

Finding Aid for the Old Residents Association of the Grand River Valley records Collection 083

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
September 1988
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Summary Information

Repository	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Creator	Old Resident's Association of the Grand River Valley.
Title	Old Residents Association of the Grand River Valley records
Date [inclusive]	1858-1955, n.d.
Extent	3.7 Linear feet 14 boxes plus flat files
Language	English
Abstract	<p>The Old Residents' Association of the Grand River Valley existed to gather facts about the early history of Kent County and Michigan and to form a social feeling among those who ranked as pioneers. The group was formerly known as the Old Settlers' Society of Kent County. The collection contains materials from its original formation to 1966. 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.</p>

Biographical/Historical note

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). During the Society's first years, as Baxter states in the History of the City of Grand Rapids, "for nearly 10 years the members seemed to forget that their Society needed concerted action in order to maintain an existence and during that time only occasional and casual meetings of the Old Settlers were held."

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 and 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 1950s 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 young members.

Scope and Contents note

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 photos are historical shots of Grand Rapids, head of Island no. 1, Pearl St. Bridge 1866, and from a painting by A.B. Turner, 1833.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department September 1988

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Accession numbers include 00.[1957].1-61+ and 1912.001.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

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.

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

Controlled Access Headings

Genre(s)

- records (documents)

Geographic Name(s)

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History
- Grand River Valley (Mich.) -- History -- Societies, etc.
- Ionia (Mich.) -- History
- Kent County (Mich.) -- History
- Ottawa County (Mich.) -- History

Subject(s)

- Pioneers -- Michigan -- Kent County

Membership

Collection Inventory

Membership		
	Box	Volume
Constitution, Bylaws and Record of Members n.d. Formerly MK9.O12c 1986.075?	3.5	6
	Box	Folder
Family records of members, n.d.	1	5-10
Membership book of the Association, 1897-1910,inc. O2:BF16.1	3	vol 4
Membership roster, 1950.	1	11
		Box
Membership card file A-L		11
Membership card file M-Z		12
Minutes		
	Box	Folder
Original minutes of the Association 1858-1885, n.d.	1	1
	Box	Volume

Scrapbooks and clippings.

Copy of the original minutes of the Association 1858-1885, n.d. Formerly MK9.OL2 Later red buckram binding.	2.5	1A
Negative Copies of the original minutes of the Association. 1858-1885, n.d. Formerly MK9.OL2	2.5	1B
Minutes of the Association and news clippings 1870-1928. O2:F12.1	2	2
[Minutes. Various meetings, 1929-1966. In "Record book. Includes clippings, ephemera, etc.]	3.5	5
Scrapbooks and clippings.		
	Box	Folder
Scrapbook, 1883, 1892-1954.	1	2
	Box	Volume
Memoirs of the Old Residents Association, scrapbook, 1921-1951, n.d. Formerly MK9.OL2m	2.5	3
	Box	Folder
News clippings, 1872-1948, n.d.	1	3
News clippings, 1914-1955.	1	4
Miscellaneous		
	Box	Folder

Miscellaneous

50th re-union pamphlet, constitution, 1925.	1	12
Pamphlet, constitution, 1948.	1	13
Memorial, Thomas Dwight Gilbert, 1894.	1	14
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	15
Map of Lowell, n.d.	1	16
		Box
List of Former Residents who attended Homecoming and the 60th Anniversary Celebration, 1910. O3:B216.1, added 4/21/2000		3
	Box	Folder
People Living in Grand Rapids in 1868 / F.D. Richmond.	1	17
Scope and Contents note		
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. 1912.001, added 5/25/2006.		
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.	1	3.5

Oversize (6 items)

Oversize (6 items)	
	Drawer
Grand Rapids Herald, page 3, November 16, 1924. (2 clippings, ½ sheets the long way. See also this information on microfilm.	FF.IX.D
Map of City of Grand Rapids wards, copyright 1899.	FF.IX.D
Map of City of Grand Rapids ward, 1903.	FF.IX.D
Graphic. Broadside. "Take the Michigan Central for the Kent County Fair ... Sept. 19-23, 1892. GR : Dean Printing Co.	FF.IX.D
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.	FF.IX.D
Old Residents Association of the Grand River Valley. Annual Summer Meeting, June 30, 1921. Huber's Garden, Reeds Lake. Musical Program.	FF.IX.D
Lantern Slides	
Scope and Contents note	
<p>"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.</p>	
Box	

Lantern Slides

William H. Anderson	4
James M. Barnett	4
Dr. Louis Barth	4
Wm. A. Berkey	4
Christian Bertsch	4
James Blair	4
D.A. Blodgett	4
John W. Blodgett	4
Edwin Booth	4
Geo. G. Briggs	4
A.A. Carroll	5
Thos. F. Carroll?	5
C.C. Comstock	5
C.W. Garfield	5

Lantern Slides

Geo. W. Gay	5
T.D. Gilbert	5
Thomas Hefferan	5
Wm. G. Herpolsheimer	5
Anton G. Hodenpyl	5
Harvey J. Hollister	5
Joseph Houseman	6
Julius Houseman	6
W.O. Hughart Sr.	6
Henry Idema	6
Gen. Innis	6
Dr. G.K. Johnson	6
Wm. Judson	6
Jacob Kleinhaus	6

Lantern Slides

John S. Lawrence	6
H. Leonard	7
Amos Musselman	7
L.D. Norris	7
Thomas J. O'Brien	7
A.V. Pantlind	7
J. Boyd Pantlind	7
Col. Pierce	7
Wm. T. Powers	7
A.D. Rathbone	8
Lester J. Rindge	8
Wm. Sears	8
W.R. Shelby	8
Wm. Alden Smith	8

Lantern Slides

Paul Steketee	8
Wilder D. Stevens	8
Sidney F. Stevens	8
F.A. Stowe	8
Martin L. Sweet	9
Geo. W. Thayer	9
Geo. P. Wanty	9
D.W. Waters	9
A.B. Watson	9
L.W. Welsh	9
W.B. Weston	9
A.S. White	9
John Widdicomb	9
L.H. Withey	10

Lantern Slides

W.K. Williams	10
James R. Wylie	10
S.D. Young	10