 1951

Carr, W. B., 1951-1952

Community Chest, 1931-1957

Cottages, 1947-1964

De Lamarter, L. J., 1920-1952

Dempsey, Joseph J., 1929-1930

Diekema, G. J., 1923-1929

Dimment, E. D., 1924-1946

Ehrmann, Fred, 1938-1939

Fairbanks Farm, 1934-1941

Fitzgerald, Frank D., 1932-1939

Geerlings, Clyde H., 1951-1964

Getz, George F., 1927-1932

Harding, President Warren G., 1923

Hull, Ivan E., 1938-1939

Karr, Charles, 1932-1933
Kennedy, E. R., 1941-1946
Koskamp, Doris, 1947-1950
Lake, John A., 1950-1952
Le Jeune, James, 1951
Ley, Arlon G., 1946-1952
McAfee, Don G., 1936-1971
McCallum, George P., 1948-1952
McKee, Frank E., 1947-1951
Masonic Lodge, 1940-1961
Michigan TB Association, 1947-1962
Prince Bernhard Visit, 1965
Thirteenth Street Property, 1965
Tulip Time, 1934, 1935, 1948, 1951
United China Relief, 1941-1946
VandenBerg, William C., Jr., 1940
Van Ry, Bastian and Gordon, 1931-1952
Vogelzang Fire, 1943-1945
Waltz, Ralph, 1936-1951
Warm Friend Hotel, 1923, 1962, 1965
Wichers, Willard, 1947-1971
Y.M.C.A., 1960-1970
Zwemer, Charles, 1951

Box 2

PERSONAL (cont.)

Fairbanks family history, n.d., 1952-1962
First Methodist Church
 1930-1958, 1936-1944, 1957-1958 (5 folders)
 Centennial, 1961
First Presbyterian Church, n.d., 1958-1961, 1968-1970, 1962 (3 images), 1962-1966
 (4 folders)
Food receipts, 1958, 1963
Guest Book, 1948-1949
“History of the organization of the First Presbyterian Church of Holland, Michigan,”
 Roger Patterson, c 1958
Memorial Service, 1971
Methodist church history, Isaac Fairbanks, n.d.
Photographs
 General, 1945, 1951, 1952 (37 images)
 Tulip Time, n.d. (22 images)
Recognition Certificates, Chamber of Commerce, 1952
Senate Resolution, 50th Wedding Anniversary, 1959
Speeches, 1929-1952

BUSINESS

Clippings, Sugar Beet Factory, 1932-1935
Correspondence
 American Oil Men's Assn., 1928
 Bohn Aluminum Corp., 1951
 Chamber of Commerce, 1920-1939, 1967
 First State Bank, 1933-1936, 1964
 General, 1925-1949
 Gulf Oil Co., 1934-1947
 Hanchett, Benjamin S., 1929-1933
 Holland Furnace Co., 1949-1951
 Letters of Recommendation, 1933-1963 (2 folders)
 Newaygo Portland Cement Co., 1920
 Parke Davis and Co., 1948-1961
 Pilgrim Home Cemetery, 1927-1951
 Provident Mutual Life Insurance Co., 1942-1946
 Reynolds Asphalt Shingle Co., 1917
 Sixteenth St. and River Ave. Property, 1931-1933
 Special Industrial Contact Representative, 1949-1951
 Sugar Beet Factory, 1932-1935 (6 folders)

Box 3

BUSINESS (cont.)

Correspondence (cont.)
 Sunnycrest School, 1933-1934
 Theisen Clemens and Co., 1929-1936
 White Star Refining Co., 1931

POLITICAL (Local)

Correspondence
 City Republican Committee, 1934
 Ford, Rep. Gerald R., Jr., 1948-1963
 Grossbeck for Governor, 1930
 Harrington, Mayor Harry, 1947-1954
 Holland Common Council, 1924-1962
 Jonkman, Rep. Bartel J., 1940-1948
 Letters to the Editor, 1932, 1957-1971
 Mapes, Rep. Carl E., 1918-1942
 Ottawa County Republican Committee, 1930-1935
 Queen Juliana Visit, 1952
 Republican Campaigns, 1932-1964 (9 folders)

Republican Finance Committee, 1950-1951
Republican State Central Committee, 1932-1952 (3 folders)
Vanden Berg, Sen. Arthur H., 1929-1952
War/Defense Committee, 1942-1944

Minutes

Holland Airport Committee, 1945
Committee for Community Cooperation, 1961-1964

Programs

Lincoln Banquet, Grand Rapids, 1934
Lincoln Day Dinner, Macomb County, 1952
Old Abe Banquet, Wright Township, 1935
Presidential Inauguration, 1953
Republican National Convention, 1916
Republican Party Banquet, Ingham County, 1952
Republican Party State Convention, 1935

POLITICAL (State Senate)

Clippings, 1944-1945
Correspondence
Campaigns for State Senate, 1944-1948 (4 folders)
Constituents, 1945-1951 (8 folders)

Box 4

POLITICAL (State Senate) (cont.)

Correspondence (cont.)
Constituents, 1945-1951 (3 folders)
Kelly, Gov. Harry F., 1944-1952
Mackinac Bridge, 1949-1971
Michigan State College, 1948-1949
Petroleum Price Study Committee, 1947-1948
Sigler, Gov. Kim, 1947-1952
State Highway Dept., 1946-1954
University of Michigan, 1947-1950
Western Michigan College, 1947
Williams, Gov. G. Mennen, 1948-1952
Ziegler, Charles M., 1949-1954
Reports, Comm. on State Govt. Reorganization, 1947-1951 (2 folders)
Speech, Opening of State Senate, 1952

POLITICAL (Lieutenant Governor)

Clippings, Campaign, 1950
Campaign, 1950

General, 1951-1952
Correspondence
Campaign, 1950 (9 folders)
Lt. Gov. Elect, 1950
General, 1951-1952 (4 folders)

Box 5

POLITICAL (Lieutenant Governor) (cont.)

Correspondence (cont.)
General, 1951-1952 (cont.) (3 folders)
Central Michigan College, 1949-1952
Church Related, 1950-1952 (2 folders)
Committee Assignments, 1951
Congratulations on Election, 1950 (2 folders)
Economics Club of Detroit, 1951
Ferguson, Sen. Homer, 1950-1955
Ferris Institute, 1950-1952
Invitations not accepted, 1950-1952
Kalamazoo College, 1952
Leonard, Donald S., 1951-1955
MacArthur, General Douglas, Visit, 1951-1952
Michigan College of Mining and Tech., 1951-1952
Michigan State College, 1951-1952
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National Music Camp, 1949-1952
Roy, Leo H., 1951-1952
Siegrist, Robert, 1950-1952
Taft, Sen. Robert A., 1952
Wayne University, 1950-1952
Expense Accounts, 1950-1951
Nominating Petitions, 1950
Program, Hilltop Schools, 1951
Publications, 1951
Radio Talks, Campaign, 1950
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POLITICAL (Campaign for Governor, 1952)

Campaign Materials, 1952 (2 folders)
Clippings, 1952 (2 folders)
Correspondence
General, 1952 (5 folders)

Box 6

POLITICAL (Campaign for Governor, 1952)

Correspondence (cont.)
 Irving, William, 1952
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News Releases, 1952
Radio Speeches, 1952 (2 folders)

CORPORATION RECORD BOOKS

VandenBerg Brothers Oil Co., 1922-1937, 1938-1942
Wolverine Advertising Co., 1922-1941

OVERSIZE (Hope College Collections Oversized Cabinet)

Certificate of Election as State Senator, 1944
Composite photograph of the Vandenberg and their parents
Senate Resolution (Memorial), 1971 (2 copies)
State of Michigan Civil Defense Council Appointment, 1951
State of Michigan Resolution (memorial) 1971