



Lemuel S. Hillman papers Collection 526

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on June 14, 2024.

Description is written in: English.

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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Grand Rapids History Center

Grand Rapids Public Library

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Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Biographical / Historical	3
Scope and Contents	4
Administrative Information	5
Related Materials	5
Controlled Access Headings	5
Collection Inventory	5
Personal papers	5
Military papers	6
Business, banking, and civic engagement papers	6
Speeches and essays	6
Death ephemera and newspaper articles	6

Summary Information

Repository:	Grand Rapids History Center
Title:	Lemuel S. Hillman papers
ID:	Collection 526
Date [inclusive]:	1797-1964
Physical Description:	1.5 Linear Feet 2 Boxes
Condition Description:	Good.
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	Lemuel Hillman (1886–1930) was a banker and prominent member of several social organizations in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This collection of his papers consists of correspondence, photographs, newspaper articles, speeches, and writings. It covers many facets of his life: his family, his military career, his banking business, and his civic engagement. The collection would be of interest to those researching Hillman family history, the banking industry in West Michigan, or the activities of any of the organizations Lemuel was involved in.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical / Historical

Lemuel Serrell Hillman was born in Mount Vernon, New York, on August 28, 1886. His parents were William and Emma Louise (Bill) Hillman. Lemuel graduated from Colgate Academy and then Colgate University in Hamilton, New York. In September 1911, he came to Grand Rapids and worked as an investment banker with Kelsey, Brewer, and Co. He also worked for a time with Howe, Snow, Corrigan and Bertles. In June 1913, he became the head of the bond department at the Grand Rapids Trust Company.

Lemuel met Dorothy Woodruff at a party through mutual friends in Grand Rapids. In 1917, they were married in Dorothy's hometown of Auburn, New York, and the couple later settled in Grand Rapids. They would have four children: Lemuel S., Jr (born 1918), Caroline B. (born 1920), Douglas W. (born 1922), and Hermione W. (born 1926).

During World War I, Lemuel enlisted in the US Naval Reserves. After the war, he became the manager of the bond department and later the vice president for the Old National Bank. Lemuel was the editor of the Old National Bank Bulletins which frequently featured informative opinion pieces by him. The bank consolidated with the Kent State Bank, becoming the Old Kent Corporation, and Lemuel became the bank's president in January 1930.

Lemuel was active in many social, educational, and community welfare organizations. A few of the roles he held with various local organizations include: trustee of Butterworth Hospital, trustee and treasurer of the D. A. Blodgett Home for Children, director of the Grand Rapids Welfare Union, Chairman of the Board of Education Tax Advisory Committee, trustee of the Grand Rapids Art Association, and founding member of the University Club. He was active with Fountain Street Church as a trustee and Superintendent of the Bible School. From 1922-1924, Lemuel was an elected member of the Kent County Board of Supervisors, representing the Second Ward.

On the evening of February 21, 1930, Lemuel was hit by a car while walking down Fulton Street with his wife and died from his injuries. His funeral was held at Fountain Street Church and was said to have been attended by about 1,000 people. His death sparked mourning throughout the city and launched a campaign for sidewalks along major streets.

Most of the information in this section came from two sources: a biographical sketch done in 1930, located in the collection of Lemuel's son Judge Douglas Woodruff Hillman (#486), and a transcript of an interview with Dorothy Hillman done in 1975 held in the Special Collections of Grand Valley State University.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Contents

The contents of this collection cover both personal and professional aspects of Lemuel's life. Family history papers dating back to the late 1700s provide a background on Lemuel's ancestry, with photographs, Bible pages, and other information on previous Hillman generations. The collection also offers a glimpse into Lemuel's military service through correspondence, certificates, and photographs. Lemuel's time as a banker is well-represented through several folders of correspondence, mostly dating between 1918–1925. A substantial portion of the collection relates to Lemuel's many speeches and writings, including articles he wrote as editor of the Old National Bank Bulletin and original manuscript drafts. Another significant portion of the collection is made up of newspaper articles about Lemuel, many of them dating to the months after his death.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Related Materials

Related Materials

Archival Collection #486: Judge Douglas Woodruff Hillman papers. Judge Hillman was Lemuel's son, and his collection contains more biographical information about Lemuel and the rest of the Hillman family.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Controlled Access Headings

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History
- Kent County (Mich.) -- History

Collection Inventory

Personal papers, 1797-1958

Title/Description	Instances
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Family history papers, Bible pages, information on previous Hillman generations	Box 1	Folder 1-3
Portrait of William Hillman (1794-1864), Vice President of American Bible Union	Box 1	Folder 4
Portrait of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr (1809-1894) with original signature	Box 1	Folder 4
Hillman family photos	Box 1	Folder 5-6
Oversized Hillman family documents and photos	Box 2	Folder 1-7

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Military papers, 1914-1964

Title/Description	Instances	
Military career photos	Box 1	Folder 7
World War I and Naval Reserve correspondence	Box 1	Folder 8
Michigan National Guard discharge certificates and record of Naval service	Box 1	Folder 9

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Business, banking, and civic engagement papers, 1918-1930

Title/Description	Instances	
Correspondence , 1921-1927	Box 1	Folder 10-13
Old National Bank Bulletins, 1920-1926	Box 1	Folder 14
Publications mentioning Lemuel Hillman	Box 1	Folder 15

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Speeches and essays

Title/Description	Instances	
Handwritten drafts and typed finalized speeches; manuscripts of published works	Box 1	Folder 16-21

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Death ephemera and newspaper articles, 1930-1935

Title/Description	Instances	
Newspaper clippings about Lemuel's death	Box 1	Folder 22
Ephemera of Lemuel Hillman's death and transcription of funeral service	Box 1	Folder 23-24
Lemuel Hillman memorial meeting booklets by the University Club of Grand Rapids; April 11, 1930	Box 1	Folder 25
Lemuel Hillman last will and testament	Box 1	Folder 26

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)