



**ArchivesSpace**  
a community served by ✦ LYRASIS

## Finding aid for the Gordon E. Harrington collection Collection 194

---

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on September 01, 2023.

Description is written in: Undetermined.

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Prepared by Jamie L. Barger

Grand Rapids History Center

Grand Rapids Public Library

111 Library Street NE

Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

Business Number: 616-988-5497

[localhis@grpl.org](mailto:localhis@grpl.org)

URL: <https://www.grpl.org/history/>

---

## Table of Contents

---

Summary Information .....	3
Reeds Lake/Ramona Park history .....	3
Scope and Contents .....	4
Administrative Information .....	5
Related Materials .....	5
Controlled Access Headings .....	6
Collection Inventory .....	6
Series I. Historical Documents (1908-1986, n.d.) .....	6
Series II. Photographs (1882-1949) .....	6
Prints from Negatives .....	8
Series III. Screened Negatives, 1880-1972, n.d. ....	9
Series IV. Post Cards (1905-1925, n.d.) .....	10
Series V. Film Negatives, n.d. ....	11
Series VI. Lantern Slides, n.d. ....	12
Series VII. Glass Negatives .....	12
3.5"x5.5", 1898-1911, n.d. ....	12
5"x7", 1882, n.d. ....	13
5"x8", 1895, n.d. ....	14
Series VIII. Page Layouts, 1972-1978, n.d. ....	14
Series XI. Miscellaneous, n.d. ....	15
Series XII. The Intepreter .....	15

---

## Summary Information

---

<b>Repository:</b>	Grand Rapids History Center
<b>Creator - col:</b>	Harrington, Gordon E
<b>Title:</b>	Gordon E. Harrington collection
<b>ID:</b>	Collection 194
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1880-1986
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6.5 Linear Feet 14 boxes
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English .
<b>Abstract:</b>	<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>

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## 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.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## 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.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Scope and Contents

---

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.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Administrative Information

---

### Publication Statement

Grand Rapids History Center

Grand Rapids Public Library

111 Library Street NE

Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

Business Number: 616-988-5497

[localhis@grpl.org](mailto:localhis@grpl.org)

URL: <https://www.grpl.org/history/>

### Immediate Source of Acquisition

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.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Related Materials

---

### Related Materials

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.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Controlled Access Headings

---

- Ramona Park (East Grand Rapids, Mich.)
- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History -- photographs
- East Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History
- Harrington, Gordon E

---

## Collection Inventory

---

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

#### Scope and Contents

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.

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

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

### Series II. Photographs (1882-1949)

## Scope and Contents

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.

Title/Description	Instances	
Actors, n.d. (1 item)	Box 2	Folder 1
Alger Park, 1889. (1)	Box 2	Folder 2
Bridge, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 3
Burial mound, 1910. (1)	Box 2	Folder 4
Circus parade, May 24, 1895. (4)	Box 2	Folder 5
Factory Gang, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 6
Fire, 1898. (1)	Box 2	Folder 7
Fire Clean-Up, 1882. (3)	Box 2	Folder 8
First Plainfield Schoolhouse, July, 1910. (1)	Box 2	Folder 9
Flood, 1904 (10)	Box 2	Folder 10
Flood, 1904 (9)	Box 2	Folder 11
Flood, n.d. (5)	Box 2	Folder 12
Gerald Building, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 13
Grand Rapids Boat and Canoe Club, 1905. (1)	Box 2	Folder 14
Grand Rapids Furniture Shore, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 15
Ice cream parlor, ca.1910. (1)	Box 2	Folder 16
Ice jam, 1904. (7)	Box 2	Folder 17
Indian graves on Boylands farm, 1911. (1)	Box 2	Folder 18
Lake, n.d. (1 item)	Box 2	Folder 19
Lake views, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 20
Lighthouse, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 21
Log barns, 1910. (1)	Box 2	Folder 22
McMurray, Ellen—Bridge and House, 1911. (2)	Box 2	Folder 23
Miami and Erie Canal Transportation Co. (1)	Box 2	Folder 24
Michigan St. (300 Block) view, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 25
Mt. Pleasant buildings, n.d. (5)	Box 2	Folder 26

Mt. Pleasant churches, n.d. (3)	Box 2	Folder 27
Mt. Pleasant State Normal School, n.d. (3)	Box 2	Folder 28
Mt. Pleasant State Normal School, n.d. (2)	Box 2	Folder 29
North Park pavilion, 1904. (2)	Box 2	Folder 30
Parade, n.d. (3)	Box 2	Folder 31
P.H.M. Portrait, 1904. (2)	Box 2	Folder 32
Railroad Tracks, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 33
Ramona Park, n.d. (2)	Box 2	Folder 34
Ramona Park Midway, n.d. (2)	Box 2	Folder 35
Ramona Park Theater, ca. 1949. (36)	Box 2	Folder 36
Ramona Park Theater Interior, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 37
Ramona Park Trolley, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 38
Ramona Park Trolley Loop, n.d. (2)	Box 2	Folder 39
Ramona Park views, n.d. (13)	Box 2	Folder 40
Ramona Park in winter, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 41
Riverbank, n.d. (2)	Box 2	Folder 42
River view, n.d. (2)	Box 2	Folder 43
Salem Turner house, 1911. (1)	Box 2	Folder 44
Spanish American War Rally, 1896. (3)	Box 2	Folder 45
Street Railway, 1911. (1)	Box 2	Folder 46
Street scenes, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 47
Train wreck, n.d. (2)	Box 2	Folder 48
Truck--Petersen Brewing Co. ca. 1912. (3)	Box 2	Folder 49
Viaduct, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 50
W.W. Weir Home, July, 1911. (2)	Box 2	Folder 51
Wampus, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 52
Waves, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 53

## Prints from Negatives

Title/Description	Instances	
Reservoir Flood, n.d. [Contact print of 194-3-9 glass neg.] 9/1999	Box 2	Folder 77
Japanese Festival, Ramona Park Midway. Oversized photoprint (damaged)		



[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)**Series III. Screened Negatives, 1880-1972, n.d.****Scope and Contents**

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.

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.

Title/Description	Instances	
Advertisement--Grand Rapids Brewing Co., 1910 (1)	Box 2	Folder 54
Alger Park, 1889. (1)	Box 2	Folder 55
Austin Engine, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 56
Boxing Match, October 16, 1909. (1)	Box 2	Folder 57
C. Brownell, Dental Depot, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 58
Campau Square, ca. 1880	Box 14	Folder 3
Center Theater, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 59
Delivery Wagon--B.T. Pierce Ice Cream Co., 1905. (1)	Box 2	Folder 60
Delivery Wagon--Paul Stekettee & Sons, 1908 (1)	Box 2	Folder 61
Downtown Grand Rapids, ca. 1972. Monroe St. view n.w. Toward Pantlind, Woolworths, Housemans, modern streetlights (1)	Box 13	
Fire Station No. 5, 1899. (1)	Box 2	Folder 62
Grand River Scene, n.d.	Box 14	Folder 1
Ice Cream Parlor, 1910. (1)	Box 2	Folder 63
Ice Cutting, early 1900s. (1)	Box 2	Folder 64
John Ball Park Zoo, n.d. (2)	Box 2	Folder 65
Jos. C. Herkner, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 66
May Graham Steamboat, n.d. (1, oversized)	Box 12	Folder 10
Milk wagon--Otto Bajema, ca. 1905. (1)	Box 2	Folder 67
Monroe Ave. Looking west, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 68

Newsstand, 1912. (1)	Box 2	Folder 69
Redmond Opera House, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 70
Rathburn House, n.d. (1)	Box 12	
Ramona Park Theater, n.d. (1)	Box 2	Folder 71
Royal Gillette Photo Studio, ca. 1907. (1)	Box 2	Folder 72
Streetcar, ca. 1932. (2)	Box 2	Folder 73
Streetcar barn, Wealthy St., 1912. (1)	Box 2	Folder 74
Truck--Petersen Brewing Co., ca. 1912 (1)	Box 2	Folder 75
Unidentified people, n.d. (6)	Box 2	Folder 76
Wurzburgs demolition, ca. 1972	Box 14	Folder 2

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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

### Scope and Contents

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.

Title/Description	Instances	
Hazel A.,1910.	Box 3	Folder 1
James Rose's bathing beach, n.d.	Box 3	Folder 2
Japanese Night at Reed's Lake,1909.	Box 3	Folder 3
Manhattan Bathing Beach, n.d.	Box 3	Folder 4
Playgrounds at Reed's Lake,1910.	Box 3	Folder 5
Ramona Park Balloon Races, n.d.	Box 3	Folder 6
Ramona Park Dancing Pavilion,1913.	Box 3	Folder 7
Ramona Park Derby Racer, n.d.	Box 3	Folder 8
Ramona Park Lakeside Club,1913.	Box 3	Folder 9
Ramona Park Miniature Train, n.d.	Box 3	Folder 10
Ramona Park at Night, n.d.	Box 3	Folder 11
Ramona Park Pavilion,1914.	Box 3	Folder 12
Ramona Park Pavilion,1925.	Box 3	Folder 13
Ramona Park, Reed's Lake, n.d.	Box 3	Folder 14
Ramona Park Theater (interior),1907.	Box 3	Folder 15

Ramona Pavilion by Night, n.d.	Box 3	Folder 16
Ramona Theater,1908	Box 3	Folder 17
Ramona Theater,1917	Box 3	Folder 18
Reed's Lake Bathing Beach,1907.	Box 3	Folder 19
Reed's Lake Boat Landing,1909.	Box 3	Folder 20
Reed's Lake from Pavilion,1905.	Box 3	Folder 21

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Series V. Film Negatives, n.d.

### Scope and Contents

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.

Title/Description	Instances	
Flood, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 1-4
Flood, souvenir wheel, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 5
Fun house, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 6
Gerald Building, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 7
Grand Rapids Furniture Shore, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 8
Lake, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 9
Lake view, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 10
Lighthouse, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 11
Michigan Street, 310 Block View, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 12
People--unidentified, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 13
Railroad tracks, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 14
Ride--carnival, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 15
Ride--spaceship, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 16
Riverbank, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 17-18
River View, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 19-20
Roller coaster, Ramona Park, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 21-23
Steamboat, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 24

Street View, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 25
Theater, Ramona Park, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 26-31
Viaduct, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 32
Waves, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 33

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Series VI. Lantern Slides, n.d.

### Scope and Contents

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

Title/Description	Instances	
Bergy Bros. Elevator, n.d.	Box 5	Folder 1
Cream separators, n.d.	Box 5	Folder 2
Ellis Barber and Beauty Shop, n.d.	Box 5	Folder 3
Elmer Dinatman & Son, n.d..	Box 5	Folder 4
Farmers State Bank of Alto, n.d.	Box 5	Folder 5
Linton, R.J.--Coal & Lumber, n.d.	Box 5	Folder 6
Nye, Harold R., n.d.	Box 5	Folder 7
Rosenberg & Son, n.d.	Box 5	Folder 8
Square Deal Farm Fence, n.d.	Box 6	Folder 9

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Series VII. Glass Negatives

### Scope and Contents

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.

Title/Description	Instances	
Barge, n.d.	Box 6	Folder 1
Burial Mound, September 10, 1910.	Box 6	Folder 2

Factory Gang, n.d.	Box 6	Folder 3
Fire, 1898.	Box 6	Folder 4
Flood, n.d.	Box 6	Folder 5.7
Flood, n.d. [Reservoir, print of #9 made 8/1999]	Box 7	Folder 8-12
Flood, West Side, n.d.	Box 7	Folder 13
Grand Rapids Boat and Canoe Club, August 16, 1905.	Box 7	Folder 14
Grand River, December 31, 1907.	Box 7	Folder 15
Ice Jam, March 23, 1904.	Box 8	Folder 16-17
Ice dynamiting, March 23, 1904.	Box 8	Folder 18
Indian Graves on Boylands Farm, June 25, 1911.	Box 8	Folder 19
Log Barn, October 12, 1910.	Box 8	Folder 20
McMurray, Ellen at Bridge, 1911.	Box 8	Folder 21
McMurray, Ellen House, 1911.	Box 8	Folder 22
North Park Pavilion, September 4, 1904.	Box 8	Folder 23
Old Weir Home, July 17, 1910.	Box 8	Folder 24
P.H.M. Portrait, April 26, 1907.	Box 9	Folder 25
Salem Turner's House, May, 1911.	Box 9	Folder 26
Schoolhouse, July 17, 1910.	Box 9	Folder 27
Spanish-American War Rally, 1898.	Box 9	Folder 28-32
Tracks, May 5, 1911.	Box 9	Folder 33
Wampus, n.d.	Box 9	Folder 34

### **5"x7", 1882, n.d.**

<b>Title/Description</b>	<b>Instances</b>	
Bridge, n.d.	Box 10	Folder 35-36
Building, Mt. Pleasant, n.d.	Box 10	Folder 37-40
Church, Mt. Pleasant, n.d.	Box 10	Folder 41-42
Fire Clean-Up, 1882.	Box 10	Folder 43-44
Presbyterian Church, Mt. Pleasant, n.d.	Box 10	Folder 45

State Normal, Mt. Pleasant, n.d.	Box 10	Folder 46
State Normal, Mt. Pleasant, n.d.	Box 10	Folder 47
Training School, Mt. Pleasant, n.d.	Box 10	Folder 48

## 5"x8", 1895, n.d.

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

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Series VIII. Page Layouts, 1972-1978, n.d.

### Scope and Contents

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.

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

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Series XI. Miscellaneous, n.d.

### Scope and Contents

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.

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

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Series XII. The Intepreter

### General

These are newsprint copies of Harrington's writings, originally printed in The Interpreter, and titled "Those Were the Days" and "Those Good Old Days." They are not dated, although all would have been written between 1968-1975, and they are in no particular order. They are in good condition and may prove useful to the researcher.

Title/Description	Instances	
"Those Were the Days"	Box 14	Folder 4-6
"Those Good Old Days"	Box 14	Folder 7-9

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)