

Finding Aid for Barbara Schlenger-Faber Collection

Date range: 1906-1930

Finding aid created by: Elizabeth Jones-Minsinger, November 2017

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Extent: 0.1 linear feet

Abstract: This collection contains letters to John G. Bechtel, a member of the Ardensingers and the Arden Repertory Players, programs and clippings related to his theatrical performances, and a pamphlet on Arden's Raiffeisen Guild.

Accession number: 2011.005.001, 2011.005.002

Language: Materials entirely in English

Acquisition Information: Gift of Barbara Schlenger-Faber, 2011

Access Restrictions: The collection is open for research.

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Cite as: [item], folder, Barbara Schlenger-Faber Collection, Arden Craft Shop Museum

Biographical and Historical Note:

This collection was donated to the Arden Craft Shop Museum by Barbara Schlenger-Faber, a resident of Thornton, Pennsylvania, and member of the Arden Shakespeare Guild.

Most of the materials in this collection relate to John G. Bechtel. Bechtel was born on February 3, 1898, to Frank Bechtel and Emma Hanby Bechtel in an area of Northern Delaware known as Carpenter's Station, now Claymont. Bechtel graduated from Princeton University in 1920 and went on to earn his law degree from the University of

Pennsylvania. He practiced law for 20 years before establishing himself as a real estate agent in Chester County, Pennsylvania. Bechtel served in the Navy during World War I and in army counterintelligence in France during World War II.

Bechtel was a member of the Plays and Players of Philadelphia and in 1936 became president of the Savoy Grand Opera Company in Philadelphia. As shown by the materials in this collection, Bechtel was also an active member of the Ardensingers, the Arden Repertory Players, and the Laurence Ludwig Repertory Players. He often acted alongside his older brother, Frank Bechtel.

John G. Bechtel married Josephine Plowman Fleming in 1964. He died on October 5, 1991 in New Castle County, Delaware.

A pamphlet in this collection was produced by the Raiffeisen Gild, a village credit union established in Arden in 1911. The Raiffeisen Gild was based on an idea originated by Friedrich Raiffeisen, a German city official who began a similar program in the 1860s to make credit available to rural communities. The first council members of the Gild were Barclay Spicer, Edward S. Potter, William Worthington, Jr., George F. Hamilton, Robert P. Woolery, and Donald Stephens. The Raiffeisen Gild operated until at least the 1920s, when the Arden Building and Loan took over many of its functions.

Scope and Content:

This collection contains letters to John G. Bechtel, a member of the Ardensingers and the Arden Repertory Players, programs and clippings related to his theatrical performances, and a pamphlet on Arden's Raiffeisen Gild.

Most of the letters to John G. Bechtel were written to him by his parents while they vacationed in Canada and New England between 1905 and 1907. In a letter from 1915, Frank Stephens asked Bechtel to play the captain in William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and attend a rehearsal at the Field Theater. This collection also includes a copy of an open letter sent to Frank Stephens by Russell Ramsey in 1922. Ramsey, a member of the Board of Townsmen, accused Stephens of circulating a story that he would exclude Jews as leaseholders of the "Harvey tract" that became Ardentown, Delaware. Ramsey then made comparisons between renting leaseholds to Jews and African Americans.

Another grouping in this collection consists of theater programs and related clippings related to performances from 1927 to 1930. These items relate to productions by the Arden Repertory Players, the Ardensingers, the Laurence Ludwig Repertory Players,

and the Aircastle Players. John G. Bechtel was cast in many of these productions. There is also a program for a production of Patrick Hamilton's *Rope* at the Robin Hood Theatre. This grouping includes newspaper clippings reviewing these productions as well as promoting radio performances by Bechtel, Marian Bloch, and Estelle Hillersohn (Frankel).

The final item in this collection is a pamphlet produced by the Raiffeisen Guild around 1922. The pamphlet describes the Guild's history and encourages new investors to make loans at 6% interest. The members of the Guild council at this time were William Worthington, Jr., Haines D. Albright, Donald Stephens, Walter E. Sweeting, Robert P. Woolery, and Frank Stephens.

Subjects:

Arden (Del.)

Ardentown (Del.)

 Theater

 Arden Repertory Players

 Ardensingers

 Robin Hood Theatre

 Bechtel, John G., 1898-1991

Stephens, Frank, 1859-1935

Raiffeisen Guild

Container List:

	Barbara Schlenger-Faber Collection
F1	Letters to John G. Bechtel, 1906-1922
F2	Theater programs and clippings, 1927-1930
F3	Raiffeisen Guild pamphlet, ca. 1922