

Finding aid for the Madeline Parker Groff collection Collection 199

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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Summary Information

Repository	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Creator - Collector	Groff, Madeline Parker, 1893-1972
Title	Madeline Parker Groff collection
Date [inclusive]	1903-1968
Extent	2.1 Linear feet Five boxes
Language	English
Abstract	<p>The Madeline Parker Groff collection documents the vaudeville career of two young physical culture devotees, Maurice Bellclaire and Benjamin Morris and their manager, Fred Paulo Mongeon, who also had his own act. Also documented is the creation, by Maurice Bellclaire and Fred Paulo, of a summer resort on the south shore of Reeds Lake, East Grand Rapids, Michigan, which catered mainly to vaudevillians and theatrical troupes. This resort operated from 1907 until the early 1920s. Included are scrapbooks from the touring days of the Bellclaire brothers and Paulo, pictures and negatives from the operating period of the Point Paulo summer resort on Reeds Lake and a scrapbook documenting the realty operation run by Maurice Bellclaire, 1946-1949. Madeline Groff was a professional singer, working in New York as well as traveling on the vaudeville circuit. The collection includes a few images of her and brief biographical information.</p>

Biographical/Historical note

Madeline Groff (nee Parker), 1893-1972, was a native of Warroad, Minnesota who became a professional singer following college. She sang with the New York Metropolitan Opera, on the vaudeville circuits, and operated a voice and music studio in New York City. She performed on the vaudeville circuits for about ten years, then concentrated on her studio and opera work. A soprano, she once sang the lead in *Madame Butterfly* with the Metropolitan Opera, as well as many supporting roles.

A friend of stage and screen actors, she was in England during the summer of 1939 and returned to the United States on *Queen Mary* shortly after England declared war on Germany. Following the war, she moved to Grand Rapids and worked for her sister and brother-in-law, Marian and Arthur Kerns, who operated Kern's Cafeteria. When the cafeteria was sold, she worked as a salesperson in a local women's clothing store.

Because of her ties to the performing arts community, she was acquainted with the vaudevillians summering on Reeds lake when she came to Grand Rapids. She developed several friendships with the former vaudevillians there and as a result collected the material in this collection.

Scope and Contents note

Groff's collection documents the vaudeville career of two young body builders in the early 20th century, and their manager, who also had an act. Included are two scrapbooks with newspaper reviews of their act, playbills, programs and some photographs. A third scrapbook documents the later life career in real estate of one of the body builders in the Grand Rapids area. Also documented is the purchase and operation of a summer resort on Reeds Lake by the act manager and one of the body builders, from 1907 to the early 1920s, which catered to vaudevillians and theatrical troupes. Documentation of the resort is through negatives, photos, plat maps and an ink drawing. Additionally, there are a number of posed pictures of the body builders in action.

Background: Two immigrant young men, both interested in, and practioners of, physical culture met in a gym in New York City about 1900. They excercised together, became friends, and soon performed tricks together as a team. In 1903, they won an amateur night competition at Miners Eighth Avenue theater and decided to turn professional. Though not related, they were booked in the Keiths vaudeville circuit organization as the "Bellclaire Brothers." They put out ads to find a manager, and met Fred Mongeon, who had his own act as Fred Paulo of "Paulo & Marlow." The three became friends, and frequently booked both acts together. They appeared in New York, Boston, New Orleans, St. Louis, Omaha and Denver to mention a few stops.

In 1907 they visited Grand Rapids and fell in love with the area. Fred Mongeon with Maurice Bellclaire purchased 22 acres of land on the south side of Reeds Lake and established a summer resort called "Point Paulo" which catered to their fellow vaudevillians and theatrical troupes. The resort operated until the 1920s, but its size was scaled back beginning in 1913 with the platting and sale of part of the property to private parties. Gradually the resort was phased out, though Fred continued to live on the site. In 1930, Fred became a realtor, with Maurice as salesman. In 1937, Fred Paulo died, but Maurice continued the real estate business until the mid 1950s. He continued to reside on Point Paulo until his death in 1973.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

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

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Laura Shoemaker, accession number 1996.004

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Collection 194, Gordon Harrington Collection

Controlled Access Headings

Genre(s)

- personal papers

Geographic Name(s)

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

Personal Name(s)

- Bellclaire, Maurice
- Mongeon, Fred Paulo, 1871-1937
- Morris, Benjamin

Subject(s)

- Tourism -- Michigan -- History
- Vaudeville -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids

Series I. Correspondence, 1909-1931.**Collection Inventory**

Series I. Correspondence, 1909-1931.		
	Box	Folder
Fred Paulo from Madison, WI to a woman friend, 11/1/1909.	1	1
Fred Paulo from Muskegon, MI woman regarding gift of Pekinese dog, 9/17/1931.	1	2
New Years greetings for Maurice Bellclaire and Fred Paulo from Roland Taylor, 1930s.	1	3
Series II. Music, 1921-1940.		
	Box	Folder
Farewell Dear Pal, Goodbye, 1921.	1	4
Way Up Among the Green Pine Trees, 1922.	1	5
G.R. Symphony Orchestra Program, 11/15/1940.	1	6
Series III. Miscellaneous, 1910-1968		
	Box	Folder

Biographical.

Land contract on Bellclaire Addition property between F. Mongeon and J. Fitzgerald, 6/14/1910.	1	14
Christmas card from William Jacks "The House that Jack Built", 1916.	1	15
4 photocopies of plat maps. Paulos Addition & Bellclaire, n.d. Addition plats and area, 1910-1968.	1	16
Invoice and statement from Grand Rapids Herald for house rental advertisement, 10/1935. (3 found 6/3/2002)	1	17
Bellclaire Realty Newspaper listings, 5/22/1949, for: 1411 East Fulton, 1013-1015 Wealthy	1	18
2-Letterhead "Good Housekeeping Shop" 25 Division Ave., S., Grand Rapids, MI, c 1950s.	1	19
Newspaper articles on "Point Paulo," 1913-1914. (3 fnd. 6/3/2002. One is graphic, with sketches by Hollis??. July 7, 1914.	1	20
Biographical.		
	Box	Folder
Madeline Parker Groff portraits-(2)	5	29
Newspaper article on professional appearance	5	29
Funeral home card at death.	5	29

Series IV. Scrapbooks, 1903-1949

Series IV. Scrapbooks, 1903-1949		
	Box	Folder
Bellclaire Brothers Act-Reviews and Programs, 1903-1906.	2	1
Moved to Box 1, 6/3/2002	2	2
		Box
Belleclaire & Kramer Act-Reviews, 1906-1907.		1
	Box	Folder
Advertising and descriptions of Bellclaire Realty, 1946-1949.	2	3
3-Loose pages of Reeds lake, 1910s-1930s. (20 photos?)	2	4
Series V. Graphics		
Postcards, 1909-1940.		
	Box	Folder
German Building, Jackson Park, Chicago, IL, 1909.	1	7
MacDonough, Ethel, 1910s. "Playing at the Empress Theatre, G.R."	1	8
Zomah, 1910s. "...At the Empress Theatre..."	1	9

Artwork, ca. 1910s.

Havemanns Raubtierschule [Lion taming act], 1916.	1	10
House on Reeds Lake, 1930s.	1	11
Monroe Avenue looking north. c1935.	1	12

Artwork, ca. 1910s.

	Box	Folder
Moved to Box 2, 6/3/2002	1	13
		Box
		2
Sketch. "Point Paulo Summer Resort, Grand Rapids, Mich. / A. Tozart, n.d. Reeds Lake, East Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1910s? Original [Pencil, ink, gauche and watercolor on board?] + laser copy.		

Negatives, 1920s-1040s.**Pt. Paulo summer resort, Reeds Lake, 1900s to 1940s.**

	Box	Folder
Three lakefront cottages (Oxford, Palace, and Alcazar).(1)	3	1
Pt. Paulo summer resort from boat. (1)	3	2
Four cottages and lakefront view. (1)	3	3

Pt. Paulo summer resort, Reeds Lake, 1900s to 1940s.

Cottages and main house from east. (1)	3	4
Shoreline cottages (2 negatives). (2)	3	5
Long Acre cottage at Pt. (1)	3	6
Group in front of "Oxford" cottage (2 negatives).	3	7
Man and woman on cottage porch. (1)	3	8
Large group of women. (2)	3	9
Group on cottage porch. (1)	3	10
View, from woods, of lakefront cottage. (1)	3	11
Male couple embracing. (1)	3	12
Man in boat. (1)	3	13
Couple in rowboat. (1)	3	14
Two men standing next to boat. (1)	3	15
Man on dock. (1)	3	16
Large group of dock (2 negatives). CHECK	3	17

Pt. Paulo summer resort, Reeds Lake, 1900s to 1940s.

Large group of bathers on dock (2 negatives).	3	18
Man diving off (3 negatives).	3	19
Belleclaire (?) in bathing suit, doing handstand. (1)	3	20
Acrobats entertaining on (3 negatives).	3	21
Vaudeville troupe doing acrobatics on dock.(1)	3	22
Fred Paulo and another man in bathing suits on dock. (1)	3	23
Group on dock, with man diving from.(1)	3	24
Man doing flip from dock roof. (1)	3	25
Man on dock. (1)	3	26
Woman in checked coat on dock. (1)	3	27
Girl holding drum while man plays. (1)	3	28
Couple on dock. (1)	3	29
Three women, with man holding fish, on shore.(1)	3	30
Three women and man (women holding fish) on shore.	3	31

Pt. Paulo summer resort, Reeds Lake, 1900s to 1940s.

Fred Paulo and second man in amphibian plane.	3	32
Fred Paulo (holding dog) and Maurice Bellclaire on steps of main house.	3	33
Dining room of main house.	3	34
East side porch on main house.	3	35
East side elevation view of main house.	3	36
Street side view of main house.	3	37
Street side view of main house with man.	3	38
Main house from lakeside.	3	39
Group on porch of main house.	3	40
Front view of main house.	3	41
Side (west) view of main house.	3	42
Main house and pump house (from rear.	3	43
Three-quarter view from street side of main house.	3	44
Dining room in main house.	4	1

Pt. Paulo summer resort, Reeds Lake, 1900s to 1940s.

View thru door of dining room in main house.	4	2
Woman with dogs on porch of main house.	4	3
Porch and furniture at main house.	4	4
Porch with two people on it, at main house.	4	5
Man and dog on side porch of main house.	4	6
Fred Paulo(?) and Maurice Bellclaire(?) next to porch at main house. [print available]	4	7
Woman with several dogs on side porch of main house.	4	8
Woman in chair, holding dog, on side porch of main house.	4	9
Five people, each holding dog.	4	10
Group holding dogs by fence.	4	11
Maurice Bellclaire(?) and Fred Paulo(?) next to main house.	4	12
Geese on Reeds Lake near Pt. Paulo.	4	13
Two men holding dogs and standing to house porch.	4	14

Tropical Park Locale, c1920s.

Two women standing next to porch.	4	15
House and man in pickup truck (Point Paulo?), c1920s.	4	16
Tropical Park Locale, c1920s.		
	Box	Folder
Fred Paulo and woman. [print available]	4	17
Fred Paulo and woman. [print available]	4	18
Fred Paulo and woman.	4	19
Fred Paulo and woman, with seated group, at night.	4	20
Fred Paulo and woman, seated on bench.	4	21
Fred Paulo and woman, standing next to large tree.	4	22
Fred Paulo and woman, standing in front of gazebo.	4	23
Woman in front of shrub.	4	24
Fred Paulo and woman, on bench in front of large plant.	4	25
Photographs, 1903-1954.		

Body building poses

Body building poses		
	Box	Folder
Maurice Bellclaire (7 photos), c1904.	5	1
Benjamin Morris (9 photos), c1904.	5	2
Bellclaire brothers (3 photos) c1903.	5	3
Pt. Paulo Summer Resort-Reeds Lake		
	Box	Folder
Two women with Fred Paulo and Maurice Bellclaire, c1920s. (1)	5	4
Group of men in dining room at main house, late 1910s? (1)	5	5
Bellclaire brothers and friends in seaplane (6 photos).	5	6
Fred Paulo (with dog) and Maurice Bellclaire.(1)	5	7
Fred Paulo (L) and Maurice Bellclaire. (1)	5	8
Fred Paulo and dog. (1)	5	9
Bellclaire and Paulo home on Frederick Road (former main house). (1)	5	10
Dock and boat area (2 photos).	5	11

Tropical park locale, c1920s-30s.

Large group standing on dock. (1)	5	12
Countess Rose and Mons. Paulo vaudeville act publicity shot, c1906 (2 photos, only 1 found 4/2000).	5	13
Tropical park locale, c1920s-30s.		
	Box	Folder
Fred Paulo (standing) and woman. (1)	5	14
Fred Paulo and woman holding hands. (1)	5	15
Man and woman. (1)	5	16
Two couples posing outside home, 1900s? (1)	5	17
Benjamin Morris (L) and young couple (sister and brother(?)) in front of store, c1900. (1)	5	18
Large home with family (possibly Ben Morris') on front porch, c1900s. (1)	5	19
Major A.B. Watson on Reeds Lake, c1900s. (1)	5	20
Older man standing outside building (Maurice Bellclaire(?), c1950. (1)	5	21
Cottage and guesthouse at Brower Lake for sale by Bellclaire Realty, 1949 (6 photos).	5	22

Tropical park locale, c1920s-30s.

Homes for sale by Bellclaire Realty (2): 600 Paris St. SE, Grand Rapids, 2705 E. Paris Rd SE, Paris Township.	5	23
Building for sale by Bellclaire Realty. 255 S. Division Ave. purchased by Mr. Kearns, 1950s (2 photos, Good Housekeeping Shop).	5	24
Kerns Cafeteria interior, 41 Ionia Ave., GrandRapids, MI (4 photos; 2 postcards).	5	25
Town House Cafeteria interior with owners family (Kerns) and employees, 1954 (2 photos).	5	26
Stream with water wheel. (1)	5	27
Utility trailer (possibly at Pt. Paulo) 1930s. (1)	5	28