

Finding aid for the Grand Rapids Citizens League papers Collection 051

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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November 1987
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Summary Information

Repository	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Creator	Grand Rapids Citizens League. (1918-1926)
Title	Grand Rapids Citizens League papers
Date [inclusive]	1916-1926
Extent	25.8 Linear feet 24 boxes
Language	English
Abstract	<p>The Grand Rapids Citizens League was a citizens group in Grand Rapids and Kent County, Michigan, active from 1916 through 1926. With the goal of better government, the League led the drive for the city commission / manager form of government. After this governmental form was adopted the League turned its attention to preserving it against attack, and to supporting prohibition and other moral issues. The League was dissolved in 1926, having lost most of its membership. Included are minutes, bylaws, correspondence, committee files, subject files and various government related publications and documents.</p>

Biographical/Historical note

The Grand Rapids Citizens League was formed in 1918 with the purpose of insuring the success of the Commission-Manager form of city government. The Leagues' belief was that the operation of this form of government required the election of qualified public candidates to run this modern, business-like government. Roy C. Hattan, formerly assistant city attorney, was elected secretary and effectively functioned as the chief executive officer of the League. Hattan and his successor, Russel F. Griffin, attempted to have elected those candidates who best exemplified the ideals of the Citizens League. The League, through the early 1920s, became embroiled in local politics on all levels, joining in name-calling, deal making, and other facets of local politics as then existed.

The League adopted the cause of Prohibition, and fought for its passage and continued to support the efforts to eradicate illegal boot-legging and production. The League was generally supportive of efforts to apply "moral" standards to governmental issues, but these standards often were not supported by the greater part of the electorate. By 1926, support for the League had waned, and in the fall of 1926, the League was dissolved, and its records donated to the Grand Rapids Public Library.

Note: An earlier group, called the Citizens Alliance of Grand Rapids, appears to be a union labor organization, rather than a political oversight organization, such as the Citizens League. For items from the Citizens Alliance, see Coll. 263.

Scope and Contents note

The collection documents the efforts of the Grand Rapids Citizens League, 1917-1926. Through the five series, the daily workings and long range plans and goals of the League are presented. The collection consists primarily of correspondence, in-coming and out-going. Also represented within the collection are a considerable amount of charts, surveys and other such data.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department November 1987

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Grand Rapids Citizens League, 1926; accession numbers 1985.026, 1986.074, 1997.003

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Coll. 104 Dorothy Judd Collection

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Grand Rapids Citizens League. (1918-1926)

Geographic Name(s)

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History
- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- Politics and government

Series I. Organization.

Collection Inventory

Series I. Organization.

Scope and Contents note

Consists of the files on the organization of the Citizens League, and the major committees and boards that were responsible for its operation. Included are the minutes and correspondence of the Executive Board, the primary policy setting body. The minutes and correspondence of the Finance Committee are also included in the series. The personal correspondence of Robert Griffin, executive secretary of the League, 1922-6, is included as is correspondence of the Municipal Measures Committee, Publicity Committee, Membership Committee, Social Betterment Committee, and the Advisory Council. This series is especially revealing in the formation and internal conflicts and compromises that was the Citizens League. Arranged chronologically.

	Box	Folder
Constitution and Bylaws.	1	1
Notes for minutes, 1918.	1	2
Good Government Section.	1	3
Misc. Minutes.	1	4
Executive Board		
	Box	Folder

Finance Committee

Minutes, 1918-1926	1	5-8
Correspondence, 1918-1923 CLOSED.	1	9-11
Election of Executive Board, 1923.	1	12
Correspondence, 1921-1924.	1	13-16
Correspondence, 1924.	2	17
Annual reports, press releases, 1926.	2	18-19
Finance Committee		
	Box	Folder
Misc. minutes	2	20
Correspondence, 1918-1922.	2	21-27a
Correspondence, 1921-1926.	3	28-33
Municipal Measures Committee		
	Box	Folder
Minutes and Correspondence, 1918-1919.	3	34
Responses, 1918, 1920.	3	35

Publicity Committee

Publicity Committee		
	Box	Folder
1918-1920.	3	36
Letters to editor, 1918-1919.	3	37
Metropolitan District correspondence, 1925.	3	38
Good Citizenship and Government Research Committee		
	Box	Folder
Minutes, 1923-1924.	3	39
Correspondence, 1923-1925.	3	40-43
Advisory Council correspondence, 1925.	3	44
Membership Committee, 1917-1923.	4	45
Lists, 1916-1923.	4	46
R.F. Griffin-Personal		
	Box	Folder
Correspondence, 1916, 1919-1926, n.d.	4	47-54

Grand Rapids National Guard

Correspondence, 1923.	4	55
Court Martials material, 1923.	4	56
Miscellaneous.	4	57
Press releases.	4	58
Recruiting Bulletins, 1922-1923, and Doughboy Doings, 1923.	4	59
Histories of Units.	4	60
Grand Rapids National Guard		
	Box	Folder
Closed, 1923	5	61
Correspondence, 1923-1926.	5	62-67
	Box	Folder
Soldiers' War Memorial.	5	68
Social Betterment Committee correspondence, 1916-1922.	5	69-70
Miscellaneous.	5	71
Correspondence, Miscellaneous, 1918-1922.	5	72-74

Series II. Administration.

Correspondence, Miscellaneous, 1921-1926.

6

75-78

Series II. Administration.**Scope and Contents note**

Consists of the records of the daily administration of the League. Included in the series is the correspondence relating to the election campaigns of 1917-25, including campaign methods, endorsement of candidates, and expenses. A complete run of the Sentinel is included, data on public meetings, mailing and other lists, and office management and audit and budget information. Arranged chronologically.

Sentinel**Box** **Folder**

#1-34, May, 1918 to April, 1926.

6

79

Correspondence.

6

80

Newspaper Comment.

6

81

Office Management correspondence, 1918-1926

6

82-86

Audit and Budget, 1919-1922.

6

87

Reciprocal Relations correspondence, 1918-1926.

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88-96

Women's City Club.

7

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National Association of Civic Secretaries

National Association of Civic Secretaries		
	Box	Folder
Correspondence, 1924-1926.	7	98-100
Reports, 1924-1926.	7	101
Metropolitan District.	7	102
Mailing Lists		
	Box	Folder
City Officials in U.S.	8	103
General.	8	104
Various Lists.	8	105-107
Churches Mailing lists.	8	108
	Box	Folder
Memberships and Conventions, 1918-1923.	8	109-111
City Government Committee, 1923-1925.	8	112-114
Campaign Methods, 1919-1923.	8	115-116

Series III. Government Agencies.

Advertisements.	8	117
Campaign Expense Statements, 1918, n.d.	9	118-119
Endorsement of Candidates, 1918-1923.	9	120-130
Annual Meeting, 1922-1926.	10	135-138
W.P. Lovett correspondence, 1922-1924.	10	139-141
W.P. Lovett correspondence, 1925-1926.	11	142-143
Public Meeting, 1918-1921, 1923.	11	144-145
Tax and Budget Meeting.	11	146
The American Boy.	11	147
Election data from other cities.	11	148
Miscellaneous correspondence, 1921-1923.	11	149-153
Miscellaneous correspondence, 1924-1925.	12	154-155

Series III. Government Agencies.**Scope and Contents note**

Kent County Jail.

The series consists of the League's records and data on the operations of various city and county governmental departments. Included under Kent County are: Work farm, Purchasing Agent, Domestic Relations Court and Juvenile Detention Home. City departments include Service, Safety, Welfare, Purchasing, Legal, Art Museum and Library, and others. Especially important in the series are the records and correspondence in re Primary election, 1918-1926, and correspondence concerning the Commission Manager Form of Government. This series gives a view of the city's workings, and the League's opinions of them. The election materials are especially revealing of League involvement in the local politics, the League's foes as well as allies. Arranged chronologically.

	Box	Folder
Michigan.	12	156-157
State Constitutional Amendments.	12	158
Kent County, 1917-1919, 1923-1925.	12	159-160
Kent County Jail.		
	Box	Folder
Work farm, 1919.	12	161
Correspondence, 1923-1925.	12	162-164
Surveys, 1925	12	165
	Box	Folder
Purchasing.	12	166
Domestic Relations Court	12	167

Kent County Jail.

Kent County Juvenile Detention Home.	12	168
Kent County Isolation Hospital.	12	169
Grand Rapids.	13	170-171
Grand Rapids Service Department, 1919-1925.	13	172-174
Grand Rapids Safety Department, 1919-1923.	13	175-177
Grand Rapids Welfare Department, 1918-1923.	13	178-182
Grand Rapids Parks and Blvds.	13	183
Improvement of River Banks.	13	184
Purchasing Department.	14	185
Legal Department.	14	186
Art Museum and Library	14	187
Street Maintenance Program, 1923-1925.	14	188-190
Miscellaneous	14	191
Recreation.	14	192

Kent County Jail.

City Officials in Various Cities.	14	193
City Manager, 1925.	14	194
Sewer Bond Election, 1923.	14	195
Board of Education, 1919-1925, Misc.	14	196-201
Voting Machines.	15	202-203
Redistricting Voting Precincts.	15	204
City Employee Retirement System.	15	205
Primary City Elections, 1923-1926.	15	206-210
Commission-Manager Form of Government, 1917-1921.	15	211-214
Commission-Manager Form of Government, 1922-1926	16	215
Four Ward Plan.	16	216
City Election, 1925.	16	217
Campaign Correspondence, 1917, 1918, 1922.	16	218-220
Campaign to Restore Election-at-large.	16	221

Series IV. Governmental Policies

Misc., 1921-1923.	16	222-223
Municipal Garage.	16	224
Waterworks.	16	225

Series IV. Governmental Policies**Scope and Contents note**

Consists primarily of League correspondence on matters Of government policies, including charters and amendments, city plans, county commission form of government, budgets and surveys, county home rule, and annexation. The material on the charter amendment campaigns provides especially useful information on the politics and political factions contesting control of the city, and the extents to which they waged their campaigns. Arranged chronologically.

	Box	Folder
Charter Amendments, 1918, 1922.	16	226-227
Candidates and Amendments, 1922.	16	228
Candidates and Amendments, misc.	17	229
Proposed, 1922.	17	230
Correspondence from other cities, 1922.	17	231-234
Campaign correspondence, 1923.	17	235-239

County Commission Government

Budget and Survey, 1916-1919.	18	240
City Plan, 1919-1925.	18	241-245
Division Avenue Widening.	18	246
Municipal Exhibit.	18	247
County Commission Government		
	Box	Folder
Correspondence, 1922.	18	248-250
Completed petitions, 1922.	18	251
Correspondence, 1923-1924.	19	252-254
County Government Committee, 1923-1924.	19	255
County Home Rule.		
	Box	Folder
1923	19	256-257
1918-1920, closed.	19	258
1921-1925.	19	259

Annexation

	Box	Folder
Proportional Representation.	19	260
State Year Book	19	261
Annexation		
	Box	Folder
Paris District.	19	262
Walker District.	19	263
	Box	Folder
Circuit Judges.	19	264
Community Theater, 1921-1922.	19	265-266
Series V. Various Subjects.		
Scope and Contents note		
<p>The series consists of the subject files of the League, containing most notably files on: the Public Utility Franchises, Roads, Elections, National Affairs (post-war), Coal Supply, Equal Suffrage, and Prohibition. The files on the utilities include gas, telephone, inter-urban & street railway, including comparisons with costs in other cities. The files on national affairs, including war programs, reconstruction, and high cost of living are of importance in portraying ideas of Grand Rapidians, as exemplified through the League, in re these post-war issues. Arranged chronologically.</p>		
	Box	Folder

Gas Franchise

Public Utilities.	20	267
Gas Franchise		
	Box	Folder
Misc..	20	268
Correspondence, 1918-1920.	20	269
Official correspondence.	20	270
	Box	Folder
Telephone Rates.	20	271
Street Railway, 1918-1923.	20	272-275
Milk Prices.	20	276
Good Roads.	20	277
Re-routing of M-16.	20	278
Re-routing of M-21.	20	279
Labor.	20	280
September Primary, 1924.	20	281-282

Gas Franchise

Spring Primaries, 1921.	21	283-284
November Election, 1924.	21	285-286
Taxation, 1915-1925.	21	287-288
Loyalty.	21	289
War Program.	21	290
National Politics.	21	291
Reconstruction.	21	292
High Cost of Living.	21	293
Parochial Schools.	21	294
Court Rooms, Conduct of.	21	295
Kent County Law Enforcement-Prohibition, 1919-1924.	21	296-299
Religious.	21	300
Local Politics.	22	301
Personnel.	22	302

Unprocessed - from Old Collection

Welsh/Ellis.	22	303
Shelby B. Schurtz.	22	304
Schurtz Injunction Suit.	22	305
Miscellaneous.	22	306
Association of Commerce.	22	307
Coal Supply, 1924.	22	308
Equal Suffrage.	22	309
Corners, data on.	22	310
Unprocessed - from Old Collection	Box	Box
	23	24