

Grand Rapids History and Special Collections

ARCHIVES

GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC LIBRARY

Finding aid for the

Grand Rapids Chicks Collection

Collection # 058

December 2008 version

Abstract

The Grand Rapids Chicks Collection is a devised collection containing photographs and official programs of the original team ca. 1946-1950. It also contains later, AAGPBL Reunion programs & photos, baseball cards plus other ephemera, and periodical articles & clippings regarding the Grand Rapids Chicks. An oral history was added in 2001. New materials continue to be added by team players and interested others from time to time. Some additional laser copies of materials, culled for the 2001 Exhibit at the GRPL Local History Department, may contain new information. The Grand Rapids Chicks were a part of the All American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL) from 1945 to 1954. Additional images & information on the Chicks & AAGPBL players can also be found in others collections in the GRPL Archives.

All American Girls Professional Baseball League official website  
<http://www.aagpbl.org/>

National repository for the AAGPBL archives at the Northern Indiana Center for History, South Bend.  
<http://www.centerforhistory.org/aagpbl.html>

Collection #: 058

Accession #'s: 1986.491, 1986.500, 1986.517, 1999.032, 1999.123; 00.[1546].1 ; P2000.062;  
P2000.065 ; 2001.054 [Note, this item to be moved to Risinger's own collection, but  
missing 10/30/2001]; 2001.084 ; 2001.129 & 129B ; 2002.099 [10/14/2002]

Donor: Gordon Olson, All American Girls Baseball League, and others.

Span dates: 1948-1954, 1986, n.d.

Processor: Original processing Martha Bloem, September 1988. Numerous additions & collection  
revisions, R. Mayne, Dec. 2, 1999 to 2002. Box Summary, Marcella Beck, August 31, 2000.

Size: 0.5 cubic ft.

Processing notes

- Previously boxed with Col. 57, but separated 12/2/1999.
- Additional materials have evidently been added since the 1988 processing, but not documented separately, or as to source.
- Collection expanded from 2 to 4 boxes to accommodate growth & additional processing.
- Collection contains purchases as well as gifts.
- Oversized box added 10/14/2002, and Box 2 converted to slip flip from slim legal flip, with 2 folders to oversized box.
- Photographs (3) 99.032                      Removed to Coll. 160 11/1/2001.
- 2 color laser copies. Aug. 26, 2000 AAGPBL Milwaukee Reunion. Bird's eye view of players standing in a "V" shape, on the field. [2001.054] Removed to Coll. 160 11/1/2001.

Related Collections

- 121 Marguerite King Moran Collection
- 125 Robinson Studio Collection. Chicks Series.
- 160 Helen Earlene Risinger Collection (Beans)
- 185-1-20 Six images, source unknown. Could be reproductions of those in other Chicks archival collections here.

Scope and Content

This is a modest collection consisting of representative items, documenting the historical American All Girls Professional Baseball League, primarily through memorabilia and written articles, from the era or later. The items come from various donor sources. Included are photographs with action shots, team photos, official programs, a souvenir program from 1986, trading cards, and other ephemera. The clippings primarily date from September 1948 to May 1954. An oral history from the Orwant brothers was added in 2001.

Additional items are added to this collection, as received.

For a larger set of photographs, see the Robinson Studio Collection 125, Chicks Series. For more scrapbook clippings see Coll. 121, Marguerite King Moran Grand Rapids Chicks Memorabilia Collection. For memorabilia for one of the better know team players and a consultant for the League of Their Own Movie, see Coll. 160, the Beans Risinger Coll.

See also the American All Girls Professional Baseball League Hall of Fame archives and website.

Box Summary

Box No.	Description of Contents	Box Description
1	Programs, ephemera	slim
2	Publications	Slim
2.5	Oral History tapes	4x5 flip box
3	Photographs	slim
4	Trading cards	4x5 box
5	Oversized	Clam
6	Exhibit stuff, including 3D	Gray lid window labels

NOTE: Several items are missing from this collection, and not correctly documented on yellow usage cards. Until this material is returned, the final revision of this collection is incomplete.

History

In 1943 Phillip K. Wrigley received word from the Office of War Information that the 1943 Major League Baseball season might be suspended due to a manpower shortage. Because of this shortage, Wrigley began working on what was to become the All American Girls Professional Baseball League. Wrigley and his advertising agent Arthur Meyerhoff promoted the new "Girls Baseball" as wholesome family entertainment for war workers.

The Grand Rapids Chicks were a part of this league from 1945-1954. The team played at South High School field. They were very popular with large attendance numbers, as many as 5,000 people attended a single game. The seasons were long-- seven months and 110 to 125 games. The women not only had to be top athletes, they also had to attend charm school, wear short skirts, have chaperons and curfews. This was all a part of the "feminine concept" held by the league. The first professional woman ball player to win "The Player of the Year" title was Connie "Iron Woman" Wisniewski of the Grand Rapids Chicks in 1945. Connie was also the league-pitching champ in 1945 and 1946. The Grand Rapids Chicks took a league championship once during its nine-year existence.

Series

**Series I. Ephemera**

Includes original or reunion programs, tickets, baseball trading cards, etc.

**Series II. Oral Histories**

Unfortunately, no oral histories of the Grand Rapids Chicks players are known to exist.

The interview included here is that of Carl & Myron Orwant / by Gordon Olson, Dec. 14, 2001  
Carl Orwant was the general manager of the Grand Rapids Chicks.

**Series III. Publications**

Publications and clippings make up a large portion of this collection. Several magazine issues are included, as they contain an article on the Chicks. These are often national or non-Michigan publications. The clippings to date are primarily from the local newspapers.

**Series IV. Scrapbooks**

This series currently only has a few loose scrapbook pages. For scrapbooks prepared by a Chicks fan see Coll. 121, Marguerite King Moran Grand Rapids Chicks Memorabilia Collection.

**Series V. Photographs**

There are about two dozen photographs in this series, from a variety of sources, most undated, though several from the era of play.

**Series VI. 2001 Exhibit Materials**

In honor of the 2001 Reunion in Grand Rapids, a wall exhibit was prepared for the Library, entitled "Who's Said Girls Can't Play Baseball?"

Select images from this exhibit are on the GRPL Website.

[http://www.grpl.org/collections/grhsty\\_spcoll/exhibits/baseball/index.html](http://www.grpl.org/collections/grhsty_spcoll/exhibits/baseball/index.html)

Contents

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
		<b>Series I. Ephemera</b>
		<b>A. PROGRAMS, Original.</b>
1	1	1946 (2)
1	2	1947 (1)
1	3	1948 (10)
1	4	1949 (4)
1	5	1950 (1)
		<b>Programs, Souvenir</b>
1	6	AAGPBL Souvenir Program, 1986. 1986.500
		<b>2001 Reunion Programs</b>
1	7	AAGPBL Reunion, Sept. 6-8, 2001
1	8	GRPL Local History Exhibit & Reception, Sept. 7, 2001. "Who Said Girls Can't Play Baseball?" Program (1 orig., 1 copy) & flyer (2)
		<b>B. TICKETS</b>
1	9	Ticket. Gran Stadium de la Habana. 219-B, 1946-1947.
		<b>C. TRADING CARDS</b>
1	10	Dolly Niemiec Konwinski (1) Alma Ziegler (1)
1	11	Fritsch trading card for Pat Keagle only, 2000(1) P2000.065
1	12	Autographed. Lavonne "Pepper" Davis (1) 2001.084            10/30/2001
4	x	3 packets of Fritsch trading cards P2000.062            12/29/2000 1)234 card set, c. 1995 2)106 card set, Series 2, c. 1996 3) 72 card set, Series 3, c. 2000.

**Series II. Oral Histories**

- |     |     |  |
|-----|-----|--|
| 2   | 1-2 | Carl & Myron Orwant / by Gordon Olson, Dec. 14, 2001<br>2001.012<br>● Transcription (2 copies) |
| 2.5 | x   | Audio Tapes & Diskettes<br>● Diskette<br>● Master tape, cassette<br>● User tape, cassette      |

**Series III. Publications**

**A. Magazines & newspaper articles, Grand Rapids Press & Herald.**

- 5 Oversized.  
Grand Rapids Press. July 9, 1982. "Calling All Chicks" (Photocopy)
- 2 2.5 Chicks Obituaries.  
AAGPBL
- 2 3 Newspaper Clippings References  
·Selective index to Grand Rapids Press items on the Chicks:  
·July 18, 1945, p. 12, col. 1  
  
·May 8, 1946, p. 16, col. 4  
·May 25, 1946, p. 12, col. 5  
·June 3, 1946, p. 12, col. 3  
·Aug. 22, 1946, p. 12, col. 3  
  
·Feb. 25, 1947, p. 8, col. 2  
·July 1, 1947, p. 24, col. 6  
·Sept. 16, 1947, p. 14, col. 5  
·Sept. 17, 1947, p. 30, col. 8  
  
·Sept. 4, 1948, p. 24, col.. 1  
·Sept. 30, 1948, p. 35, col. 1  
  
·Sept. 1, 1949, p. 34, Col. 1  
·Sept. 20, 1949, p. 22, col. 8  
  
·Mar. 16, 1950, p. 37, col. 1  
·June 6, 1950, p. 16, col. 1  
·July 21, 1950, p. 2, col. 1  
·July 21, 1950, p. 23, col. 3  
·Aug. 17, 1950, p. 36, col. 1  
·Aug. 19, 1950, p. 22, Col. 7  
·Sept. 1, 1950, p. 38, col. 1  
  
·May 7, 1951, p. 32, col. 1  
·June 26, 1951, p. 16, col. 1  
·Sept. 6, 1951, p. 31, col. 1  
  
·July 22, 1952, p. 20, col. 3.  
·July 23, 1952, p. 33, col. 7  
·Aug. 8, 1952, p. 23, col. 3

**Series III. Publications**

**A. Magazines & newspaper articles, Grand Rapids Press & Herald.**

Selective index to Grand Rapids Press items on the Chicks:

- Aug. 23, 1952, p. 23, col. 3
- Sept. 1, 1952, p. 31, col. 3
- Feb. 25, 1954, p. 39, col. 3
- Apr. 17, 1954, p. 24, col. 3
- May 27, 1954, p. 25, col. 5

**Series III. Publications**

**B. Magazine & newspaper articles, Other, including unknown sources.**

- |   |     |  |
|---|-----|--|
| 2 | 15? | <b>Cadence</b> , Sept. 12, 2001. "Grand Rapids Chicks a part of area sports heritage" p. 31. [Article on the 2001 reunion]   |
| 2 | 3.5 | <b>Chronicle</b> , V. 30, no. 1, Spring 2007. Michigan History Day. Alayna Klco dressed as a Grand Rapids Chick. pg. 17.<br>2007.004.025            Added 2/6/2008 |
| 5 | x   | <b>Detroit News</b> "Accent", Mar. 5, 1992 "Women in Diamonds" (photocopy)   |
| 2 | 4   | <b>Glamour</b> , May 1989. "Women Who Play Hardball" (photocopy)   |
| 2 | 5   | <b>Herizons</b> : Women's Feminist Views. Sum. 1992. V. 6, no. 2. "The Girls of Summer" by Johanna Brand.  |
| 2 | 6   | The <b>Jerusalem Report</b> . Nov. 14, 1996. "In a League of Her Own" p. 31. Missing, 2000.  |
| 2 | 7   | <b>Michigan History Magazine</b> , Sept./Oct. 1997. "Girl's of Summer" by Carey L. Draeger. P. 16+   |
| 2 | 8   | <b>Museum</b> (Public Museum of Grand Rapids) Sum. 1994. "The Girls of Summer", pg. 8+   |
| x | x   | Peninsular Club Magazine, v. 21, May 1952, pg. 28. "Fans Can Look Forward to Bright Chick Season" Photocopy pending 2/29/2008                                      |
| 2 | 9   | <b>People Magazine</b> . Aug. 17, 1987. Voices: p. 77. "This Mother could Hit" (Photocopy)   |
| 2 | 10  | <b>Smithsonian Magazine</b> , July 1989. "The 'Belles of the Ball Game' were a hit with their fans" / by Jack Fincher. (photocopies, 2 different versions)         |
| 2 | 11  | <b>Traces</b> : of Indiana & Midwestern History, Spr. 1993. "Women in Baseball" / Barbara Gregorich. P. 26+ (photocopy)  |
| 2 | 12  | <b>Women's Sports</b> , Oct. 1982. P. 48+ "Seasons in the Sun" / by David Young. (photocopy)   |
|   |     | Unknown Sources  |
| 2 | 13  | Unknown source. "Girls' Ball Club Would Build \$150,000 Field on City Land" (photocopy)  |

**Series IV. Scrapbooks & Scrapbook pages**

- 5 x 4 Scrapbook pages, from the Scrapbook of fan Marie H. Taylor, including clippings & 2 original b/w photos.  
2002.099 10/14/2002

**Series V. Photographs**

Note: This inventory of the photos was prepared in Oct. 2002. It is possible that other additional photographs previously existed, and are now misplaced.

- 3 1 Photographs, N.D.(19 items 2/10/2001; )  
5x7 ish, b/w Spielmacher Photos, 16 found, 10/14/2002) South High Field(?)  
1. Team shot, seated on steps, beside building, with shadows at bottom step.  
2.-4. Individual Player (3)  
5.-6. Individual Player (2)  
7.-16. Action Shots (10)  
7. Saluting the flag from the dugout (1)  
8.-9. Field shots (2)  
10.-14. Across the Plate (5)  
10. Catcher Ann O'Dowd & Runner Mary Lou Studnicka  
11. Baserunner Alma "Gabby" Zielger. Includes Ernestine "Teeny" Petras, GR Chick sitting in the dugout in the background.  
12. Unidentified catcher & runner  
13. Unidentified back of No. 12 & runner.  
14. Unidentified back of No. 18 near umpire & runner, with building in background.  
15.-16. Night shots (2)  
16. Unidentified runner, catcher, other player & umpire  
17. Group with team manager
- 3 2 8x10 Team photo by Spencer Beebe, Moss Point, Miss. N.d. (1)
- 3 3 8x10 Copy photo, autographed by player "Beans" Risinger. (1) [Possibly a recent Fuji copy print, but was there an original, since the item carried the old photo locations, ca. 2000]
- 3 4 Team Photo  
[00.[1546].1  
Robinson Studio Coll. print from our collection, 125-938-98, used in unidentified publication, with non-Robinson copy neg. #2175.
- 3 5 Multi-team group photo, including Lassies, Chicks and others. Borrer Studio.  
2001.103 11/1/2001

**Series V. Photographs continued ...**

- 3     6     1950 or 1951 Team snapshot, out of uniform, by Wm. A. Meadows. 1999.123,  
with not from donor.
- 3     7     “Women in Baseball” Exhibit in display case.  
Note: Restricted. Reprints should be obtained from the National Baseball  
Library, Cooperstown, N.Y. (1)  
2001.085
- 3     8     Marilyn Jenkins (3)  
1 mounted on board & 2 copies on board.  
2002.089     10/14/2002
- 3     9     Kent Co. Sheriff’s Dept. Reserves. Photocopies of Photos.  
This group served as Ushers at the Chicks games.  
Photos include donor James E. Taylor, and one includes with him his father,  
Hubert D. Taylor.  
2002.099     10/14/2002
- 3     11     AAGPBL Exhibit & Reception at GRPL, Sept. 7, 2001  
20 color photos by Pam Swiler.

**Series VI. 2001 Exhibit Materials.**

An exhibit was prepared by then GRHSCC Staff Member Martha Bloem in 2001, to commemorate the AAGPBL Reunion, held in Grand Rapids, Sept. 6-8, 2001.

The exhibit, which as the designer planned it took the form of a large scrapbook, is expected to be given to the AAGPBL Hall of Fame in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. It has signatures of players & others who attended the exhibit opening at the Library.

The material included here are mostly color laser copies of materials which were not eventually included in the exhibit. While much of this information comes from elsewhere in the GRPL Collections, some may be new material, received from undocumented donors.

- |   |      |  |
|---|------|--|
| 1 | 13   | Miscellaneous<br>·“Paper Doll” cutout of Chicks player, probably cut from a program.<br>·Cover & verso(first inside page) of original program. “Grand Rapids Chicks vs South Bend Blue Sox”, n.d.<br>·Clipping. “Grand Rapids’ Miss Baseball”—Mildred Earp. N.d.<br>·Graphic Clippings from original programs of team photos, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>·Chicago Colleens</li><li>·Fort Wayne Daisies</li><li>·Racine Belles</li><li>·Peoria Redwings</li><li>·South Bend Blue Sox</li><li>·Springfield Sallies</li></ul> |
| 1 | 13.5 | Miscellaneous 2 (xx items)<br>Clippings from various sources, including cartoons, an enlarged color postcard, a players head, baseballs, newspapers, etc.  |
| 1 | 14   | Map, from unidentified source<br>“Map 1.—Sites of AAGBBL [sic, AAGBPL] League Cities, 1943-1954  |
| 1 | 15   | Exhibit Labels or information sheets.<br>12 typed sheets of information on the League.   |

- 2      x      **Series VI. 2001 Exhibit Materials.**  
Photocopies of Newspaper articles from Aug. 1954, the last season & end of the League.
- Grand Rapids Press**  
·8/16  
·8/17  
·8/18  
·8/19  
·8/21, p.22  
·[8/22?]  
·8/23  
·8/25  
·8/26  
·8/27, p. 32  
·8/28, p. 22  
·8/30, p.27  
·8/31  
·9/3  
·9/4
- Grand Rapids Herald**  
·8/16  
·8/17  
·8/18  
·8/19, p. 10  
·8/21, p. 6  
·8/22, p. 1 Sports  
·8/23, p. 6  
·8/24, p. 8
- 2      x      Grand Rapids Herald clippings (photocopies) continued ...  
·8/25, p. 8  
·8/26  
·8/27  
·8/28  
·8/30  
·8/31
- 3      10      Photographs, mounted on “fringed” paper, but unused items from the exhibit preparation (xx)

5

**Series VI. 2001 Exhibit Materials.**

Oversized Exhibit materials (18 items)

Mostly laser copies of

·Clippings

·Scrapbook pages

·Photos

·Cartoons

·**On the Town**, p. 12 “Skirts on the Basepath”