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H88-0182. Van Zoeren, Gerrit J. (1884-1980).
Papers, 1863-1980. 3.00 linear ft.



Abstract

Industrialist and alumnus of Hope College class of 1912. The collection contains clippings, photographs, a speech at the dedication of Van Zoeren Library, four scrapbooks (scrapbook I: "A History of the Van Zoeren Family," including a genealogy, family pictures, copies of family documents and some correspondence; scrapbook II: "My Memory Book of Hope College," 1904-1912, including class reunions through 1962, and three tapes of class reunions and one photograph, 1935-1955; scrapbook III: "How Chemical Specialties Grew," the history of a chemical company, 1935-1955, and what happened to it and its founders through 1965; scrapbook IV: "The Van Zoeren Library Story"). Also included in the collection is an audiotape cassette/transcription of an interview conducted by Dr. James Malcolm in 1976, letters written by John Albers, a soldier in the Union Army during the Civil War, to his sister living in Vriesland, Michigan, and a book about the family of Hessel O. Yntema.

Accession No: H88-0182
Provenance: Gerrit John Van Zoeren
Donor: Gerrit John Van Zoeren
Photographs: 34 images
Processed by: Ena Brooks, January 1998

Biography

Dr. Gerrit John Van Zoeren was born in Vriesland, Michigan, in 1884. He attended the Holland Academy, which later became Hope College. He graduated from Hope College in 1912 and was awarded an assistantship in chemistry at the University of Illinois. In 1914, he became a chemist at the Holland-St. Louis Sugar Company. From there he accepted an assistantship at McDonald College to experiment with sugar. There, he received his master's degree in 1917. During World War I, he worked on high explosives in the chemical warfare division.

In 1919, Van Zoeren joined the chemistry staff of Holland Aniline Company and worked there until he joined with Edwin De Pree to form De Pree Laboratories in 1922. In 1935, that company became the Chemical Specialties Company in Zeeland, Michigan. There, Van Zoeren served as president and general manager until it merged with Miles Laboratories of Elkhart, Indiana, in 1947.

Van Zoeren was a member of Hope Reformed Church. He served on its consistory and had a lifelong interest in the relation of the Christian faith to the sciences. He also was very dedicated to Hope College. In 1959, he presented a gift to Hope College to build a library that bears his name. This gift was made in memory of his deceased wife, Anna Elizabeth. In 1961, he married his second wife, Lena Carley. She passed away on February 19, 1972.

Van Zoeren lived to be 96 years old before passing away on October 13, 1980, in a Holland, Michigan, nursing home.

Scope and Content

The collection, spanning the years of 1863 and 1980, contains materials and scrapbooks relating to Hope College, the Van Zoeren Library, and Chemical Specialties Company. In addition to articles and clippings of the Van Zoeren Library and chemical company, it also includes numerous photographs. Photographs of G. J. Van Zoeren and his wife, Lena Carley Van Zoeren are also included. Folders are arranged in alphabetical order.

Container List

Box 1

Articles

- “The Analysis of Maple Products,” 1916
- “Note on a convenient dip electrode” by G. J. Van Zoeren, n.d.
- “Pollution—collected articles,” 1956, 1961, 1968

Biographical, 1950-1980

- “History of the Van Zoeren’s Pioneers” by Mrs. Van Zoeren, 1939
- “How chemical specialties grew,” n.d. (4 images)
- Interview of G. J. Van Zoeren conducted by Dr. James Malcolm, 1976 (audiotape cassette/transcription)
- “Letters written by John Albers (a soldier in the Union Army during the Civil War) to his sister living in Vriesland, Michigan, 1863-1894 (includes photograph of Col. Moore and Jan Albers and Peter Verschure)

Photographs

- Van Zoeren with unidentified group, 1961 (1 image)
- Mr. and Mrs. Van Zoeren, n.d. (1 image)
- Open house at Miles Chemical Co., Zeeland, Michigan, n.d. (1 image)
- Anna Carley Van Zoeren, n.d. (1 image)
- Van Zoeren, n.d. (1 image)
- Van Zoeren with two men, n.d. (1 image)
- Presentation of key at dedication of new library, 1960 (3 images)
- Groundbreaking of Van Zoeren Library, 1960 (1 image)
- The Reflective Index*, Zeeland Facility Marks 60 Years of Prosperity, 1995
- “Revised history of chemical specialties,” 1935-1955
- “Revised history of chemical specialties,” n.d. (18 images)
- Van Zoeren Library, Correspondence and clippings concerning the donation of funds for the library and the library dedication ceremony, 1959-1961
- Yntema Family, *The Family of Hessel O. Yntema: Frisian Immigrant to Michigan, 1847* by Mary E. Yntema, 1958
- “Gerrit Jakobs Van Zoeren’s Descendants” (scrapbook), 1848-1965
- “My Memory of Hope College, 1904-1912” (scrapbook)
- “How Chemical Specialties Grew” (scrapbook), 1932-1965

Box 2 (Oversized)

“The Van Zoeren Library Story” (scrapbook), 1959-1969