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Finding aid for the Alberta Massingill papers Collection 514

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Prepared by

Grand Rapids History Center

Grand Rapids Public Library

111 Library Street NE

Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

Business Number: 616-988-5497

localhis@grpl.org

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

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Summary Information

Repository:	Grand Rapids History Center
Title:	Alberta Massingill papers
ID:	Collection 514
Date [inclusive]:	1941-1979
Physical Description:	.25 Linear Feet 1 Box
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	Alberta Massingill (1914-2005) was the director of the Grand Rapids Public Library, in Grand Rapids, MI from 1972-1979. During her tenure she was instrumental in establishing remedial reading programs and school libraries, the opening of additional library branches and the founding of the Lakeland Library Cooperative. Newspaper clippings, correspondence and photographs make up the majority of her papers and could be used by those researching Massingill herself, the history of the Grand Rapids Public Library or Michigan library directors.

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Biographical / Historical

Alberta Massingill was born on July 12, 1914 in Urich, Missouri. She attended Park College where she worked at the college library, while earning a bachelor's degree in science. Massingill earned a second bachelor's degree from the University of Denver in library science. While she was offered positions in both Flint and Grand Rapids, MI, she chose the Grand Rapids Public Library.

Massingill began working in the Grand Rapids Public Library's fiction room in 1941. Shortly thereafter, she was named head of the circulation department. Some of her other titles included: personnel director, book purchaser, and lending services coordinator. In 1954 she won a national award for collaborating with local teachers to pioneer a remedial reading program. That same year she received her master's degree in library science from the University of Michigan.

In 1962 Massingill became the associate director of the library. Donald Kohlstedt was the director at the time but his death in 1972 led Alberta to maintain operations for 14 months. Ultimately she was nominated for the director position. The planning and construction of the Yankee Clipper branch occurred under her directorship. Although other branches were built during her tenure at the library, Yankee Clipper yielded triple the patron business. Massingill was also instrumental in establishing school libraries, which led to the initiation of services for children and summer programs. Similarly, she was sometimes referred to as the "founding mother" of the Lakeland Library Cooperative since its inception in 1971. She also held committee appointments in the Michigan and American Library Associations.

After 38 years of service, she announced her retirement in 1979. During her retirement she traveled and continued her work through Friends of the Library. She died on April 21, 2005.

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Scope and Contents

The Alberta Massingill collection contains newspaper clippings, photographs, pages from a photo album, cards and correspondence. These materials provide an overview of Massingill's time as director of, and retirement from, the Grand Rapids Public Library.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

These materials were donated anonymously. 2022.046

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Related Materials

Related Materials

Collection 109: Grand Rapids Public Library administrative archives

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Controlled Access Headings

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History
- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History -- 20th Century
- Library employees -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids -- Biography
- Women library administrators

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances	
Photos and newspaper clippings on Donald Kohlstedt, Library Director, graduation commencement , 1942-1972	Box 1	Folder 1
Librarian's report: February 1944, October 1946, November 1946, employment offers letters and correspondence	Box 1	Folder 2
Letters of congratulations, news paper clippings, Remedial Reading article	Box 1	Folder 3
Photos of Alberta's Birthday, undated	Box 1	Folder 4
Photos of ribbon cutting at Yankee Clipper branch, 1979	Box 1	Folder 5
Newspaper Clippings of Alberta Massingill, 1941-2000	Box 1	Folder 6
Retirement cards and letters for Alberta Massingill , 1979	Box 1	Folder 7-9
Post Retirement: miscellaneous correspondence and Agenda's from the Friends of the library meetings, 1979-2004	Box 1	Folder 10
List of names of Friends of library	Box 1	Folder 11

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Album of Albert Massingill and staff at library event	Box 1	Folder 12
Poster of Alberta Massingill	Box 1	Folder 13
