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# Finding Aid for the Lincoln Republican Club Collection 522

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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Grand Rapids History Center

Grand Rapids Public Library

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

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Grand Rapids History Center
<b>Title:</b>	The Lincoln Republican Club
<b>ID:</b>	Collection 522
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1896-1922
<b>Physical Description:</b>	.25 Linear Feet 1 slim box.
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English .
<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>The Lincoln Republican Club of Grand Rapids, Michigan was formed in 1892. Made up of Kent County Republican Party workers, the club sought to promote the principles of Republicanism and to interest those in politics who had previously been indifferent. The club's constitution provided that Abraham Lincoln's birthday be commemorated with a banquet every year. Two years later the Young Men's Republican Club formed to promote similar ideals and held a competing Lincoln Day Banquet until 1899, when the two clubs began to jointly organize one annual banquet. In 1920 the two organizations formally merged. Banquet speakers included Republican Michigan governors, foreign ambassadors, U.S. senators, cabinet officers, in addition to former and future presidents and vice presidents. Average attendance numbered 1500. This collection consists mainly of Lincoln Day Banquet programs. Most helpful to researchers will be a 1904 Souvenir Hand Book of the Lincoln Republican Club and the Young Men's Republican Club, which provides a detailed history of the two organizations. Those interested in the clubs specifically or the Republican Party in West Michigan will find this collection useful. Information in the collection notes comes from the collection itself and from <i>The Grand Rapids Press</i>.</p>

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## Biographical / Historical

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Organized in 1892, the Lincoln Republican Club was formed, according to their constitution,"to advocate, promote and maintain the principles of Republicanism as enunciated by the Republican Party; to interest in politics those who have hitherto been indifferent to their political duties; to encourage attendance at primary meetings, that honest and capable men be nominated; to guard and defend the purity of the ballot box; to promote the cause of good government and to perform such other work as may best conserve the interests of the Republican Party." The club's constitution provided that Abraham Lincoln's birthday should be commemorated with a banquet every year. The first was held on February 10, 1893, in Lockerby Hall.

Major C.W. Watkins, one of the charter members of the Lincoln Club, and its first president, is credited with the club's name. The members were made up of local Kent County Republican Party workers and gradually increased until it comprised a large portion of the Republican Party workers in Western Michigan. Dues were set at \$1.00 per year and all interested men over the age of 18 were eligible for membership.

The Young Men's Republican Club began in 1894 and they met in the Lincoln Club's room. Their stated purpose was "to interest young men in politics and to obtain a better appreciation of the political duties and responsibilities of citizenship; to encourage attendance at the primary meetings, and to secure the enactment and enforcement of the laws to insure the purity of the primaries, and to promote and maintain the principles of good government advocated by the Republican Party." The Young Men's Republican Club held their own Lincoln Day Banquets, the first at the Sweet's Hotel in 1895, until 1899 when the two organizations sponsored one annual banquet. In 1920 the two organizations formally merged.

The banquet speakers included all but one Republican Michigan governor, Kim Sigler, many foreign ambassadors, U.S. senators, cabinet officers, in addition to former and future presidents and vice presidents. Attendance at Lincoln Day Banquets numbered, on average, 1500. Until the newly built Coliseum opened in 1911, no venue could accommodate that number. Many who wished to attend had to come in after the meal was served and stand along the perimeter. The 1911 Lincoln Day Banquet was the Coliseum's inaugural event and it was held there for many years afterward.

Notably, Booker T. Washington spoke in 1912 and, until 1916, when members of the Equal Franchise Club were invited to attend, women had only been allowed at the event as waitresses or to watch from the balcony. The first woman to speak at the banquet was Harriet E. Vittum, the Head Resident of the Northwestern University Settlement and Mrs. John W.(Minnie C.) Blodgett was the first female toastmaster in 1921.

It is unclear when the Lincoln Republican Club dissolved or became part of another Republican organization. Lincoln Day Banquets continued in Grand Rapids into the 1960s but were organized by other Kent County Republican groups.

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## Scope and Contents

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This small collection consists mainly of Lincoln Day Banquet programs, many which include images of the speakers. Most helpful to researchers will be a 1904 Souvenir Hand Book of the Lincoln Republican Club and the Young Men's Republican Club, which provides a detailed history of the two organizations. In addition there are a few newspaper clippings and a small pamphlet, which looks to have been produced at the time of the club's founding and includes their constitution and original member list.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

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### Processing Information

Most of the material in this collection is part of accession 1986.247, given by an unknown donor. In October of 2023 it was discovered as unprocessed material in collection 216. It was removed from collection 216, as it was enough material to warrant its own collection. Several Lincoln Republican Club items from other accessions had previously been processed into collection 216. That material moved into this collection. Additional archival material was found in the department subject files and added to this collection as well. All duplicates were discarded.

### Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research use.

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## Related Materials

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### Related Materials

The Old Collection 371 contains a Lincoln Republican Club ledger book (1893-1895) containing minutes, member lists and newspaper clippings and a 1908 Young Men's Republican Club Handbook.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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

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## Collection Inventory

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Lincoln Day Banquet programs		
Title/Description	Instances	
Fourth Annual Banquet program, 1896	Box 1	Folder 1
Souvenir Hand book of Lincoln Republican Club and Young Men's Republican Club of Grand Rapids; includes the Lincoln Day Banquet program, 1904	Box 1	Folder 2
Lincoln Banquet program, 1908	Box 1	Folder 3
Lincoln Centenary Banquet program, 1909	Box 1	Folder 4
Lincoln Day Banquet program, 1910	Box 1	Folder 5
Lincoln Day Banquet program, 1911	Box 1	Folder 6
Lincoln Day Banquet program, 1914	Box 1	Folder 7
Lincoln Day Banquet program, 1919	Box 1	Folder 8

Lincoln Day Banquet program, 1920	Box 1	Folder 9
Lincoln Day Banquet program, 1921	Box 1	Folder 10
Lincoln Day Banquet program, 1922	Box 1	Folder 11

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## Other material

Title/Description	Instances	
Coliseum postcards	Box 1	Folder 6
Miniature American flag	Box 1	Folder 6
Lincoln Day Banquet invitation, 1920	Box 1	Folder 9
Newspaper clippings, 1910-1922	Box 1	Folder 12
Constitution and List of the Lincoln Republican Club, 1892	Box 1	Folder 13

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