

# **Finding aid for the Clark Retirement Community and Clark family collection Collection 360**

**Finding aid prepared by Jennifer Morrison**

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This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
<b>Title</b>	Clark Retirement Community and Clark family collection
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1850s-2000s
<b>Extent</b>	1.4 Linear feet Two boxes
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>Clark Retirement Community, originally the M.J. Clark Memorial Home, opened in 1906 in the former residence set on the twenty acre farm of M.J. and Emily Clark, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The home was operated by the West Michigan Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church and was developed primarily as a refuge for elderly Methodist ministers and their dependents. The material in this collection is almost entirely copies of relevant documents discovered during the research and writing of the centennial history of Clark Retirement Community in 2006 and includes information on the Clark family, their business and philanthropic activities, the Clark Home and the local Methodist community.</p>

## Biographical/Historical note

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Clark Retirement Community opened in 1906 in the former Sherman Street home of Melvin J. and Emily Clark and was originally called the M.J. Clark Memorial Home in the Clark's honor. There were ten residents by the end of the first year. Melvin was a farmer, retail grocer and lumberman who began his career in Solon Township, later moving to Cedar Springs and then Grand Rapids. He built at least one commercial building in downtown Grand Rapids. Emily Jewell Clark played a major role in the founding or development of the D.A. Blodgett Home for Children, the Grand Rapids Art Museum, local suffrage activities and the Starr Commonwealth.

The Clark Home was originally administered by the West Michigan Conference of the Methodist Episcopal church in response to many years of concern for the care of elderly, or “super-annuated,” ministers. Among the first local facilities to provide a retirement experience, the home was open to Methodist ministers, their wives or widows and other area elderly. Since its opening the organization has grown and expanded, though the Clark Retirement Community of 2007 occupies the same twenty acres as the original Clark farm that surrounded the Clark residence. The organization celebrated its centennial in 2006 with a series of events and with the publication of *Caring Community: The History of Clark Retirement Community* by Jennifer Morrison and Gordon Olson.

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## Scope and Contents note

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The materials in this collection were gathered for the research and writing of *Caring Community: The History of Clark Retirement Community* by Jennifer Morrison and Gordon Olson, and consist almost entirely of photocopies. The images are either photocopies of photos or scanned copies. As the Clarks were a prominent family, some beautiful photos exist of them, including of their daughter, Marguerite's, wedding to Edmund Wurzburg. The photos of the Clark Home institution are also quite good and cover a broad range of dates, including one very detailed photo of the Home when it was still the Clark residence. The minutes of the West Michigan Conference give a good description of how the organization originated. The newspaper articles are quite rich, and while those related to the Home do tend to focus on building activity, there are some early and recent ones that relate lifestyle issues. Copies were obtained from the archives of the Clark Retirement Community, the archives of the Starr Commonwealth, the Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Center of the Grand Rapids Public Library, descendants of the Clarks and the Albion College archives.

## **Administrative Information**

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### **Publication Information**

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

### **Immediate Source of Acquisition note**

Jennifer Morrison

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## **Related Materials**

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### **Related Archival Materials note**

See references in the publication listed above for items from the GRPL Archival Collections and Local History Reference materials used in the book.

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## **Controlled Access Headings**

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### **Corporate Name(s)**

- Clark Retirement Community.

### **Geographic Name(s)**

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History

### **Personal Name(s)**

- Clark, Emily Jewell, 1843-1929
- Clark, Melvin J

### **Subject(s)**

- Older people -- Housing -- Michigan
- Publications -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- Retirement communities -- Michigan

Series I. General Documents

## Collection Inventory

### Series I. General Documents

#### Scope and Contents note

Legal Documents: Includes photocopies of Certificate of Incorporation, Constitution, and By-Laws, information related to Puffer v. Clark (1918) and some other lawsuits involving Clark Retirement Community.

Personal Recollections: Correspondence inspired by the centennial history book project, and transcript of a cassette tape found at Clark Retirement Community made by a resident in the 1980s in which she reads history of the community.

Timelines/List of Clark Home Administrators: Created for Caring Community project

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Legal Documents 1906-2005	1	1
Personal Recollections ca. 1980 – 2006	1	2
Timelines/List of Clark Home Administrators 2006	1	3

### Series II. Images

#### Scope and Contents note

Photocopies of photographs from the Clark Retirement Community archives (A variety of photos of Clark Home)

## Series II. Images

Photocopies of photographs from the Grand Rapids Public Library (Clark Home and D.A. Blodgett Home)

Photocopies of Tom Dilley postcards (Clark Home)

Copies of photographs from Jane Kirkeby, M.J. and Emily Clark's great grand-daughter: general; from album labeled "Clark-Wurzburg"; from album labeled "Friends & Family to 1937"; from "Jane Wurzburg's photo album" (Family members including Emily, Melvin, their children, other Clarks, Wurzburgs, Logies and extended family)

Site Maps ca. 1960 – 1991 (Clark Home)

Exhibit Material: Created for small library exhibit in 2006

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Images from the Clark Retirement Community archives ca. 1930 – ca. 2005	1	4
Images from the Grand Rapids Public Library ca. 1920 – ca. 1952	2	1
Photocopies of Tom Dilley postcards ca. 1920S – ca. 1952	2	2
General images from Jane Kirkeby ca. 1875 – ca. 1920	1	5
Images from Jane Kirkeby album labeled "Clark-Wurzburg" ca. 1915 – ca. 1925	1	6
Images from Jane Kirkeby album labeled "Friends & Family to 1937" ca. 1915 – ca. 1937	1	7
Images from Jane Kirkeby, "Jane Wurzburg's photo album" ca. 1920 – ca. 1930	1	8



**Series III. Publications**

Site Maps ca. 1960 – 1991	2	3
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Exhibit Material 2006 exhibit	2	4
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**Series III. Publications****Scope and Contents note**

Caring Community: Jennifer Morrison and Gordon Olson. Clark Retirement Community, 2006 (signed at book release party by both authors)

Book Excerpts: Photocopies from books used in researching Caring Community

Clark Retirement Community Newsletter: The first issue was published in Autumn 1967. It was originally called News From Home, then switched to The Window in 1992. Included here are photocopies of old issues from the Clark Retirement Community archives, as well as some original later issues. They date from Autumn 1967 to 2006. Organized chronologically.

Gordon Olson piece on elder care: Written for Caring Community but only appears highly edited in the book

Minutes of the Michigan Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church: Included here are photocopies of conference minutes from 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906 and 1907 (organized chronologically), as well as some notes. The source of this material is the archives at Albion College and the notes were taken by Jennie Thomas, the archivist.

Newspaper and Magazine Articles: articles on Clark Home, 1905 -2006 (Organized chronologically in a notebook); obituaries and biographies of Melvin J. and Emily Jewell Clark, 1897 – 1929 (Separated by individual, then organized chronologically); business activities of Melvin Clark and associates, 1870 – 1929 (Organized chronologically); philanthropic activities of Emily Clark, 1891 – 2005 (Organized into three main groups: General, D.A. Blodgett Home for Children, Grand Rapids Art Museum, and then each arranged chronologically); Articles on others related to Clark Home including James Hamilton and Frank Jewell (Organized alphabetically by last name) Promotional Material: Clark Retirement

Series III. Publications

Community brochures, pamphlets, calendars and other promotional material both from Clark and from the vertical files at GRPL; includes promotional material about centennial and centennial history book

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Caring Community: The History of Clark Retirement Community Jennifer Morrison and Gordon Olson (Grand Rapids, Clark Retirement Community, 2006) – Copy 1, 2006.102, Added 11/2006	1	9
Caring Community: The History of Clark Retirement Community Jennifer Morrison and Gordon Olson (Grand Rapids, Clark Retirement Community, 2006) - Copy 2, 2008.014, Added 8/18/2008. Donated by the Clark Home.	1	9.1
Books Excerpts 1857 – 1993	1	10
Clark Retirement Community Newsletter 1967 -2006	1	11
Gordon Olson piece on elder care 2006	1	12
History of the Clark Retirement Community Volunteers, Patricia Morgan, et al. (Grand Rapids: Clark Retirement Community, 2003) 1965-2003	1	13
Minutes of the Michigan Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church 1901 – 1907	1	14
		<b>Box</b>
Notebook: Newspaper and Magazine Articles on Clark Home 1905 -2006		1
	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>

**Series IV. Subject Files**

Obituaries and biographies of Melvin J. and Emily Jewell Clark 1897 – 1929	1	15
Newspaper and Magazine Articles on Business activities of Melvin Clark and associates 1870 – 1929	1	16
Newspaper and Magazine Articles on Philanthropic activities of Emily Clark 1891 – 2005	1	17
Articles on others related to Clark Home or family including James Hamilton and Frank Jewell 1910 – 2006	1	18
Promotional Material 1911 – 2006	2	5

**Series IV. Subject Files****Scope and Contents note**

**Buildings and Property:** Information on residences and commercial buildings belonging to M.J. Clark, including deeds, images, maps and articles. Organized by building or property.

**Genealogy Material from Jane Kirkeby:** Jane Kirkeby is the great granddaughter of M.J. and Emily Clark. Photocopies of letters, charts, articles and other documents relating to Clark family genealogy

**M.J. and Emily Clark Family information:** Photocopies of census, articles and other material pertaining to the early and family life of Melvin J. & Emily Clark, their parents and their three children

**Material from Craig Kidder:** Craig Kidder is a descendant of James Clark, who was the brother of Melvin J. Clark. Kidder attended the book release party for Caring Community and subsequently brought in photocopies from his own genealogy and historical research. This file contains a wide variety of material from genealogy of Clark and Kidder families to information on the Clark building downtown Grand Rapids, the Wurzburg store and the D.A. Blodgett Home for Children.

## Series IV. Subject Files

**Starr Commonwealth: Material from and on Starr Commonwealth, including prints of the original and second Emily J. Clark building.**

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Buildings and Property 1876 – 2005	1	19
Genealogy Material from Jane Kirkeby ca. 1860 – 1955	2	6
M.J. and Emily Clark Family information ca. 1850 – 1976	2	7
Material from Craig Kidder ca. 1878 – 2006	1	20
Material from and on Starr Commonwealth 2005 - 2006	1	21