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Finding Aid for the

Reubey S.T. Ferris Recollections of William Haldane

Collection # 012

September 2009 version

Abstract

The Reubey S.T. Ferris Recollections of William Haldane primarily contains the 1937 reminiscences of the donor, Reubey S. Tomlinson Ferris of Baldwinsville, N.Y. Reubey was said to be the adopted daughter of the William Haldane (1807-1898), a Grand Rapids, Michigan pioneer. In actuality she was Haldane's niece by marriage. Deacon Haldane, on the other hand, is known as the "father" of the Grand Rapids furniture industry. In her remembrance Mrs. Ferris describes living conditions in the Village and then Town of Grand Rapids, Michigan, ca. 1837 to 1898. Included are details of the life of William Haldane, commonly viewed as the first commercial furniture maker in Grand Rapids. Haldane's origins, training, travels to Grand Rapids and the step-by-step developments of his furniture-making business are described, along with his church work, and the development of the community. Supplemental references are included.

Collection #: 012

Accession #: 1986.171

Donor: Reubey S.T. Ferris, 1936

Span dates: 1837-1898

Original processing date : 1986

Size: .21 linear ft. ; (2.5 inches) 8/4/2009

Search words: Ferris, Reubey ; Haldane, William

Related Collections

Coll. 204 Grand Rapids Furniture Designers Association. Records
Scrapbook entry.

See also early Grand Rapids newspapers for small advertisements of Haldane's business.

See also various collections containing early documents of the Park Congregational Church

Coll. 036, "Women Magazine", includes several issues with a black & white cover illustration by Reubey Ferris. This may be a the later generation "Reubey Ferris" of the family, rather than Haldane's adopted daughter.

Box Summary

Box No. Description of Contents Box Description
Box inventory 8/4/2009

1 Documents slim legal

NOTE: This collection was previously housed in the same box as Colls. 9 through 14.

Biography

Author of the Reminiscence:

Reubey S. Tomlinson (Tomlinson) from Baldwinsville, New York, was the niece of Mrs. William Haldane and came to live with the Haldanes. The Haldane's had no living children of their own; Reubey was taken into the family as a daughter. She married J.W. Ferris, and later moved to Wisconsin to live with a daughter in 1936. In that year she wrote these recollections of life with the Haldanes, for the Grand Rapids Centennial (1937). The version in this collection was edited by W.J. Etten.

Subject of the Reminiscence:

William Haldane (1807-1896) was born in Delhi, Delaware County, New York, the eldest of four children born to James and Elizabeth (nee Preston) Haldane, both native of Edinburgh, Scotland. At age 14 William Haldane became an apprentice carpenter and joiner, becoming a journeyman six years later. In 1832 he opened a furniture making shop, having married Sarah Tomlinson, the previous years.

In 1836 the Haldanes moved to Grand Rapids, where Haldane opened a cabinet-making shop in his house at the southeast corner of Pearl Street and Ottawa Avenue. [See Baxter illustration, pg 763 included below.] Initially he made furniture by hand and a foot-powered lathe. In 1847 he added water-power machinery in a new shop along the East Canal at Bridge Street. He converted to steam power in 1853.

A skilled furniture maker, generally viewed as the first in Grand Rapids, Haldane also made excellent cutters whose quality was such that customers bid to make purchases. Haldane also made coffins and for a brief time added undertaking to his endeavors.

A long time member of the Congregational Church, Haldane was active in First (Park) Congregational Church in Grand Rapids for 50 continuous years, during which time he came to be known as "Deacon" Haldane. The Haldanes had two children, both died in infancy. At his death, Haldane left his estate to Reubey Tomlinson.

Contents

Box	Folder	Description
1	1	Reminiscences of Mrs. Reubey Statira Tomlinson Ferris of Baldwinsville, N.Y. / edited by W.J. Etten. Grand Rapids, Michigan, July 10, 1936. Formerly MKG92.H13 F4 00.[3224].1 Added 11/24/2004
1	2	Images: William Haldane (2, 11/24/2004) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graphic clipping of published photo from unidentified source.• Photoprint of a sketch of the printed photo above. Artist unknown.
1	3	Photocopy of photo. Haldane chair, said to have been made in Grand Rapids in 1836. Dale Rooks photo taken for the Grand Rapids Furniture News Bureau.
1	4	Newspaper clippings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deacon Haldane Built Church before he made furniture, Mrs. Ferris his niece recalls.• From Haldane ... Pg. 186 from unidentified scrapbook. Original newspaper citation not given.• Deacon's Centennial (1936) p. 177 of unidentified scrapbook. Original newspaper citation not given.• City's First Furniture Maker also built caskets and caught bear cubs for pets. GR Herald, June 7, 1936.• Deacon Haldane : Pioneer Furniture Man. [Grand Rapids] Democrat, Mar. 6, 1898.• Furniture was Cheap when G.R. Industry was Young. GR Herald, July 1, 1936, p. 5• Table made by "Father" of Furniture Industry here is sought by Museum. GR Herald, July 2, 1936, pg. 5
1	5	Haldane House and other early Grand Rapids buildings, illustrations from Baxter, p. 762-763.
1	6	Notes on Ferris family <ul style="list-style-type: none">• listing of Ferris / Haldane descendants