The papers of the Merrill and Palmer Families were placed in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs as part of the papers of the Merrill-Palmer Institute in January of 1982 and were opened for research in June of 1986.

The Merrill-Palmer Families Collection consists of the papers of Thomas Witherell Palmer, Lizzie (Elizabeth) Merrill Palmer, and Charles Merrill, father of Lizzie. The Merrill-Palmer Institute was established by Lizzie Palmer in her will which bequeathed the bulk of her estate for this purpose.

Thomas Witherell Palmer was born in Detroit on January 25, 1830. Son of Thomas P. Palmer and Mary Ann Witherell Palmer, he became one of Michigan's most distinguished citizens. His father, originally from Connecticut, was a store owner, sawmill owner, and involved in mining in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Mary Palmer was the daughter of James Witherell, a Michigan Supreme Court Justice and Secretary of the Michigan Territory.

Thomas Palmer was educated in Detroit and at the University of Michigan. He settled in Appleton, Wisconsin in 1848. After his business was destroyed by fire in 1852, he returned to Detroit and became his father's business partner. In 1853, he associated with Charles Merrill, who owned vast lumbering enterprises throughout Michigan. He became a full partner in 1863. On October 16, 1855, he married Lizzie Merrill. They adopted two children, Harold and Lizzie.

In 1882, Thomas Palmer was elected a Michigan State Senator, and the following year, a United States Senator. During his political career, he was a popular debater and orator, a proponent of women's suffrage, government regulation of railroads, and restricted immigration. He was appointed Ambassador to Spain in 1889 and served for two years. In 1892 he accepted President Harrison's offer to be a commissioner for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. He died on January 1, 1913.

Lizzie Pitts Merrill Palmer was born in 1837. Throughout her life she was highly active in family business affairs and in the Detroit community. During her long residence in Detroit, Lizzie Palmer, together with Thomas, was active in the Humane Society, was a founder of the Detroit Institute of Arts, and donated many gifts to the city of Detroit, including Palmer Park. She died on July 28, 1916. In her will, Lizzie left three million dollars for the establishment of the "Merrill-Palmer Motherhood and Home Training School."
The papers of the Merrill-Palmer Family Collection primarily reflect Thomas and Lizzie's involvement in the Michigan and Detroit business communities. The journals of Thomas Palmer and Charles Merrill reflect their personal activities in the mid-nineteenth century.

Important subjects covered in the collection are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Properties</th>
<th>Palmer Park</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estate Transactions</td>
<td>Palmer-Whittier Land Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merrill-Palmer School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the important correspondents are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>George Brady</th>
<th>Thomas Palmer Estate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harold Palmer</td>
<td>Thomas P. Whittier</td>
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oversize ledgers

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Journals and a speech relating to Thomas Palmer's travels to Europe and South America and his
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Series II, The Charles Merrill Journals, 1850-1869, Box 1:
Journals relating to Charles Merrill's daily business activities from 1850 to 1869.

Series III, Business Records, 1858-1926, Boxes 2-31, Item 41:
Correspondence, financial records, land contracts, deeds, plats, and tax titles relating to the
business concerns of Thomas and Lizzie Palmer. There are a few items concerning mutual
business interests with Charles Merrill.

Series IV, Thomas and Lizzie Palmer Estates, 1913-1923, Boxes 32-40, Items 42-43:
Correspondence, financial records, land contracts and deeds, legal documents, and maps relating
to the estates of Thomas and Lizzie Palmer. Some material concerns Harold Palmer, their
adopted son who also acted as agent for Lizzie Palmer.
Series I
The Thomas Palmer Papers, 1848-1880
Box 1

Journals, a percentage table book and a speech of Thomas Palmer. The journals are concerned with his travels to Europe and South America, and his daily activities from 1848 to 1855. The speech relates to the 1880 United States Presidential election. The percentage table book was a reference tool for business transactions. Material is arranged chronologically.

Box 1

1. Thomas Palmer; Journal, European and South American trip, 1848
2. Thomas Palmer; Journal, Dec 1848 - Feb 1849
3. Thomas Palmer; Journal, Aug 1852 - Feb 1855
4. Thomas Palmer; Speech and related notes [c. 1880]

Series II
The Charles Merrill Journals, 1850-1869
Box 1

Journals relating to the daily activities of Charles Merrill. There is also a business account book. The material is arranged chronologically.

Box 1

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7. Charles Merrill; Account book, Nov 1850 - May 1852
8-12. Charles Merrill; Daily journals, Jan 1852 - Jan 1869
Correspondence, financial records, land contracts, deeds, plats (land maps), and tax titles relating to the business concerns of Thomas and Lizzie Palmer. Most of the materials are concerned with their land holdings, but is also a small amount of information on mutual business interests with Charles Merrill. Files are arranged chronologically by type of material. An oversized ledger for 1915-16 will be found at the end of the collection.

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