

# BIOGRAPHICAL RESOURCES

## PORTRAIT AND BIOGRAPHY FILES

These files are in alphabetical order by last name and may contain newspaper clippings, obituaries, photocopies of portraits, among other documents. The more connections someone had to the area and/or the more prominent they were in the community, the more likely it is there will be a file on that individual.

## PORTRAIT AND BIOGRAPHY CARD CATALOG

Alphabetical by last name, these cards will direct the researcher to articles about an individual (obituaries, wedding announcements, articles about business, etc.), whether in newspapers or scrapbooks.

## NEWSPAPERS: GENERAL

Obituaries and engagement, wedding and anniversary announcements are often substantive sources of information about an individual. Newspapers dated 1844 to present are available on microfilm. Depending upon the date, indexing is available for these newspapers.

## YEARBOOKS

The collection consists of high school yearbooks from throughout the city and a few of the suburbs. The earliest yearbook in the collection is the *The Mirror* from Grand Rapids High School (later Central High School) in 1894. There are a wide range of dates and not every year is available but the collection is continually being updated. The collection is located in closed stacks, so you will need to ask staff for assistance.

## CITY & COUNTY DIRECTORIES

City and County Directories are directly accessible in book form or microfilm. Directories contain names, addresses and occupations of city residents.

- City directories (RL Polk & Co.) are available from 1865-present.
- Suburban directories cover 1957 to 1997.
- Since 1999, these directories cover the entire Kent County area.

## BETTY GIBOUT REAL ESTATE LISTING CARDS

Real estate listing cards are the original, descriptive cards from the listing of a property through a local realtor. Organized alphabetically by street and numerically by address these cards represent sales from 1955 to 1997. This collection does not include property sold by owner, land contract or other unique sales. Some cards are available for properties that have been demolished and these can be found in archival collection 273. *Please see staff for help in searching real estate listing cards.*

## ARCHIVAL RESOURCES

- **Coll. 125, the Robinson Studio Photographic Collection.** Portrait and wedding photographs make up a large portion of this collection and can be searched with the help of staff.
- **Coll. 96 Western Michigan Genealogical Society Church Records.** The primary types of data in this collection are records of births, deaths, marriages, baptisms, confirmations and memberships. Church histories, directories and lists of officers can also be found. The bulk of the documents date from 1837 to 1920, though for some churches materials are found as late as 1990.
- **Coll. 131 Grand Rapids Township Death Records** This collection includes photocopies of death certificates for those listed as residents of Grand Rapids Township at the time of death. The copies list deaths from 1906-1910 and from 1914-1952.
- **Coll. 137 Cannon Twp. Death Records** This collection consists of the unofficial death records for the residents of that township from 1911-1952. The records provide the name,

age, sex and birth date, along with the date and cause of death. The occupation, marriage status, birth place and date, undertaker, and some family history area also included in all of the records.

- **Funeral Home Records: Coll. 55 Spring Funeral Home, Coll. 97 Birdsall Funeral Home, Coll. 107 Ionia Funeral Home, 157 Latzek Funeral Home.** The volumes in these collections contain such data as the name of the deceased, address, occupation, death date, age at death, cause of death, parents' names and birthplaces, funeral costs, and place of interment. *Please see staff regarding indexing of these collections.*

**NOTE:** Depending up the individual's interests, occupation and/or involvement in the community, there may additional archival collections that should be searched. Staff members can help you determine which collections those might be.

## DATABASES

The Grand Rapids Public Library provides free access to research databases. Databases are available at the Library and some are available from home with Internet access and your Grand Rapids Public Library card. *Staff can help you determine which databases may be helpful in finding biographical information on the individual(s) you are researching.*

## MICROFILM

Here is a list of some of the microfilm available in our department, in addition to newspapers:

- Applications to the Michigan Veterans Facility
- Register of Deeds prior to 1870
- Michigan State Census 1884
- World War I Census of Veterans
- Records of the Michigan Superintendent of Indian Affairs
- Kent Co. Marriage Index (does not include marriage certificates)
- Cemetery Records
- School Census Records

There is some indexing of these microfilm collections provided by the Western Michigan Genealogical Society at [data/wmgs.org](http://data/wmgs.org).

## VITAL RECORDS

Vital records (birth, marriage or death certificates), are **not** available at the Grand Rapids Public Library, though some Kent County marriages and deaths are indexed on microfilm. Actual certificates can be obtained by contacting the county clerk in the county in which the individual was born, married or died, depending upon the record you're seeking.

**A Note about Michigan Birth Certificates:** Only the mother, father, legal guardian, or the individual named on the certificate may order/receive a copy of the birth certificate. Legal Guardians must show guardianship papers.

Anyone may obtain a copy of a birth record more than 100 years old. If the desired record is less than 100 years old, and the individual is deceased, an heir may obtain it by providing a death certificate and documents to prove heir's relationship.

## NEWSPAPERS AND INDEXES AT GRPL.ORG

Visit our website to search the individual's name you are researching. We provide a number of online indexes to newspapers and other collections housed within the Local History and Special Collections Department at

<http://www.grpl.org/project/newspapers-and-indexes/>