

Grand Rapids History & Special Collections

Archives

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Finding Aid for the

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

Collection # 083

September 2009 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: 3.7 linear ft. (44 inches)

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
Box Inventory 9/2009		
1	untitled	standard legal
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>
		<b>Membership</b>
3.5	[vol.6]	Constitution, Bylaws & Record of Members n.d. Formerly MK9.OI2c 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
		<b>Minutes</b>
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.]
		<b>Scrapbooks &amp; clippings.</b>
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 ... 22<sup>nd</sup> 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<sup>th</sup>  
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.

Old Settlers/Residents Assoc Coll.  
Collection # 083

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
- Lantern Slides**
- 7 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