

Grand Rapids History & Special Collections

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Finding Aid for the

Old Settlers' Association /
Old Residents Society / Old Residents Association Collection

Collection # 083

December 2008 version

Abstract

The Old Settlers Society of Kent County was formed February 22, 1858. The purpose of the Association was to gather facts about the early history of Kent County and Michigan, and to form a social feeling among those who ranked as pioneers. To be eligible for membership, a man must have settled in Kent County, Territory of Michigan, prior to January 26, 1837 (the date Michigan became a state). In 1872 the requirements were revised to be a man, who was 35 or more years old and be a resident of the Grand River Valley, in Ottawa, Kent and Ionia counties for 25 years or more. In 1876 women were allowed to join, at first as honorary members only. The organization died out in the 1950's. The Old Settlers Association Collection contains materials from its original formation to 1955. Included are family records of members, meeting minutes and scrapbooks of news clippings and obituaries. Also included is a set of lantern slides, donated to the Association by the Estate of William H. Anderson.

For further reading about the Old Residents Association, History of Kent Co. Michigan by Chapman and History of the City of Grand Rapids by Baxter each offer information about the group.

Collection #: 083

Accession #: 00.000 ; 00.[1957].1-61+ ; 1912.001

Span dates: 1858-1955, n.d.

Processor: Martha Bloem, September 1988; R. Mayne, Apr. 2000, addition of volume from Old Col. Box Summary, Marcella Beck, Sept. 7, 2000. Addition of Lantern Slides, Jan 2002, Dee Henry Processor, under the instruction of R. Mayne. Finding aid Revision, Jan. 14, 2002.

Reboxing & addition of find. Items to finding aid, R. Mayne 4/3/2002 + revisions to 2005.

Size: 2 cu. ft.

Related Collections

See Coll. 054 for images of some of the Old Settlers, which may correspond to the lantern slides in this collection.

Ask staff for assistance in identifying specific collections which may have information on old settlers, such as the Ketcham Family Collection, which includes the Burton Family of early settlers of Grand Rapids.

Box Summary

Box No.	Description of Contents	Box Description
1	untitled	standand
2	V.2	slim legal
2.5	v.1A, v1B, v3	15 x 19 x 3 in. drop front print
3	v.4 Member, 1897-1910	Clam
3.5	v. 5-6 + 1910 Anniv. Vol. Reboxed 4/3/2002.	Standard Legal
4	Glass Lantern Slides A-B	4x6 slim
5	Glass Lantern Slides C-H	4x6 slim
6	Glass Lantern Slides H-L	4x6 slim
7	Glass Lantern Slides L-P	4x6 slim
8	Glass Lantern Slides R-S	4x6 slim
9	Glass Lantern Slides S-W	4x6 slim
10	Glass Lantern Slides W-Y	4x6 slim
11	Membership card file A-L	4x5
12	Membership card file M-Z	4x5
FF.IX.D	Oversized maps, clippings & ephemera [Need L-sleeves] 10/8/2007	

History

On December 27, 1871, a meeting was held at Sweet's Hotel to reorganize and draft a new constitution and by-laws. By January 17, 1872, reorganization was completed. Two of the major changes were the qualifications for membership and enlarging the territory of the society. To become a member, a man had to be 35 years old and be a resident of the Grand River Valley, in Ottawa, Kent and Ionia counties, for 25 years or more.

Changes were again made January 26, 1876, when the members voted to change the name to "Old Residents Association of the Grand River Valley." Also in 1876, women were permitted to be honorary members. Prior to 1876 only men were allowed to join the Association. But when it was decided to hold a banquet and ball, the men found they couldn't hold such a function without women, decided to allow their wives to become honorary members. Later women were admitted as regular members.

The Association continued to thrive over the years, their annual picnics were very successful. The reason for the Association's demise is unclear. It appears that in the late 1950's declining membership and interest forced the Association to dissolve. Also it is possible that other historical and social organizations were being formed and these new groups drew more younger members.

Scope and content

The collection contains original minutes of the Association, scrapbooks containing news articles about the society's activities and history of the Grand River Valley. Family record sheets of the Association members contain useful genealogy information on early Grand Rapids residents.

Also of interest, the scrapbooks contain indexed obituaries of members, and photos. Two of the books are historical shots of Grand Rapids, head of Island no. 1, Pearl St. Bridge 1866, and from a painting by A.B. Turner, 1833.

Contents

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
Membership		
3.5	[vol.6]	Constitution, Bylaws & Record of Members n.d. Formerly MK9.Ol2c 1986.075?
1	5-10	Family records of members, n.d.
3	vol 4	Membership book of the Association, 1897-1910,inc. O2:BF16.1
1	11	Membership roster, 1950.
11	x	Membership card file A-L
12	x	Membership card file M-Z
Minutes		
1	1	Original minutes of the Association 1858-1885, n.d.
2.5	[vol 1A]	Copy of the original minutes of the Association 1858-1885, n.d Formerly MK9.OL2 Later red buckram binding.
2.5	[vol.1B]	Negative Copies of the original minutes of the Association. 1858-1885, n.d Formerly MK9.OL2
2	[vol 2]	Minutes of the Association and news clippings 1870-1928. O2:F12.1
3.5	[vol.5]	[Minutes. Various meetings, 1929-1966. In "Record book. Includes clippings, ephemera, etc.]
Scrapbooks & clippings.		
1	2	Scrapbook, 1883, 1892-1954.
2.5	[vol 3]	Memoirs of the Old Residents Association, scrapbook, 1921-1951, n.d. Formerly MK9.OL2m
1	3	News clippings, 1872-1948, n.d.
1	4	News clippings, 1914-1955.

Miscellaneous

- | | | |
|---|----|--|
| 1 | 12 | 50th re-union pamphlet, constitution, 1925. |
| 1 | 13 | Pamphlet, constitution, 1948. |
| 1 | 14 | Memorial, Thomas Dwight Gilbert, 1894. |
| 1 | 15 | "A Tale of Two Cities", written by Angie Bingham Gilbert, wife of Thomas Dwight Gilbert, n.d.
Formerly M9.G37
c. 1 Existing
c. 2 00.[2920].1 Added 12/4/1008 |
| 1 | 16 | Map of Lowell, n.d. |
- FF.IX.D
- Oversized (6 items, some could be moved to print boxes 10/8/2007)
- "Grand Rapids Herald," page 3, November 16, 1924. (2 clippings, ½ sheets the long way. See also this information on microfilm.
 - Map of City of Grand Rapids wards, copyright 1899.
 - Map of City of Grand Rapids ward, 1903.
 - Graphic. Broadside. "Take the Michigan Central for the Kent County Fair ... Sept. 19-23, 1892. GR : Dean Printing Co. Poor condition. Previously folded & tearing. Long but narrow size.
 - Graphic. Broadside. Fragment. "Are You Coming? Of Course I am ... 22nd Annual Picnic & Homecoming. ... Old Settlers ... Sand Lake ... Aug. 29, no year, ca. 1914-1917. Pinkish color, cut off at the bottom.
 - Old Residents Association of the Grand River Valley. Annual Summer Meeting, June 30, 1921. Huber's Garden, Reeds Lake. Musical Program.
Contains the words to numerous old songs. Bottom part is torn off but present. Legal size or slightly larger. Light card stock, printed on both sides.
- | | | |
|---|----|---|
| 3 | | List of Former Residents who attended Homecoming and the 60 th Anniversary Celebration, 1910
O3:B216.1 Added 4/21/2000 |
| 1 | 17 | People Living in Grand Rapids in 1868 / F.D. Richmond.
1912.001 Added 5/25/2006
Tan leather binding. Inside front cover has inscription: Gift from William N. Cook, March 28, 1912. This book came into Mr. Cook's hands through Reuben H. Smith, who for many years was secretary to the Old Settlers' Association. |

- 1 3.5 Clipping. "Value of Preservation of Historical Records Reviewed by Mrs. S.W.McKee before Old Residents' Assoc. GR Herald, Feb. 27, 1916. Added 11/2/2001.

Images

“Lantern Slides of some of Grand Rapids Oldest business and Profesional [sic, Professional] men. Donated by the Estate of William H. Anderson to the Old Resident Association of Grand River Valley.” These individuals were not necessarily members of the Association. Found in an old envelop box.

00.[1957].1-61? Added 1/14/2002

Arranged alphabetically by the last name of the individual shown.

Lantern Slides

- 4 William H. Anderson
James M. Barnett
Dr. Louis Barth
Wm. A. Berkey
Christian Bertsch
James Blair
D.A. Blodgett
John W. Blodgett
Edwin Booth
Geo. G. Briggs
- 5 A.A. Carroll
Thos. F. Carroll?
C.C. Comstock
C.W. Garfield
Geo. W. Gay
T.D. Gilbert
Thomas Hefferan
Wm. G. Herpolsheimer
Anton G. Hodenpyl
Harvey J. Hollister
- 6 Joseph Houseman
Julius Houseman
W.O. Hughart Sr.
Henry Idema
Gen. Innis
Dr. G.K. Johnson
Wm. Judson
Jacob Kleinhaus
John S. Lawrence

- 7 **Lantern Slides**
H. Leonard
Amos Musselman
L.D. Norris
Thomas J. O'Brien
A.V. Pantlind
J. Boyd Pantlind
Col. Pierce
Wm. T. Powers
- 8 A.D. Rathbone
Lester J. Rindge
Wm. Sears
W.R. Shelby
Wm. Alden Smith
Paul Steketee
Wilder D. Stevens
Sidney F. Stevens
F.A. Stowe
- 9 Martin L. Sweet
Geo. W. Thayer
Geo. P. Wanty
D.W. Waters
A.B. Watson
L.W. Welsh
W.B. Weston
A.S. White
John Widdicomb
- 10 L.H. Withey
W.K. Williams
James R. Wylie
S.D. Young