

Finding aid for the Louis Moran account book Collection 011

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department

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Summary Information

Repository	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Creator	Moran, Louis, 1757-1826
Title	Louis Moran account book
Date [inclusive]	1796-1819
Extent	0.1 Linear feet Three folders
Language	French
Abstract	<p>The Louis Moran Account Book collection contains what appears to be the major portion of an original account book, 1796-1819, in French. It provides a record of bartered items exchanged in the Detroit and Saginaw areas. It has been said to be prepared by Louis Moran, originally called Louis Maurant, presumed to be an earlier relative of the settler Louis Moran of Grand Rapids. An English translation of the account book is included in the collection. Also included is an April 11, 1963 excerpt of a report to the Kent County Historical Society by Albert Hyma. Hyma clarifies previous misconceptions that credited the account book to Louis Campau, founder of Grand Rapids. The Campau family also immigrated to Grand Rapids from the Detroit area, and appears to have been related to the Moran family.</p>

Biographical/Historical note

Louis Moran was one of the early settlers in the area that grew into Grand Rapids, Michigan. He first came in 1833, as clerk for Louis Campau, credited as Grand Rapids' first settler. Moran is known to have located near the headwaters of the Grand River with about 2 dozen other 1834 settlers, including Antoine Campau and Martin Ryerson.

Shortly after, however, Moran moved up the nearby Thornapple River, near Middleville, where he is known to have kept a tavern with lodgings at Scales Prairie. It is believed to be this facility that is described by J.C. Holmes, in a paper he presented concerning his 1835 woodland journey, to the Detroit Pioneer Society, around 1875.

On the sixth day we rode to Louis Moran's, a very comfortable log hotel with a large chimney in the center; a ladder up against the chimney for ascending to the lodging apartment, which was the attic of the building. The floor boards of the attic were few and far between, the beds were filled with the coarsest of prairie grass, familiarly known as prairie feathers. The meals furnished us at that house were excellent [on the return trip] .. We engaged supper and lodging, and spent a very pleasant evening with the guests of the house ... [Baxter, 1891, p. 66-67]

Moran returned to Grand Rapids in 1836 or 1837 to run the Eagle Hotel, built sometime after 1835, but was replaced in this position by Canton Smith around 1838. Moran suffered in the 1837 financial crash. Subsequently, he is said to have driven teams, and hired others for the same task. Described in Baxter's as a large man over 6 foot, he is said to have had great faith in the honesty of others, and had many friends. He died in 1874(?)

As with many of the other early residents of Grand Rapids, Moran participated in important events and functions within the community. In 1836, a treaty was negotiated with the Indians who ceded their lands north of the Grand River. Moran was a witness of this treaty, along with Lucius Lyon, Rix Robinson, and others. Moran is also known to have served as a street commissioner in the early 1850's.

Moran's life before Grand Rapids is of note, as well. Moran was born in Detroit, date currently unknown. On the morning that Detroit received news of the declaration of the War of 1812, Moran, with his father and another person, were hired to carry a letter across the river to Windsor, Canada. There they were taken prisoners by the British, thus said to have become the first prisoners of that War in this part of the country. They were confined for eight days in Fort Malden; and then released.

NOTE: The account book is the central and single original document in this collection, but does not document Moran's history, as outlined above. This information has been developed from numerous resources in the historical collections.

Scope and Contents note

Three documents are included in this collection, prepared in part from 1796 to 1963. The original journal in this collection is in poor condition, fragile, torn paper, and faded ink. The other later documents, which translate or discuss this document, are typed on newsprint or other fair quality papers.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department October 1986

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Accession Number: 1984.003, 1986.181; Donor: Marie and Carolyn Beck, 1984, 1986

Controlled Access Headings

Geographic Name(s)

- Detroit (Mich.) -- History
- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History
- Saginaw (Mich.) -- History

Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
Account Journal [1984.003] 1796-1819	1	1
Account Journal (English translation) [1984.003] 1796-1819	1	2
Hyma Report Excerpt April 11, 1963	1	3