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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 Vanden Berg, 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. Dickema, E. D. Dimnent, 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

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
  Bacheller, 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
  Dimnent, 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
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
Zwemer, Charles, 1951

Box 2

PERSONAL (cont.)

First Methodist Church
   Centennial, 1961
   (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
  Grossbeck for Governor, 1930
  Harrington, Mayor Harry, 1947-1954
  Holland Common Council, 1924-1962
  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)
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
  Michigan, University of, 1951-1952
  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
  Speeches, 1950-1952

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
  - VandenBerg, William C., Jr., 1952
- 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 Vandenbergs and their parents
- Senate Resolution (Memorial), 1971 (2 copies)
- State of Michigan Civil Defense Council Appointment, 1951
- State of Michigan Resolution (memorial) 1971