

Finding aid for the Gordon E. Harrington collection Collection 194

Finding aid prepared by Jamie L. Barger

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
September 1996
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Summary Information

Repository	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Creator - Collector	Harrington, Gordon E, d. 1996
Title	Gordon E. Harrington collection
Date [inclusive]	1880-1986
Extent	6.5 Linear feet 14 boxes
Language	English
Abstract	<p>The Gordon E. Harrington collection includes documents, photographs, negatives, lantern slides and glass negatives, newspaper page layout negatives, and postcards reflecting Harrington's interest in Grand Rapids, Michigan history. Depicted is turn-of-the-century Grand Rapids, including the Powers Theater, Redmond Opera House, 1904 flood and ice jams, area businesses and homes and paddle and steamboats. The page layouts are for Harrington's column, "Those Good Old Days," written for the Interpreter newspaper during the 1970s. In these columns Harrington illustrated Grand Rapids history, including articles on Mrs. J.C. Carr, Mathias J. Alten and Charles Lindbergh. While a wide variety of subject matter is included in the collection, a large portion of the documents and images represent the history of Ramona Park and Reed's Lake located in the East Grand Rapids area.</p>

Reeds Lake/Ramona Park history

Widely represented in Harrington's collection are views, programs, a contract and historical articles of Reeds Lake, including Ramona Park, a major recreational area on the east side of Grand Rapids, later East Grand Rapids. Drawing visitors from around the Midwest and once accessible from the city by trolley car, picnicking began in the lake area as early as 1868. Ramona Park emerged around 1897 as one of the finest amusement parks in the country. The Ramona Theater was constructed in 1897 and rebuilt in 1912. In the 1930s and 1940s the Theater attracted popular acts such as the Marx Brothers, Jimmie Durante and Edgar Bergen. By 1955 the amusement park was closed and the SS. Ramona ferry boat made its last cruise. A residential area developed around the lake which led to the demise of the theater, torn down in 1949, and limited the sharing of the lake as a recreational center.

Biography

An avid collector of local history memorabilia, Gordon Harrington died in Feb. 1996, survived by his wife. The Grand Rapids city directories list a Gordon Harrington living by himself on Madison Ave. in 1940. By 1943/44 Gordon and Mary Harrington are given at 1207 Phillips Ave., with Gordon employed as an inspector for Grand Rapids Industries and later Metal Craft Co. Later the Harrington's lived at 1215 Gladstone Dr., where they remained until his death.

Various city directories list Harrington as an editor, office worker, camera man and manager for Geo. W. Welch Co., from 1955 to 1975. From October 1968 to November 1975, Welch published *The Interpreter*, an alternative newspaper. Harrington's column in 1973-1975 *Interpreter* issues, were called "'Those 'Good Old Days,' and often featured images or old advertisements from Grand Rapids Public Library holdings. After *The Interpreter* folded, Harrington is recorded in the directories as working as manager for Slot Publishing in 1976, a salesman for Smith Enterprises in 1978/1979 and a clerk for the Grand Rapids Press from 1980-1983. He retired in 1984.

Scope and Contents note

The bulk of this collection is made up of photographic materials including glass, film negatives along with prints. While the emphasis of the collection is on Ramona Park, the photograph prints focus mainly on Grand Rapids. Negatives and photographs show Ramona Park during the first half of the 20th century,

theater programs date from 1908 to 1932, newspaper clippings about the closing of Ramona Park are from the early 1950s, a history of the merry-go-round is included, and postcards date from 1905 to 1925. Catastrophic events in Grand Rapids, like the fire of 1882 and the flood of March, 1904, are depicted in photographs. Lantern slides for Grand Rapids area businesses, which were shown at Ramona Park Theater, are also included in the collection. Page layouts, from *The Interpreter*, show historic photographs, many of which are from other GRPL Local History photo collections.

A scrapbook (Acc. 1992.030 Anonymous) of Gordon Harrington's column "Those 'Good Old Days'", from *The Interpreter*, has also been included with this collection's miscellaneous materials.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department September 1996

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Gordon Harrington, accession numbers 1992.030, 1994.044 and unknown.

Acquisition of this collection was made possible through a contribution from the Questers. Two Quester members, June Murphy and Nancy Smith, also provided items in this collection.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Interpreter (newspaper), microfilm, v. 1, no. 1, 1968-v. 8, no. 12, Nov. 1975. [Probably incomplete]

2000.037. "Welcome to East Grand Rapids Village, Incorp. 1891" Poster by Phyllis Duffy.

00.[139].1 unprocessed. Said to be part of a backdrop at Ramona Theater. Believed to be from Harrington. See the Archivist for access to this item.

Collection 289, the Greater Grand Rapids Publishers and Publishing Collection Collection 160. RE *Interpreter* article by Harrington on the Grand Rapids Chicks. July 29, 1971.

Controlled Access Headings

Geographic Name(s)

- East Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History
- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History -- Photographs
- Ramona Park (East Grand Rapids, Mich.)

Personal Name(s)

- Harrington, Gordon E, d. 1996

Series I. Historical Documents (1908-1986, n.d.)

Collection Inventory

Series I. Historical Documents (1908-1986, n.d.)

Scope and Contents note

Included here are Ramona Park theater programs from 1908 to 1927, information on the history of Ramona Park, from the late 1940s into the 1980s, and data on the international Marcus Shows.

	Box	Folder
Contract and Bill for Marcus Shows, ca. 1913.	1	1
Herpolsheimer & Co. Advertisement, n.d.	1	2
Ramona Park history and closing, 1949, 1977, 1984, 1986.	1	3
Marcus Shows programs: Australia, Mexico, United States of America, n.d.	1	4
Ramona Park Theater program, 1908-27, n.d.	1	5-8
Power's Theater Building information booklet, n.d.	1	9
Ramona Park history, n.d.	1	10
Ramona Park Merry-Go-Round, after 1980.	1	11

Series II. Photographs (1882-1949)**Series II. Photographs (1882-1949)****Scope and Contents note**

The photographs range from around 1882 to 1949, with many undated, and several ca. 1910-1912. Included are images of Ramona Park, but also many Grand Rapids Views. Events such as the 1904 Flood, fires, and a Spanish American War Rally are found here, as well as various scenes. There are also prints of the Reservoir Flood.

Also included is an oversized photo of a Ramona Japanese Festival, which is damaged.

	Box	Folder
Actors, n.d. (1 item)	2	1
Alger Park, 1889. (1)	2	2
Bridge, n.d. (1)	2	3
Burial mound, 1910. (1)	2	4
Circus parade, May 24, 1895. (4)	2	5
Factory Gang, n.d. (1)	2	6
Fire, 1898. (1)	2	7
Fire Clean-Up, 1882. (3)	2	8
First Plainfield Schoolhouse, July, 1910. (1)	2	9

Series II. Photographs (1882-1949)

Flood, 1904 (10)	2	10
Flood, 1904 (9)	2	11
Flood, n.d. (5)	2	12
Gerald Building, n.d. (1)	2	13
Grand Rapids Boat and Canoe Club, 1905. (1)	2	14
Grand Rapids Furniture Shore, n.d. (1)	2	15
Ice cream parlor, ca.1910. (1)	2	16
Ice jam, 1904. (7)	2	17
Indian graves on Boylands farm, 1911. (1)	2	18
Lake, n.d. (1 item)	2	19
Lake views, n.d. (1)	2	20
Lighthouse, n.d. (1)	2	21
Log barns, 1910. (1)	2	22
McMurray, Ellen—Bridge and House, 1911. (2)	2	23

Series II. Photographs (1882-1949)

Miami and Erie Canal Transportation Co. (1)	2	24
Michigan St. (300 Block) view, n.d. (1)	2	25
Mt. Pleasant buildings, n.d. (5)	2	26
Mt. Pleasant churches, n.d. (3)	2	27
Mt. Pleasant State Normal School, n.d. (3)	2	28
Mt. Pleasant State Normal School, n.d. (2)	2	29
North Park pavilion, 1904. (2)	2	30
Parade, n.d. (3)	2	31
P.H.M. Portrait, 1904. (2)	2	32
Railroad Tracks, n.d. (1)	2	33
Ramona Park, n.d. (2)	2	34
Ramona Park Midway, n.d. (2)	2	35
Ramona Park Theater, ca. 1949. (36)	2	36
Ramona Park Theater Interior, n.d. (1)	2	37

Series II. Photographs (1882-1949)

Ramona Park Trolley, n.d. (1)	2	38
Ramona Park Trolley Loop, n.d. (2)	2	39
Ramona Park views, n.d. (13)	2	40
Ramona Park in winter, n.d. (1)	2	41
Riverbank, n.d. (2)	2	42
River view, n.d. (2)	2	43
Salem Turner house, 1911. (1)	2	44
Spanish American War Rally, 1896. (3)	2	45
Street Railway, 1911. (1)	2	46
Street scenes, n.d. (1)	2	47
Train wreck, n.d. (2)	2	48
Truck--Petersen Brewing Co. ca. 1912. (3)	2	49
Viaduct, n.d. (1)	2	50
W.W. Weir Home, July, 1911. (2)	2	51

Prints from Negatives

Wampus, n.d. (1)	2	52
Waves, n.d. (1)	2	53
Prints from Negatives		
	Box	Folder
Reservoir Flood, n.d. [Contact print of 194-3-9 glass neg.] 9/1999	2	77
		Drawer
Japanese Festival, Ramona Park Midway. Oversized photoprint (damaged)		FF-IX-E
Series III. Screened Negatives, 1880-1972, n.d.		
Scope and Contents note		
<p>The reference to "Screening" here could either refer to a review of the negatives as to type, such as silver nitrate vs safety film, or a reference to a printing technique of applying dots to vary size and density in the image. In the second case, the quality of a print image from the negative may vary with the application of this technique.</p> <p>Negative images may include some which correspond to the prints in Series II, but there are also other unique images represented in the negatives, such as the Wealthy St. streetcar barn. No views of Ramona are listed for this series.</p>		
	Box	Folder
Advertisement--Grand Rapids Brewing Co., 1910 (1)	2	54
Alger Park, 1889. (1)	2	55

Series III. Screened Negatives, 1880-1972, n.d.

Austin Engine, n.d. (1)	2	56
Boxing Match, October 16, 1909. (1)	2	57
C. Brownell, Dental Depot, n.d. (1)	2	58
		Box
Campau Square, ca. 1880. (1 oversized)		14
	Box	Folder
Center Theater, n.d. (1)	2	59
Delivery Wagon--B.T. Pierce Ice Cream Co., 1905. (1)	2	60
Delivery Wagon--Paul Stekettee & Sons, 1908 (1)	2	61
		Box
Downtown Grand Rapids, ca. 1972. Monroe St. view n.w. Toward Pantlind, Woolworths, Housemans, modern streetlights (1)		13
	Box	Folder
Fire Station No. 5, 1899. (1)	2	62
		Box
Grand River Scene, n.d. (1 oversized)		14
	Box	Folder
Ice Cream Parlor, 1910. (1)	2	63

Series III. Screened Negatives, 1880-1972, n.d.

Ice Cutting, early 1900s. (1)	2	64
John Ball Park Zoo, n.d. (2)	2	65
Jos. C. Herkner, n.d. (1)	2	66
May Graham Steamboat, n.d. (1, oversized)	12	10
Milk wagon--Otto Bajema, ca. 1905. (1)	2	67
Monroe Ave. Looking west, n.d. (1)	2	68
Newsstand, 1912. (1)	2	69
Redmond Opera House, n.d. (1)	2	70
		Box
Rathburn House, n.d. (1)		12
	Box	Folder
Ramona Park Theater, n.d. (1)	2	71
Royal Gillette Photo Studio, ca. 1907. (1)	2	72
Streetcar, ca. 1932. (2)	2	73
Streetcar barn, Wealthy St., 1912. (1)	2	74

Series IV. Post Cards (1905-1925, n.d.)

Truck--Petersen Brewing Co., ca. 1912 (1)	2	75
Unidentified people, n.d. (6)	2	76
		Box
Wurzburgs demolition, ca. 1972 (1 oversized)		14

Series IV. Post Cards (1905-1925, n.d.)**Scope and Contents note**

Postcards date from ca. 1905 to 1925, and are almost all depicting Reeds Lake and Ramona Park. Many of these popular images can be found in other postcard collections or series in the Archives.

	Box	Folder
Hazel A.,1910.	3	1
James Rose's bathing beach, n.d.	3	2
Japanese Night at Reed's Lake,1909.	3	3
Manhattan Bathing Beach, n.d.	3	4
Playgrounds at Reed's Lake,1910.	3	5
Ramona Park Balloon Races, n.d.	3	6
Ramona Park Dancing Pavilion,1913.	3	7

Series IV. Post Cards (1905-1925, n.d.)

Ramona Park Derby Racer, n.d.	3	8
Ramona Park Lakeside Club,1913.	3	9
Ramona Park Miniature Train, n.d.	3	10
Ramona Park at Night, n.d.	3	11
Ramona Park Pavilion,1914.	3	12
Ramona Park Pavilion,1925.	3	13
Ramona Park, Reed's Lake, n.d.	3	14
Ramona Park Theater (interior),1907.	3	15
Ramona Pavilion by Night, n.d.	3	16
Ramona Theater,1908	3	17
Ramona Theater,1917	3	18
Reed's Lake Bathing Beach,1907.	3	19
Reed's Lake Boat Landing,1909.	3	20
Reed's Lake from Pavilion,1905.	3	21

Series V. Film Negatives, n.d.**Series V. Film Negatives, n.d.****Scope and Contents note**

This negative series may contain those corresponding to some photoprints in Series II. Some Ramona or Reeds Lake images are included, along with Grand Rapids scenes.

	Box	Folder
Flood, n.d.	4	1-4
Flood, souvenir wheel, n.d.	4	5
Fun house, n.d.	4	6
Gerald Building, n.d.	4	7
Grand Rapids Furniture Shore, n.d.	4	8
Lake, n.d.	4	9
Lake view, n.d.	4	10
Lighthouse, n.d.	4	11
Michigan Street, 310 Block View, n.d.	4	12
People--unidentified, n.d.	4	13

Series VI. Lantern Slides, n.d.

Railroad tracks, n.d.	4	14
Ride--carnival, n.d.	4	15
Ride--spaceship, n.d.	4	16
Riverbank, n.d.	4	17-18
River View, n.d.	4	19-20
Roller coaster, Ramona Park, n.d.	4	21-23
Steamboat, n.d.	4	24
Street View, n.d.	4	25
Theater, Ramona Park, n.d.	4	26-31
Viaduct, n.d.	4	32
Waves, n.d.	4	33

Series VI. Lantern Slides, n.d.**Scope and Contents note**

The 9 lantern slide images included here appear to be primarily for businesses, and may have been used in advertising.

Series VII. Glass Negatives

	Box	Folder
Bergy Bros. Elevator, n.d.	5	1
Cream separators, n.d.	5	2
Ellis Barber and Beauty Shop, n.d.	5	3
Elmer Dinatman & Son, n.d..	5	4
Farmers State Bank of Alto, n.d.	5	5
Linton, R.J.--Coal & Lumber, n.d.	5	6
Nye, Harold R., n.d.	5	7
Rosenberg & Son, n.d.	5	8
Square Deal Farm Fence, n.d.	6	9
Series VII. Glass Negatives		
Scope and Contents note		
Some of the glass negatives in this series may be the original negatives corresponding to the photographs in Series II. A later film negatives for the same image may be found in Series II or V.		
3.5"x5.5", 1898-1911, n.d.		
	Box	Folder

3.5"x5.5", 1898-1911, n.d.

Barge, n.d.	6	1
Burial Mound, September 10, 1910.	6	2
Factory Gang, n.d.	6	3
Fire, 1898.	6	4
Flood, n.d.	6	5.7
Flood, n.d. [Reservoir, print of #9 made 8/1999]	7	8-12
Flood, West Side, n.d.	7	13
Grand Rapids Boat and Canoe Club, August 16, 1905.	7	14
Grand River, December 31, 1907.	7	15
Ice Jam, March 23, 1904.	8	16-17
Ice dynamiting, March 23, 1904.	8	18
Indian Graves on Boylands Farm, June 25, 1911.	8	19
Log Barn, October 12, 1910.	8	20
McMurray, Ellen at Bridge, 1911.	8	21

5"x7", 1882, n.d.

McMurray, Ellen House, 1911.	8	22
North Park Pavilion, September 4, 1904.	8	23
Old Weir Home, July 17, 1910.	8	24
P.H.M. Portrait, April 26, 1907.	9	25
Salem Turner's House, May, 1911.	9	26
Schoolhouse, July 17, 1910.	9	27
Spanish-American War Rally, 1898.	9	28-32
Tracks, May 5, 1911.	9	33
Wampus, n.d.	9	34
5"x7", 1882, n.d.		
	Box	Folder
Bridge, n.d.	10	35-36
Building, Mt. Pleasant, n.d.	10	37-40
Church, Mt. Pleasant, n.d.	10	41-42

5"x8", 1895, n.d.

Fire Clean-Up, 1882.	10	43-44
Presbyterian Church, Mt. Pleasant, n.d.	10	45
State Normal, Mt. Pleasant, n.d.	10	46
State Normal, Mt. Pleasant, n.d.	10	47
Training School, Mt. Pleasant, n.d.	10	48

5"x8", 1895, n.d.

	Box	Folder
Circus Parade, May 24, 1895.	11	49-52
Parade, n.d.	11	53-55

Series VIII. Page Layouts, 1972-1978, n.d.**Scope and Contents note**

Included here are page layouts for Gordon Harrington's newspaper column on Grand Rapids area history "Those Were the Days" believed to have been published in The Interpreter newspaper. See the available issues of the tabloid in microfilm.

The contents probably represents select, rather than comprehensive coverage of his articles, including topics such as artist Mathias Alten, the visit of Charles Lindbergh, and the local cosmetics business run by two women, Marietta Stanley Co., which produced "Sempre Giovine" perfume.

	Box	Folder
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Series XI. Miscellaneous, n.d.

Alten, Mathias J., n.d. (1 sheet, w 4 detached images)	12	1
Carr, Mrs. J.C.--Sempre Giovine, n.d.	12	2
County Fair, n.d. (1 sheet, with 3 of 4 images found, loose)	12	3
Lindbergh, Charles, 1927 visit to Grand Rapids. "When the Lone Eagle Flew..." (1)	12	4
Old Grand Rapids, n.d. (2 sheets)	12	5
Radio Pioneers of Grand Rapids, n.d. (2 sheets, w 1 image missing)	12	6
Radio Show, "Glenn & Lenore," 1938-1948. (1)	12	7
Ramona Park Retrospective; 1905-1915. (1 sheet, w 1 image missing)	12	8
Theaters, downtown Grand Rapids, n.d.	12	9
		Box
Powers Theater Demolition "It's Curtains for the Old Powers Theater" / by David Nicolette ; photo by Fred Barnes. Grand Rapids Press. December 17, 1978.		13

Series XI. Miscellaneous, n.d.**Scope and Contents note**

Series XI. Miscellaneous, n.d.

A scrapbook in this series includes clippings of Harrington's "Those Were the Days" columns, which may provide more comprehensive information on Grand Rapids history and Harrington's works.

	Box	Folder
No smoking signs from Ramona Park Theater Dressing Room. (2)	12	11
		Box
Scrapbook of a newspaper column by Gordon Harrington, called "Those 'Good Old Days'", believed to have been published in The Interpreter.		13