

Finding Aid for the Grand Rapids Study Study Club records Collection 082

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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Summary Information

Repository	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Creator	Grand Rapids Study Club.
Title	Grand Rapids Study Club records
Date [inclusive]	1904-1987
Extent	6.25 Linear feet Six boxes
Language	English
Abstract	<p>The Grand Rapids Study Club records document the activities and membership of this Grand Rapids, Michigan African American womens' organization. Included are minutes, correspondence, membership lists, yearbooks, historical notes and clippings. Holdings provide information on the Club from its creation in 1904 until 1987, with the bulk of the contents from the 1930s to the early 1970s. Yearbooks from the junior club, called the Pierian Club, are also included with the collection. Historical documents and architectural drawings of the Club's property at 427 James St. are included. That facility, cited as the Paul Richens House/Grand Rapids Study Club Clubhouse, was added to the Michigan State Register of Historic Places in 1985.</p>

Biographical/Historical note

The Grand Rapids Study Class, as it was originally called, was organized Nov. 10, 1904 “for the mutual helpfulness, literary work, and general charities.” It is said to be the first organization for black women in Grand Rapids. The records document the social and business affairs of the Club. The first yearbook was created by hand in 1905-1906. In 1906, the Club became a member of the National Federation of Women's Clubs, and also the State Chapter. In 1926 a junior club, the Pierian Club, was created for younger members. As the membership grew, the club became focused more on aiding various charities, expounding black ideals and acting as a support group for the black community in general.

The date of formal transition from the earlier name “Grand Rapids Study Class” to its later name, “Grand Rapids Study Club,” has not yet been determined, and usage of both terms overlapped for several years.

A Feb. 5, 1942 letter in this collection includes an image of a building at 427 James Ave., which the Club was purchasing as a future clubhouse. A contract and a tax history from 1935, located in the collection, suggest an even earlier association of the Club with the property. Work was begun around 1979 to propose the property at 427 James Ave. as an historic landmark. In January 1985, the Club was informed that the Paul H. Richens House/Grand Rapids Study Club Clubhouse had been listed in the Michigan State Register of Historical Places. Paul Richens (ca. 1844-1927) was a prominent early Grand Rapids builder, believed to have constructed and lived in this house.

Scope and Contents note

The collection contains very few gaps in the records, even though some of the record keeping was done on scraps and waste paper. The correspondence dates to the early years of the club and details their relationship to sister organizations in the community. Also included are materials documenting their discussions and lectures over the years as well as an almost complete set of the club's yearbooks. The collection also contains a set of Pierian Club yearbooks. An incomplete scrapbook contains newspaper clippings documents the club's activities and achievements, but also one additional black and white photograph.

There are four different constitution documents in the collection, none of which are dated. All use the name Grand Rapids Study Class.

The architectural drawings of the Clubhouse are housed with other drawings in Coll. 254, Grand Rapids Buildings Collection, although they are officially part of this collection.

Material in the “Club interest” folders reflect national topics that were also being discussed locally.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

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

Revision Description

2004

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Grand Rapids Study Club, 1987, accession number 1986.028.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Coll. 185, the GRPL Michigan Room Copy Negatives Coll. Has a photo of a Pierian Club banquet, with name identification of members, at 185-3-45.

Controlled Access Headings

Genre(s)

- records (documents)

Geographic Name(s)

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History

Subject(s)

- African American women -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids -- Societies and clubs
- African Americans -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- Women -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids -- Societies and clubs

Series I. Documents

Collection Inventory

Series I. Documents

Scope and Contents note

Includes versions of the organization constitution, historical information, minutes and correspondence from the late 1930s into the 1970s and 1980s, and some membership information.

	Box	Folder
Constitution, "Grand Rapids Study Class" n.d. (4)	4	1
History		
	Box	Folder
"History of the Grand Rapid Studio Club" / by Esther Colston Hill [and Grace Sims]	4	2
Misc. notes.	4	2
Feb. 5, 1942 printed letter.	4	2
"Ladies of the Club" / Jaye Beeler. Grand Rapids Press, Mar. 2, 1997. ProQuest Print.	4	2
Correspondence, 1937-1985		

Minutes, 1934-78

	Box	Folder
Feb. 1937 – 1969	1	1
Feb. 1971 – Jan. 1985	1	2
Minutes, 1934-78		
	Box	Folder
1948-1974	1	3
	Box	Volume
1934-1937	1	1
1937-1940	1	2
1940-1942	1	3
1943-1946 [short black booklet]	1	4
1947-1948	1	5
1948-1949	2	6
1950-1953	2	7
1968-1973	2	8

Financial Reports, 1935-74.

Financial Reports, 1935-74.		
	Box	Volume
Reports, 1935-47. [2 ring binder]	3	9
Ledger, 1945-1951 ["Double Entry Ledger"]	3	9
	Box	Folder
Reports, May 1948-Nov. 1974	3	1
Receipts, 1933-74, n.d.		
	Box	Folder
Receipts, April 1933-May 1955	3	2
Receipts, Mar. 1956-Oct. 1959	3	3
Receipts, 1959-1974, n.d.	3	4
Misc. found receipts.	3	5
Membership		
	Box	
1948/49 – 1962/63 [Brown Sterling(?) journal]	3	
Series II. Graphics		

Documents associated with the property at 427 James Ave.**Scope and Contents note**

Includes documents and architectural drawings related to the Club meeting house on James St., plus a few photos of members.

	Collection	Box
Clubhouse Architectural Drawings - 427 James Ave., Grand Rapids. Richard W. Wright, architect. 5/17/85. Sheets 1-6	254	9

Documents associated with the property at 427 James Ave.

	Box	Folder
Abstract of title. Peoples National Bank #535	2	3
2 contracts.	2	3
June 24, 1935	2	3
Nov. 10, 1944	2	3
Tax history, June 13, 1935.	2	3
Misc. notes and correspondence	2	3
	Box	Folder
Historic Register nomination, 1979-1985 and Paul Richter, builder/ contractor/owner information, ca. 1927	4	3

Series III. Scrapbooks and Ephemera

“Houses with a History” / Karin Orr. Grand Rapids Press, Feb. 23, 1992. ProQuest Print.	4	3
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Photographs, n.d. (3, 1/25/2002)	4	5
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Series III. Scrapbooks and Ephemera

Scope and Contents note

One scrapbook is included in the collection which contains programs, clippings and other ephemera, plus one group photos. Some additional programs and other ephemera items are also included separate from the scrapbook. Some of these items document the Michigan and National Chapters as well as Grand Rapids.

	Box	Folder
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Scrap book, 1942-81.	6	1
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Scope and Contents note

Includes photo: Ms. K. Nickerson, E. Rambau, E. Coe, V. Glenn, and S. Glover are working out last minute plans. [for Langston Hughes at Fountain Street Baptist Church]

Newspaper clippings, 1981, 1986, n.d.	2	2
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Ephemera

	Box	Folder
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Two unused “Study Class” dues and assessments cards. [pink or yellow]	4	11
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Non-GR Study Class, but Grand Rapids Ephemera

Program. G—R—Study Club. Lincoln-Douglas Banquet, Feb. 12, 1942.	4	11
Program. G-R-Study Class. Langston Hughes. Feb. 14, 1960, Fountain Street Baptist Church	4	11
4 Club song or yell sheets.	4	11
Class Song by Bessie Bernette	4	11
Second Annual Festival of Black Films, Apr. 12 and 19, 1985 [flyer]	4	11
Fourth Annual Festival of Black Films, May-June 1987 [Flyer + 2 tickets]	4	11
Raffle tickets. 3 Skim Mink Scraf ... Grand Rapids Study Group. N.d.	4	11
Business card. "Phillips & Canada" original Rhythm Kings. W.C. Phillips, Bill Canada, Grand Rapids, Mich.	4	11
Non-GR Study Class, but Grand Rapids Ephemera		
	Box	Folder
National Urban League. Annual Conference. [Program] Sept. 3-8, 1950. Civic Auditorium. Hosted by Grand Rapids Urban League.	4	12
Grand Rapids Silver Charms, 1969-1982. [Brochure]	4	12
"And Still We Rise : recent books on the black experience from Grand Rapids Public Library" Feb. 1979.	4	12

Programs and Programming

The Grand Rapids Civic Theatre, 41st Season, 1966-1967. Flyer, including “Raisin in the Sun”	4	12
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Bulletin of the Women’s City Club, Grand Rapids. [serial] v. 62, no. 4, Dec. 1984.	4	12
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Raffle tickets. Plymouth Club Sedan, 1955. By the Good Will Club, proceeds to the 1955 Polio Campaign.	4	12
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Programs and Programming

	Box	Folder
60th Anniversary, Nov. 15, 1964. Guest List booklet	4	6
75th Anniversary planning, 1979/1980	4	7
“Unit” Programs: Unit 4 and 5. Pearl Primus. St. Cecilia. [mostly advertising]	4	8
“Unit” Programs: Unit 5. Langston Hughes in “Poems of Negro Life” May 16, 1945. A.M.E. Community Church	4	8
“Giants” planning, 1984	4	9
“The Negro in Grand Rapids” / Paul Phillips [copy]	4	10

Club Interests, 1939-87.

Other African American Women's Organizations, 1922-84, n.d.

	Box	Folder
Interests and discussion topics	4	13
Interests and discussion topics	4	14
Other African American Women's Organizations, 1922-84, n.d.		
Michigan State Association of Colored Women's Clubs		
	Box	Folder
Constitution and Bylaws. History. 1895-1946, 1895-1955. Note: A list of the clubs on pg. 4 of the 1955 edition also lists the Browning Health Club for Grand Rapids.	4	15
Michigan Club Women's Bulletin, [serial] v. 1, no. 1, May 1946.	4	15
Recording Secretary's Report, Oct. 1944-June 1947.	4	15
Conference/Convention programs (5)		
	Box	Folder
June 1951, Community AME Church, Grand Rapids.	4	15
June/July 1963, Pantlind Hotel, GR	4	15
1955 Convention Treasurer's report.	4	15

National Association of Colored Women's Clubs

Second Annual Tour, Apr. 1961. Program. Michigan Historical Commission. Archives.	4	15
Ephemera. "dime gleaner"	4	15
National Association of Colored Women's Clubs		
	Box	Folder
Ephemera and Programs.	4	16
National Notes [serial]	4	16
July 1926, Oakland, Calif. Convention number	4	16
V. 28, no. 1, Jan./Feb. 1947 [poor condition]	4	16
NACW Bulletin [serial], v. 3, no. 11, Apr. 1946; Dec. 1946	4	16
Misc. Women's Organizations. Michigan.		
	Box	Folder
Publications from Pontiac and Saginaw.	4	17
[Hand Fan] Michigan Boosters. Dr. Rosa L. Slade Gragg image.	2	4
Misc. Women's Organizations. National (4 items), publications and ephemera	Box	Folder
	4	18

Series IV. Publications**Series IV. Publications****Scope and Contents note**

The bulk of this collection are the yearbooks, including those of the Junior club called the “Pierian Club.” An article published in Grand Rapids Magazine, and one issue of a club newsletter are also included here.

	Box	Folder
Study Club Gazette Newsletter, #1 ca. Dec. 1978.	2	1
“A Study in Self-Improvement” / by Carol Tanis. Grand Rapids Magazine, v. 24, no. Jan. 1987.	4	4

Year Books, “Study Class”

	Box	Folder
1912	5	1
1915	5	1
1917	5	1
1918	5	1
1919	5	1
1920	5	2

Year Books, "Study Class"

1921	5	2
1923/24	5	2
1924/25	5	2
1925/26	5	2
1926/27	5	2
1927/28	5	2
1928/29	5	2
1929/30	5	2
1930/31	5	3
1931/32	5	3
1932/33	5	3
1933/34	5	3
1934/35	5	3
1935/36	5	3

Year Books, "Study Class"

1936/37	5	3
1938/39	5	3
1939/40	5	3
1940/41	5	4
1941/42	5	4
1942/43	5	4
1943/44	5	4
1944/45	5	4
1945/46	5	4
1946/47	5	4
1947/48	5	4
1948/49	5	4
1949/50	5	4
1950/51	5	5

Year Books, "Study Class"

1951/52	5	5
1952/53	5	5
1953/54	5	5
1954/55	5	5
1955/56	5	5
1956/57	5	5
1957/58	5	5
1958/59	5	5
1959/60	5	5
1960/61	5	6
1961/62	5	6
1962/63	5	6
1963/64	5	6
1964/65	5	6

Yearbooks, "Grand Rapids Study Club"

1965/66	5	6
1968/69	5	6
1969/70	5	6
[1970/71]	5	7
1971/72	5	7
1972/73	5	7
[1974]	5	7
Yearbooks, "Grand Rapids Study Club"		
	Box	Folder
[1975/76]	5	7
[1977/78]	5	7
Junior Study Club		
	Box	Folder
1926/1927	5	8

Pierian Club (formerly Junior Study Club)

Pierian Club (formerly Junior Study Club)		
	Box	Folder
1927/28	5	9
1928/29	5	9
1929/30	5	9
1931/32	5	10
1932/33	5	10
1933/34	5	10
1934/35	5	10
1936/37	5	10
1937/38	5	10
1939/40	5	10
1941/42	5	11
1943/44	5	11

Pierian Club (formerly Junior Study Club)

1944/45	5	11
1946/47	5	11
1947/48	5	11
1948/49	5	11
1949/50	5	11
1950/51	5	12
1951/52	5	12
1952/53	5	12
1954/55	5	12
1955/56	5	12
1956/57	5	12
1957/58	5	12
1958/59	5	12
1959/60	5	12

Series V. Miscellaneous African American Associated Items

1960/61	5	13
1961/62	5	13
1962/63	5	13

Series V. Miscellaneous African American Associated Items

Scope and Contents note

This series includes a hand full of items which may have been used by the Club, including national articles as well as local sources. One item has been housed with the Grand Rapids Rotary Club Collection, but is cross referenced here, as part of the documents of the Study Club.

	Box	
“When a Negro moves next door” The Saturday Evening Post. Apr. 4, 1959	6	
	Box	Folder
“A Boy Who Was Traded for a Horse” / James Saxon Childers” RE: Dr. George Washington Carver”. Reader’s Digest, Feb. 1937	4	19
	Collection	Box
Grand Rapids Rotary Club Roster, 1949.	129	7
	Box	Folder
The Fourteen Stations of the Cross/ by Albert H. Pellowe, Trinity Methodist Church, Grand Rapids, Mich. N.d.	4	20

Series V. Miscellaneous African American Associated Items

Good Samaritan Lodge Ritual Book [National Grand Lodge of I.O. of G.S. & D. of S.], Ritual Book, n.d ...with ribbon for the “42nd Annual Session of Wolverine Grand Chapter O.E.S., Port Huron, Mich., August 4th and 5th, 1931. Corinthian Chapter, no. 19, Hostess”	4	20
“Local Leper Fund Treas....Mrs. Henry Verhoek.. Grand Rapids”	4	20