

Carl Betz Collection

Carl Betz was a pioneer in promoting the teaching of physical education in the Kansas City Public School District in the late 1800s. This collection features primarily printed material as well as artifacts connected with Mr. Betz.

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Carl Betz
Title: Carl Betz collection
Dates: 1880s -1988, bulk 1880s-1890s
Size: 2 boxes, 28 folders
Location: SC88

Administrative Information

Restrictions on access: Unrestricted access

Related collections in other depositories: Carl Betz (1854-1898) Papers, Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Kansas City, (0532kc)

Acquisition information: Gift, October 9, 1968, Annette Betz. It appears that the collection was picked up at some date earlier to this date and given to library director Richard Sealock in the library office.

Custodial history: Initial information in the collection folder indicates that Miss Betz also had in her possession music manuscripts of her father. As late as 1976 she still had the manuscripts, although she indicated they might be donated to the Missouri Valley Room at a later date. Apparently these manuscripts were never given to the library. A diploma from Paris, 1889, is also mentioned but was not found with the collection.

Citation note: Carl Betz collection (SC88), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Collection Description

Biographical/Historical note

The Kansas City School District in its early, formative years was known nationally and internationally for its quality and innovative approach to educating its pupils. An important factor in this reputation sustained by the school district was the quality of its teachers. One of its leading, progressive teachers of the late nineteenth century was Carl Betz. He was a pioneer in the development of a physical education curriculum for the district and as a result established one of the most complete systems of physical education for public schools in the country at the time. This was accomplished here in 1886 thanks to his efforts. He was also a musician and composer and made contributions to the school district in this way.

Carl Betz was born on June 1, 1854, in Belleville, Illinois, of German parents. He was educated in the St. Paul, Minnesota, schools and in 1876 completed the course of the Seminary of the Turnerbund in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which prepared him to teach physical education in the gymnasiums of the Turner societies, a German-American group. The societies where he taught were located in South Bend, Indiana; Louisville, Kentucky; Terre Haute, Indiana; St. Paul, Minnesota; and Kansas City, Missouri. While in Kansas City he presented

a report to the school district concerning the importance of physical education and the health of children. By January 1886 he was appointed director of physical training for the schools.

As an author, he wrote a series of books entitled *A System of Physical Culture for Public Schools*, publishing the first four volumes and not having the chance to complete the last four. He adapted the German gymnastics system to meet the needs of American schools. His exercises were meant to develop every part of the body, and all the children participated. At the end of the school year, there were elaborate closing exercises held in such places as Exposition Park, the Gillis Opera House, the Warder Grand, and the Auditorium. A natural extension of physical education was the availability of public playgrounds for children in Kansas City. Mr. Betz promoted this and presented a plan to the Board of Park Commissioners.

Carl Betz was also a musician, having studied music in Germany in 1881. He played the piano and cello, sang, composed music and directed. While in Kansas City he directed the Germania Maennerchor as well as held the title of Director of Music for the Kansas City public schools. He published a book of songs called *Gems of School Song*. He also was an editor for several youth magazines in both German and English. His accomplishments were noted by winning the silver medal and diploma at the Paris Exposition in 1889 and the medal given at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, 1893

The career of Carl Betz was cut short by his untimely death on April 28, 1898. He was 43 years old and died from an operation to remove his appendix. He left his wife, Louise Wittig Betz and their six surviving children: Annette Betz, Alma Betz, Martha Betz Shapley, C. E. Betz, Carl W. Betz, and Louise Betz Woods. His grandson and namesake, Carl Betz, was an actor appearing on several television shows in the 1960s-1970s. (Biographical information obtained from booklet *Carl Betz (1854-1898) Pioneer in Physical Education*.) He is buried in Elmwood Cemetery in Kansas City, Missouri.

Scope and content note

Both artifacts and publications associated with Mr. Betz are the main items in the collection. The contents of Box 1 were left as arranged when donated, in large manila folders with notations on the outside of the folders. The contents of the collection include numerous publications, nine photographs, various types of artifacts, three pieces of sheet music, several newspaper clippings, one set of handwritten exercise notes, and correspondence regarding the donation. Types of publications in the collection include booklets, circulars, programs, periodicals, cards, a manuscript paper, forms, etc. There are diaries or personal correspondence of Mr. Betz and little handwritten items belonging to him.

The Betz family history as well as biographical information on Carl Betz is represented by some publications in the collection most of which were added after the initial donation. Annette Betz, in 1981, at the age of 95 handwrote "The Home of Carl Betz and Louise Wittig Betz and Their Children" which gives an account of the family. She and her sisters in 1962 wrote "Carl Betz (1854-1898) Pioneer in Physical Education" and a manuscript written in 1988 by Arthur Wilkins entitled "The Betz Family and Kansas City Education" is informative. In November 1968, items from the collection were placed on display in conjunction with a teachers meeting. Photographs of the display items are found in Box 1, Folder 13.

The strength of the collection can be found in the published pieces which demonstrate his involvement in physical education in the Kansas City School District during his tenure between 1886 and his death in 1898. Some of the items do show his involvement with the topic in the educational community

outside of Kansas City. The artifacts give another dimension and contain personal items as wallets, desk calendars, and his penknife as well as the prestigious awards he received. The department's local history database also contains references to Carl Betz, and the microfiche newspaper clippings contain an entry for Annette Betz.

Bibliography of materials available in Missouri Valley Special Collections Publications of Carl Betz

1. *A System of Physical Culture, Designed as a Manual of Instruction For the Use of Schools*, 4 vols., 1886- , Kansas City Presse, MVSC 091.98 B56s.
2. *Gems of School Song: Suitable For Children of All Ages*, 1896, American Book Company, MVSC 784.6 B56g.
3. *Work and Play; a Magazine Devoted to the Interests of American Boys and Girls At Home, in School and Abroad*, 1 vol. in 8 numbers, 1893-94, MVSC 028.5 W926.

Family History

1. *The Family of Carl Betz June 1, 1854-April 28, 1898; part, 2, The Family of Mrs. Carl Betz (Mrs Louise Wittig) September 8, 1865-May 18, 1956; Including All Known Ancestors, Descendants, and Relatives*, by Annette Betz, 1965, MVSC Q 929.2 B565.

Publications That Mention Carl Betz

1. *History of Physical Education*, by Charles William Hackensmith, Harper & Row, 1966, p. 362, MVSC 371.73 H11H (circulating collection).
2. *Pioneers of Modern Physical Training*, by Fred Leonard, Association Press, 1915, p. 112-118, includes his picture, MVSC 371.73 L58p.

Collection Inventory

Box 1

Folder 1

- Collection provenance material
- Paper entitled "The Betz Family and Kansas City Education," signed Arthur Wilkins, 3/30/88

Folder 2 - Partial contents of manila folder number 1 - Printed booklets and leaflets

- Physical exercise notes, 13 handwritten pages with sketch illustrations

Folder 3 - Partial contents of manila folder number 1 - Printed booklets and leaflets

- Printed booklets including "Grouping With Flags" and "Play in Public Education," both written by Carl Betz
- Circulars from the Department of Physical Culture, 1892-1897
- Term examination publications from Department of Physical Culture, 1888-92

Folder 4 - Partial contents of manila folder number 1 - Printed booklets and leaflets

- Receipts and expenditures flyers, Department of Physical Culture, 1893-1895
- Miscellaneous publications, 1890s

Folder 5 - Partial contents of manila folder number 1 - Printed booklets and leaflets

- Graded lessons in singing by Carl Betz
- Sheet music: "Star Spangled Banner" and "Lightly Let Our Merry Feet"

Folder 6 - Partial contents of manila folder number 1 - Printed booklets and leaflets

- Publication - *Outlines of a System of Physical Culture for The Public Schools of Kansas City, Mo., prepared by Charles Betz, published by the German Gymnastic Association "Kansas City Sozialer Turn-Verein," of Kansas City, Mo., 1885*
- Publication - *Carl Betz (1854-1898), Pioneer in Physical Education*
- Publication - *A System of Physical Culture in a Series of Four Books, Designed as a Manual of Instruction for the Use of Schools by Carl Betz, 1886*
- Publication - *Course of Study and Syllabus of Grade Work in Music of the Kansas City Ward Schools, n.d.*

Folder 7 - Partial contents of manila folder number 1 - Printed booklets and leaflets

- Programs, circulars, exercises, etc., 1880s-1890s

Folder 8 - Partial contents of manila folder number 2 - Programs and lecture locations

- Handwritten list of programs on exercise that Mr. Betz performed giving date and place. Also includes programs from these events. Includes places in Missouri as Sweet Springs, Carrolton, and Joplin as well as Kansas locations as Atchison, Arkansas City, and Winfield. Aurora, Illinois, is also included.

Folder 9 - Partial contents of manila folder number 2 - Programs and exercises

- Closing exercises programs, circulars #2-7, 9 as well as miscellaneous ones, 1890s

Folder 10 - Partial contents of manila folder number 2 - Publications containing information about the work of Carl Betz

- *The American Turner*, Vol. 1, No. 10, April, 1913 - pages 237, 238
- *Mind and Body, a Monthly Journal Devoted to Physical Education*, Vol. 5, No. 50 (p.41-42), 51 (p.56), April and May, 1898
- *The Kansas City Schools*, Vol. 5, No. 6, April, 1948, page 2

Folder 11 - Contents of manila folder number 3 - Magazines associated with Carl Betz

- *Work and Play, a Magazine for Boys and Girls*, Work and Play Publishing Company, Kansas City, Mo., Vol. 1, May, 1893 - Carl Betz, managing editor
- *Work and Play, a Magazine for Boys and Girls*, Work and Play Company, Kansas City, Mo., Vol. 1, No. 2, September, 1893 - Carl Betz, managing editor
- *Loose Leaves, a Magazine Devoted to Child Culture*, Loose leaves Publishing Company, Kansas City, Mo., Vol. 1, No. 2, February, 1896 and Vol. 1, No. 4, April, 1896 - Carl Betz, managing editor
- *Deutsche Jugendzeitung*, published in Kansas City, Mo., No. 21, Jahrgang 1 - Carl Betz managing editor, contains a song by Betz on last page

Folder 12 - Contents of manila folder number 4 - Publications

- *Kansas City and Its Schools*, National Education Association, Department of Superintendence, Kansas City, Missouri, 1917, prepared for meeting of February 26 to March 3, 1917 - Carl Betz mentioned on page 57
- *The Teachers' Institute*, Vol. 20, No. 9, May, 1898 - Music by Carl Betz on p.386, "Save the Song-Birds"

Folder 13 - Partial contents of manila folder number 5 - Photographs (All black and white)

- Photograph #1 - Carl Betz, portrait, 2 1/2" x 4", 1881, Stubers Photographers, Louisville, KY
- Photograph #2 - Carl Betz, portrait, 3 3/4" x 5 1/2", ca1880s-90s
- Photograph #3 - Mrs. Carl Betz (Louise Wittig Betz), 4" x 10", 1891, C. . Pomeroy photographer, 920 Main St., Kansas City, MO
- Photograph #4 - Mrs. Charles (Annette) Wittig, mother of Mrs. Carl (Louise) Betz, 2 1/2" x 4 1/2", also a newspaper clipping of actor Carl Betz, a grandson of Mrs. Carl Betz, he played on TV program "Judd For the Defense"
- Photograph #5 - Mrs. Louise Wittig Betz, widow of Carl Betz, 4 1/2" x 6 1/2", ca1948
- Photograph #6 - Mrs. Carl (Louise) Betz and family including Annette, Alma, Martha, Carl Egmont, Carl William, and Louise Julia, posed in front of their home at 430 Bellefontaine Avenue in Kansas City, Missouri, 8" x 10", 1899
- Photograph #7 - View of display case holding items from the Carl Betz collection including books, periodicals, outlines, medals awarded, etc., 8" x 10", 1968
- Photograph #8 - Close-up view of display case holding items from the Carl Betz collection as in Photograph 7, 8" x 10", 1968
- Photograph #9 - Titled "Allegorical Representation of the Turner Society, Original Tableau by Carl Betz, At the tenth Turner Festival of the Indiana Turner Society in Terre Haute, Indiana on the 12th, 13th and 14th of August, 1882" The central figure is Louise Wittig who later became Mrs. Carl Betz, 3 1/2" x 9", mounted, 1882

Folder 14 - Partial contents of manila folder number 5 - Miscellaneous items

- Booklet - *Carl Betz (1854-1898), Pioneer in Physical Education*
- Photocopy of "Republican Union Ticket. Winona County." Given to actor Carl Betz from actor William Windom

- Correspondence - To Missouri Valley Room from Annette Betz, October 6, 1969, handwritten and typewritten copy, 1 p.; To Annette Betz from Marjorie Kinney of Missouri Valley Room, October 31, 1969, typewritten, 1 p.

Folder 15 - Contents of manila folder number 6 - Booklet

- Booklet - *Report of the Board of Park and Boulevard Commissioners of Kansas City, Mo.*, 1893. Written on folder: "This envelope contains a copy of the 1893 report of the Board of Park and Boulevard Commissioners. It is of interest to us because Carl Betz was the first to advocate playgrounds in Kansas City. And playgrounds are included in this report. Carl Betz began working for playgrounds soon after his arrival in Kansas City in January of 1885. See article on Carl Betz in the *Star* on page 10C of October 2, 1910. Headlines are: 'A Pioneer of Playgrounds - Carl Betz, Who Died in 1898, first to advocate them here' - 'He saw Holmes Square in the 80's'. He made two important converts, A. R. Meyer and George E. Kessler. These and others carried out many of his ideas later."

Folder 16 - Contents of manila folder number 7 - newspaper clippings

- Newspaper clippings - May 20, 1890, May 22, 1890, April 28, 1898, May 1, 1898, Oct. 2, 1910. Includes his obituary. Originals and 2 sets of photocopies

Folder 17 - Contents of manila folder number 8 - publication booklet covers and memoriam booklet

- Booklet, leather bound, entitled "In Memory of Prof. Carl Betz." Note with it reads: "This booklet "In Memory of Prof. Carl Betz" was sent to the family by the superintendents, principals, and teachers of the Kansas City, Missouri, schools. The teachers met in the morning of April 30, 1898, the morning of the funeral, to adopt these resolutions."
- Pre-publication leather covers - Vol. V - VIII, contents empty. Titles: V. Heavy Gymnastics, VI. Gymnastic Plays & Games, VII. Fancy Gymnastics, VIII. Outings.

Folder 18 - Booklet

- Booklet entitled "The Home of Carl Betz and Louise Wittig Betz and Their Children," by Annette Betz, 1981, handwritten, 68 p. Acquired after initial collection was donated to the library.

Box 2 - Artifacts

Folder 1 - Children's Game

- Handmade cards in box - Handwritten sheet attached to box lid reads: "Carl Betz (1854-1898) made many games for his children. The one we treasured most is this game of authors, the books of which represent German writers, composers, artists, and philosophers. He designed and painted the cards for us. He made the game in 1895, when his oldest child was not yet 9 years old. The book about the family he added the next year after his son Carl was born. He told his children, while they were still very young much about great writers, musicians and painters. He took them to the woods in spring time to show them the wild flowers. On clear nights he took them outdoors and taught them the names of the stars".

Folder 2 - Pocketknife and Tuning Fork

- Pocketknife note reads: "For many years before his death in 1898, Carl Betz carried this pocketknife."
- Tuning fork note reads: "This is the tuning fork that Carl Betz used when he visited the school classes in the Kansas City Public Schools during the years 1896-1898, when he was also supervisor of Music in the K.C. schools."

Folder 3 - Desk Calendar

- Desk calendar note reads: "This desk calendar was used by Carl Betz in the year of his death. The top page, April 15, 1898, shows the day on which he was taken ill. He died April 28, 1898. The calendar is interesting, too, for the quotations, notes, 'commercials,' etc., printed at the top of each page."

Folder 4 - Pad of Report Blanks

- Kansas City Public Schools, Department of Physical Culture, pad note reads: "Pad of report blanks used by Carl Betz in the 1890s."

Folder 5 - Award Ribbon

- An official ribbon from the World's Columbian Exposition given to Carl Betz for gymnastic manuals. Note reads: "Ribbon awarded to Carl Betz by the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893."

Folder 6 - Booklet and Newspaper Clippings

- Booklet - "The Chicago Tribune Art Supplements in Two Parts, World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, Part One."
- Newspaper clippings - "Carl Betz Laid to Rest," *Kansas City Journal*, May 1, 1898, p.9
- Newspaper clippings - "A Pioneer of Playgrounds," *The Kansas City Star*, October 2, 1910, p.10C
- Newspaper clippings - Unidentified, Picture of three Kansas City School District Superintendents, I.I. Cammack, 1913-1928; George Melcher, 1928-; James M. Greenwood, 1874-1913

Folder 7, 7a, 7b - Wallets

- Two, leather bound wallets containing newspaper clippings, cards, notes, articles, etc. Note with wallets reads: "Two wallets that belonged to Carl Betz (1854-1898)." Wallet contents have been photocopied.

Folder 8 - Medals

- Medal from Paris World's Fair, 1889 - Notes read: "Silver medal to Carl Betz from the Paris World's Fair in 1889 for his work and his books in the field of physical education in the public schools"; "He was awarded the silver medal at the Paris Exposition in 1889 for his work in physical education in the public schools and for his books. This was the only medal in this field given to one from the U.S."; "From Paris, 1889 (World's Fair)."
- Medal from World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893, encased in metal case with silver lining. Note reads: "World's Columbian Exposition in

Chicago in 1893 gave Carl Betz the highest award and medal for his work in physical education and for his books."

MVSC Oversize Collection

- MVO166F - Portraits of the Board of Education, 1867-1895. Inventory of this collection states that it is from the Carl Betz Collection (old#6). Online in Education MVO Collection <http://www.kchistory.org/u/?Education,526>.
- MVO128F - Portraits of Board of Education members, superintendent, principals and school officials, Kansas City School District, May 1895. Includes photo of Carl Betz. May have been part of collection as received in 1968. Online in Education MVO Collection <http://www.kchistory.org/u/?Education,509>.

Processed by Special Collections Librarian Sara Nyman, March 2006.