

Grand Rapids History & Special Collection Center

Archives

GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC LIBRARY

Finding Aid for the

Grand Rapids Public Library
Cyanotype Collection

Collection # 87

Abstract

The Grand Rapids Public Library Cyanotypes Collection is a devised collection containing forty-one (41) cyanotype photoprints, purchased from now unidentified sources by Grand Rapids Public Library staff. The views are of Grand Rapids area scenes, houses, house interiors, John Ball Park, and four unique views of the damage caused by the 1900 break in the city water reservoir. Cyanotypes, as suggested by the name, have a blue coloring to the photoprint. The technique dates the photos from the period of around the 1880's to 1920's. Most of the identification data has been created by staff from their research & personal knowledge. The source and creators of these images is unknown.

Collection #: 087

Accessions #: 00.000. Some donor data on photos.

Donor: Library purchases

Span dates: ca. 1880-1900

Processor: Original processor, Richard H. Harms, October 1988. Box Summary added, Sept. 7, 2000, Marcella Beck. Inventory, item level description & location address labeling. Analysis of current housing conditions & some additions & revisions to finding aid, 8/23/2001-2005, R. Mayne.

Size: 0.2 cu.ft.

Box Summary

<u>Box No.</u>	<u>Description of Contents</u>	<u>Box Description</u>
1	photos	small print box 3x10x13

History

Cyanotypes are one of several photo processes based on the ferric process, also called iron printing. The familiar blue color in architectural blueprints is due to the similarities in the chemicals used in their production. Cyanotypes were invented in 1842 by Sir John Herschel, and are considered the first permanent photographic process. Though considered permanent, they fade in contact with alkaline substances or from extended exposure to light. In the later case, many faded cyanotypes will magically regenerate their blue after resting in the dark. The concern with alkaline fading effects the type of paper chosen for use in making the print, as well as the nature of the materials used in archival storage. Known to be

popular with amateurs who could easily make the prints at home for postcards or other keepsakes, cyanotypes were sometimes also printed on cloth as decorative pillows, clothing, wall hangings, and other decorative objects.

Unfortunately, no information is know about the photographer of these cyanotypes or the source of these unique historical reproductions.

Physical Condition (8/24/2001)

Images #1-36 have been adhered to either side of a buff colored, textured paper. The paper is acidic, which in the case of cyanotypes is less likely to reduce fading. No information is available on the specific nature of the paper or the adhesive used. Images have been placed on both the front & the back of the buff paper support. Any identifications are written on the buff paper. Image & support are enclosed with a plastic photo sleeve, probably Polyguard, via Hollinger. This is believed to protect the image from the possible bad effects of the acid-free (alkaline) file folders. Several photoprints are housed in the same folder. A better housing, in a box and neutral sleeve closer to the correct size of the paper, may be indicated in the future.

Images #37-41 are attached to board, and in a plastic sleeve.
Images #38-41 are 8 x 10 including board.

Apparently, black & white copy negatives have been made of all items, probably within the last 10-20 years.

Arrangement (8/24/2001)

Images have apparently been arranged at random, and are numbered successively on either side of the support(#1-36) or verso(#38-41). A group of the images are housed successively in regular sized file folders, currently in a flat 3" print box.

Scope and Content

This collection is the only known representation of the cyanotype photographic process currently located in the Grand Rapids History & Special Collections Archives. It is suggested by the manner of collection that the items came from more than one source.

The description in bold below are those words given on the

items. Additional descriptions have been given in order to provide more search access, and to provide a mental description of the image to remote users of the finding aid. An index at the end collocates similar themes, and provides added access.

Contents

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	1	<p>#1 Cascade Springs. Shows park-like setting.</p> <p>#2 Channel & bridge between Fisk & Reeds Lake . Man in straw hat rowing boat in channel near bridge underpass.</p> <p>#3 Hazel, and smaller boat Trixie, at dock, probably on Reeds Lake.</p> <p>#4 O-wash-ta-nong Boat Club, Reeds Lake</p> <p>#5 Wealthy Ave. (Park) Baptist Church [Tentative ID. Previously misidentified as O-Wash-ta-nog Boat Club]</p> <p>#6 Interior, unidentified, possibly the O-Wash-ta-nong Boat Club. Floral draperies at room entrance, table. Overlighting or fading of image obscures image in center.</p> <p>#7 Cascade house, unidentified. Woman with dog standing, and boy on porch.</p> <p>#8 Small boathouse & pier with 2 males(?) and row boat at pier</p> <p>#9 Grand Rapids View. Bird's eye view toward Grand Rapids city, from east, including old City Hall and County Building.</p> <p>#10 Grand Rapids View. Bird's eye view toward Grand River</p> <p>#11 Grand Rapids View. Bird's eye view. Tower center right is Berkey & Gay.</p> <p>#12 Grand Rapids View. Bird's eye view with road center, stretching to the horizon</p> <p>#13 Boat Club Street Entrance, Lakeside Club [Tentative ID]</p> <p>#14 Lakeside Club, Reeds Lake, view from lake</p> <p>#15 Lakeside Club, Reeds Lake, view from</p>

land, with picket fence walkway, horse-drawn carriage in lane.

#16 **Ramona Park**, Second Pavilion with tower
[Tentative ID]

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	2	#17 Robinson(?) Road View . Robinsons horse & buggy (surrey) on ? Road. #18 Thornapple River at Cascade? #19 Thornapple(?) River #20 Wooded scene, with man-made water flow constructions, Flume #21 Dr. Addison Robinson, dentist d. 1913, on dock at Reed's Lake #22 Inside of Boat Club, Reeds Lake? O-Wash-ta-nong or Lakeside clubs. #23 Cherry(?) St. View . Man in wagon with horse, turning corner, another man looking on. Large building in background left. Post on street corner near left, with possible large rock in street near curb. #24 Unidentified tree-lined street. #25 Grand Rapids View . View of Grand Rapids, believed to from down river, possibly from West side, toward dam, with Berkey & Gay tower visible center right #26 (44) 54 Sheldon Ave., Robinson Residence 1894-1922. Previously identified as the Amberg Residence, 54 Sheldon Ave., no evidence of Amberg residence has yet been found. However, a David M. Amberg is listed in the 1879/80 through 1892 directories at 56 Sheldon Ave. It is known that the house shown was the home & office of Dr. Albert Robinson, when it was still 44 Sheldon St., later 54. Per city directories, the house was purchased by the Robinsons around 1894, and Mrs. Jennie M. Robinson (widow) lived in the house until 1922. See image #27.

#27 **Dr. Albert Robinson, Mrs. Jennie M. Robinson?, Doris (baby) and Olga Robinson at Home/Office 44 Sheldon Ave.**

#28 **Unidentified house interior.** Class front bookshelves, rocking chair & 2 other chairs, draped entry into next room.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	2	<p>#29 Helen Remington Faye, rowing in boat in unidentified waters.</p> <p>#30 Cascade Springs. Unidentied encampment, with tents.</p> <p>#31 Unidentifed House interior. Fireplace with high bricking and slim mantel. Clock on mantel has greyhouse type dog figurine atop. Piano in corner, 2 rocking chairs.</p> <p>#32 Unidentified house, 2-3 stories, singled 2nd store, porches at entrance 1st & 2nd storied.</p>
1	3	<p>#33 Large House Corner of Union & Cherry. Possible the same building as seen in back in #23 above.</p> <p>#34 Unidentified house seen through trees, with picket fence in front.</p> <p>#35 Fountain, probably Fulton Street Park.</p> <p>#36 Houses on unidentified tree-lined street. Horse hitch near right corner?</p>
1	4	<p>#37 John Ball Park. Bird's eye view of Greenhouse with ponds.</p>
1	5	<p>Water Reservoir Break, 1900</p> <p>#38 Unidentified houses, standing. Rubble of one house at top of hill against standing house. Church in background center right.</p> <p>#39 Rubble, seen through trees, with many people standing around.</p> <p>#40 Distant bird's eye view of scene. Houses. Railway. People gathered above, on right side of railway underpass</p> <p>#41 Scene of slide, downhill to right,</p>

with house viewed on opposite side of slide.
People on lower portion of slide.

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