

Grand Rapids History & Special Collections

Archives

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Finding Aid for the

Grand Rapids Study Class / Grand Rapids Study Club Records

Collection # 082

September 2009 version

Abstract

The Grand Rapids Study Class / Grand Rapids Study Club Records document the activities and membership of this Grand Rapids, Michigan African American womens' organization, through it's minutes, correspondence, membership lists, yearbooks, historical notes & clippings. Holdings provide information on the Club from its creation in 1904 until 1987, with the bulk of the contents from the 1930's to the early 1970's. Yearbooks from the junior club, called the Pierian Club, are also included with the collection. Historical documents and architectural drawings of the Club's property at 427 James St. are included. That facility, cited as the Paul Richens House/Grand Rapids Study Club Clubhouse, was added to the Michigan State Register of Historic Places in 1985.

Grand Rapids Study Club Website

<http://www.grandrapidsstudyclub.org/index.htm>

Grand Rapids Study Club Building

<http://www.grapids.lib.mi.us/photocoll?cat=onclick&keynum=483>

Collection #: 082

Accession #: 1986.028

Donor: Grand Rapids Study Club, 1987

Span dates: 1904-1987.

Original archival processing date: Undocumented & 2004.

Size: approx. 6.25 linear ft. (26.5 + x inches in 254)

Related Collections

Coll. 185, the GRPL Michigan Room Copy Negatives Coll. Has a photo of a Pierian Club banquet, with name identification of members, at 185-3-45.

Box Summary

Box No.	Description of Contents	Box Description
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Box Inventory 9/2009		
1	Correspondence	standard
2	Legal sized docs.	standard legal
3	Minutes, ledgers	standard
4	History, Clubhouse, etc.	standard
5	yearbooks	Standard
6	Oversized. Scrapbook	squarish gray lidded
254 Box 9	Architectural drawings housed with the GRPL Art & Graphics Collection.	

## History

The Grand Rapids Study Class, as it was originally called, was organized Nov. 10, 1904 “for the mutual helpfulness, literary work, and general charities”. It is said to be the first organization for black women in Grand Rapids. The records document the social and business affairs of the Club. The first yearbook was created by hand in 1905-1906. In 1906, the Club became a member of the National Federation of Women's Clubs, and also the State Chapter. In 1926 a junior club, the Pierian Club, was created for younger members. As the membership grew, the club became focused more on aiding various charities, expounding black ideals and acting as a support group for the black community in general.

The date of formal transition from the earlier name “Grand Rapids Study Class” to its later name “Grand Rapids Study Club”, has not yet been determined, and usage of both terms overlapped for several years.

A Feb. 5, 1942 letter in this collection includes an image of a building at 427 James Ave., which the “Club”, was purchasing as a future clubhouse. A contract & a tax history from 1935, located in the collection, suggest an even earlier association of the Club with the property. Work was begun around 1979, to propose the property at 427 James Ave. as an historic landmark. In January 1985, the Club was informed that the Paul H. Richens House/Grand Rapids Study Club Clubhouse had been listed in the Michigan State Register of Historical Places. Paul Richens, (ca. 1844-1927) was a prominent early Grand Rapids builder, believed to have constructed & lived in this house.

## Scope and Content

There are 4 different “Constitution” documents, in the collection, none of which are dated. All use the name “Grand Rapids Study Class”.

The architectural drawings of the Clubhouse are housed with other drawings in Coll. 254, Grand Rapids Buildings Collection, although they are officially part of this collection.

Material in the “Club interest” folders reflect national topics that were also being discussed locally.

Some of the existing record keeping was done on scraps and waste paper. The correspondence dates to the early years of the club and details their relationship to sister organizations in the community. Also included are materials documenting their discussions and lectures over the years as well as an almost complete set of the club's yearbooks. The collection also contains a set of Pierian Club yearbooks. An incomplete scrapbook contains newspaper clippings documents the club's activities and achievements, but also one additional black & white photograph.

Series Descriptions

**Series I. Documents**

Includes versions of the organization constitution, historical information, minutes & correspondence from the late 1930's into the 1970s & 1980s, and some membership information.

**Series II. Graphics**

Includes documents and architectural drawings related to the Club meeting house on James St., plus a few photos of members.

**Series III. Scrapbooks and Ephemera**

One scrapbook is included in the collection which contains programs, clippings and other ephemera, plus one group photos. Some additional programs and other ephemera items are also included separate from the scrapbook. Some of these items document the Michigan and National Chapters as well as Grand Rapids.

**Series IV. Publications**

The bulk of this collection are the yearbooks, including those of the Junior club called the "Pierian Club". An article published in Grand Rapids Magazine, and one issue of a club newsletter are also included here.

**Series V. Miscellaneous**

This series includes a hand full of items which may have been used by the Club, including national articles as well as local sources. One item has been housed with the Grand Rapids Rotary Club Collection, but is cross referenced here, as part of the documents of the Study Club.

Contents

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
		<b>Series I. Documents</b>
		<b>Constitution, n.d.</b>
4	1	Constitution, "Grand Rapids Study Class" n.d. (4)
4	2	<b>History</b>
		○ "History of the Grand Rapid Studio Club" / by Esther Colston Hill [and Grace Sims]
		○ Misc. notes.
		○ Feb. 5, 1942 printed letter.
		○ "Ladies of the Club" / Jaye Beeler. Grand Rapids Press, Mar. 2, 1997. ProQuest Print.
		<b>Correspondence, 1937-1985.</b>
1	1	Feb. 1937 – 1969
1	2	Feb. 1971 – Jan. 1985
		<b>Minutes, 1934-78.</b>
1	3	1948-1974.
1	vol.1	1934-1937.
1	vol.2	1937-1940.
1	vol.3	1940-1942.
1	vol.4	1943-1946. [short black booklet]
1	vol.5	1947-1948.
2	vol.6	1948-1949.
2	vol.7	1950-1953.
2	vol.8	1968-1973.
		<b>Financial Reports, 1935-74.</b>
3	vol.9	Reports, 1935-47. [2 ring binder] Ledger, 1945-1951 ["Double Entry Ledger"]
3	1	Reports, May 1948-Nov. 1974.
		<b>Receipts, 1933-74, n.d.</b>
3	2	Receipts, April 1933-May 1955
3	3	Receipts, Mar. 1956-Oct. 1959
3	4	Receipts, 1959-1974, n.d.
3	5	Misc. found receipts.

- 3 x **Membership**  
1948/49 – 1962/63 [Brown Sterling(?) journal]
- 254 Box 9 **Series II. Graphics**  
Clubhouse Architectural Drawings  
427 James Ave., Grand Rapids  
Architectural drawings. 6 blackline prints.  
Grand Rapids Study Club / Richard W. Wright, architect. 5/17/85. Sheets  
1-6  
Sheet 1. Site plan  
Sheet 2. Basement plan  
Sheet 3. First floor plan  
Sheet 4. Second floor plan  
Sheet 5. Photo elevations.  
Sheet 6. Detail page.
- 2 3 Documents associated with the property at 427 James Ave.  
  - Abstract of title. Peoples National Bank #535
  - 2 contracts.
  - June 24, 1935
  - Nov. 10, 1944
  - Tax history, June 13, 1935.
  - Misc. notes & correspondence
- 4 3 Historic Register nomination, 1979-1985 & Paul Richter,  
builder/contractor/owner information, ca. 1927.  
“Houses with a History” / Karin Orr. Grand Rapids Press, Feb. 23, 1992.  
ProQuest Print.
- 4 5 Photographs, n.d.  
Photographs, n.d. (3, 1/25/2002)  
  - Snapshot of 4 women with “Grand Rapids Study Class” sign.
  - Snapshot of 3 women with “Grand Rapids Study Class” sign.
  - Interior, group photo.See also one photo in the Scrapbook.

**Series III. Scrapbooks and Ephemera**

- Scrap book, 1942-81.
- 6 1 b/w photo, programs, ephemera, clippings.  
1. Photo. Group. Caption: Ms. K. Nickerson, E. Rambau, E. Coe, V. Glenn, and S. Glover are working out last minute plans. [for Langston Hughes at Fountain Street Baptist Church.”  
Newspaper Clipping, 1981, 1986, n.d.
- 2 2 Clippings, 1981, 1986, n.d.
- 4 11 Ephemera
- 2 unused “Study Class” dues & assessments cards. [pink or yellow]
  - Program. G—R—Study Club. Lincoln-Douglas Banquet, Feb. 12, 1942.
  - Program. G-R-Study Class. Langston Hughes. Feb. 14, 1960, Fountain Street Baptist Church
  - 4 Club song or yell sheets.
  - Class Song by Bessie Bernette
  - Second Annual Festival of Black Films, Apr. 12 & 19, 1985 [flyer]
  - Fourth Annual Festival of Black Films, May-June 1987 [Flyer + 2 tickets]
  - Raffle tickets. 3 Skim Mink Scraf ... Grand Rapids Study Group. N.d.
  - Business card. “Phillips & Canada” original Rhythm Kings. W.C. Phillips, Bill Canada, Grand Rapids, Mich.
- 4 12 Non-GR Study Class, but Grand Rapids Ephemera
- National Urban League. Annual Conference. [Program] Sept. 3-8, 1950. Civic Auditorium. Hosted by Grand Rapids Urban League.
  - Grand Rapids Silver Charms, 1969-1982. [Brochure]
  - “And Still We Rise : recent books on the black experience from Grand Rapids Public Library” Feb. 1979.
  - The Grand Rapids Civic Theatre, 41st Season, 1966-1967. Flyer, including “Raisin in the Sun”.
  - Bulletin of the Women’s City Club, Grand Rapids. [serial] v. 62, no. 4, Dec. 1984.
  - Raffle tickets. Plymouth Club Sedan, 1955. By the Good Will Club, proceeds to the 1955 Polio Campaign.

**Series III. Scrapbooks and Ephemera**

- Programs & Programming
- 4 6 60th Anniversary, Nov. 15, 1964. Guest List booklet
- 4 7 75th Anniversary planning, 1979/1980
- 4 8 "Unit" Programs
- Unit 4 & 5. Pearl Primus. St. Cecilia. [mostly advertising]
- Unit 5. Langston Hughes in "Poems of Negro Life" May 16, 1945.
- A.M.E. Community Church
- 4 9 "Giants" planning, 1984
- 4 10 "The Negro in Grand Rapids" / Paul Phillips [copy]
- See also Coll. 006, the Paul Phillips Collection.
- Club Interests, 1939-87.
- 4 13 Interests and discussion topics
- 4 14 Interests and discussion topics
- Other African American Women's Organizations, 1922-84, n.d.
- 4 15 Michigan State Association of Colored Women's Clubs
- o Constitution & Bylaws. History
  - o 1895-1946.
  - o 1895-1955.
- Note: A list of the clubs on pg. 4 of the 1955 edition also lists the Browning Health Club for Grand Rapids.
- o Michigan Club Women's Bulletin, [serial] v. 1, no. 1, May 1946.
  - o Recording Secretary's Report, Oct. 1944-June 1947.
  - o Conference/Convention programs (5)
  - o June 1951, Community AME Church, Grand Rapids.
  - o June/July 1963, Pantlind Hotel, GR
  - o 1955 Convention Treasurer's report.
  - o Second Annual Tour, Apr. 1961. Program. Michigan Historical Commission. Archives.
  - o Ephemera. "dime gleaner"
- 4 16 National Association of Colored Women's Clubs
- o Ephemera & Programs.
  - o National Notes [serial]
  - o July 1926, Oakland, Calif. Convention number
  - o V. 28, no. 1, Jan./Feb. 1947 [poor condition]
  - o NACW Bulletin [serial]
  - o v. 3, no. 11, Apr. 1946.
  - o Dec. 1946

**Series III. Scrapbooks and Ephemera**

- Misc. Women's Organizations. Michigan.  
Publications from Pontiac and Saginaw.
- |   |    |   |
|---|----|---|
| 4 | 17 |   |
| 2 | 4  | [Hand Fan] Michigan Boosters. Dr. Rosa L. Slade Gragg image on one side.    |
| 4 | 18 | Misc. Women's Organizations. National (4 items)<br>Publications & ephemera. |

**Series IV. Publications**

- By or about the Club
- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 1 | Study Club Gazette Newsletter<br>#1 ca. Dec. 1978.  |
| 4 | 4 | "A Study in Self-Improvement" / by Carol Tanis.<br>Grand Rapids Magazine, v. 24, no. Jan. 1987. |
- Year Books, "Study Class"
- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | 1 | 1912<br>1915<br>1917<br>1918<br>1919  |
| 5 | 2 | 1920<br>1921<br>1923/24<br>1924/25<br>1925/26<br>1926/27<br>1927/28<br>1928/29<br>1929/30       |
| 5 | 3 | 1930/31<br>1931/32<br>1932/33<br>1933/34<br>1934/35<br>1935/36<br>1936/37<br>1938/39<br>1939/40 |

**Series IV. Publications**

5	4	1940/41 1941/42 1942/43 1943/44 1944/45 1945/46 1946/47 1947/48 1948/49 1949/50
5	5	1950/51 1951/52 1952/53 1953/54 1954/55 1955/56 1956/57 1957/58 1958/59 1959/60
5	6	1960/61 1961/62 1962/63 1963/64 1964/65 1965/66 1968/69 1969/70
5	7	[1970/71] 1971/72 1972/73 [1974] Yearbooks as "Grand Rapids Study Club" [1975/76] [1977/78]
5	8	Junior Study Club 1926/1927

**Series IV. Publications**

Pierian Club (formerly Junior Study Club)

5      9      1927/28  
                 1928/29  
                 1929/30

5      10      1931/32  
                 1932/33  
                 1933/34  
                 1934/35  
                 1936/37  
                 1937/38  
                 1939/40

5      11      1941/42  
                 1943/44  
                 1944/45  
                 1946/47  
                 1947/48  
                 1948/49  
                 1949/50

5      12      1950/51  
                 1951/52  
                 1952/53  
                 1954/55  
                 1955/56  
                 1956/57  
                 1957/58  
                 1958/59  
                 1959/60

5      13      1960/61  
                 1961/62  
                 1962/63

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**Series V. Miscellaneous African American Associated Items**

- 6 x "When a Negro moves next door" The Saturday Evening Post. Apr. 4, 1959.  
Baltimore context.
- 4 19 "A Boy Who Was Traded for a Horse" / James Saxon Childers" RE: Dr. George Washington Carver". Reader's Digest, Feb. 1937.
- 129 Box 7 Grand Rapids Rotary Club Roster, 1949.  
NOTE: This item now housed in Coll. 129, GR Rotary Club Record.  
2/10/2004
- 4 20 The Fourteen Stations of the Cross/ by Albert H. Pellowe, Trinity Methodist Church, Grand Rapids, Mich. N.d.  
Good Samaritan Lodge Ritual Book [National Grand Lodge of I.O. of G.S. & D. of S.], Ritual Book, n.d.  
...with ribbon for the "42nd Annual Session of Wolverine Grand Chapter O.E.S., Port Huron, Mich., August 4th and 5th, 1931. Corinthian Chapter, no. 19, Hostess"
- 4 20 "Local Leper Fund Treas...Mrs. Henry Verhoek.. Grand Rapids"  
[2 pamphlets associated with wider ranging club charities]  
"Soyung," n.d.  
"Maltee," n.d.