Old Men's Association Records

The Old Men's Association was a social club for men who were age 60 and over and lived in the Kansas City area. They held monthly meetings, primarily in Kansas City, from 1893 to 1918 for a total of 25 years. The collection contains their minute/record books and published constitution.

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Old Men's Association (Kansas City, Mo.)
Title: Old Men's Association records
Dates: 1893-1918
Size: 1 box, 24 folders
Location: SC98

Administrative Information

Restrictions on access: Unrestricted access.

Acquisition information: Unknown

Custodial history: It seems logical when the Old Men's Association disbanded they left the record books at the location where they usually met, in the library. The records were probably placed in the Missouri Valley Room soon after the department was formed. They may also have been a part of the Missouri Valley Historical Society (SC7) holdings.

Citation note: Old Men's Association records (SC98), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Collection Description

Biographical/Historical note

The Old Men's Association was a Kansas City area social organization for men age 60 and over. It provided a place for older men to gather and reminisce about the past and their involvement in it. The organization's meetings started in 1893, just 40 years after Kansas City's second incorporation in 1853. There were many members who could recall the early years of the city's history. As well as Kansas City memories, members could speak about the Mexican War, Civil War, Grand Army of the Republic meetings, travel on the trails West, as well as their world wide travel adventures. Partisan politics was absolutely prohibited from discussion at the meetings.

Another purpose for the group was to promote camaraderie among the members. This sometimes involved visiting sick members, preparing tributes when they died, attending funerals, corresponding with each other, and sharing life's stories and experiences. In its height, the membership was around 50-60 members.

According to the history section found in the published constitution: "In the fall of 1893 Edward L. Dimmitt conceived the idea of forming an 'Old Men's Club.' He placed a call in the Evening Star for a meeting of men of sixty and over to be held in room 217 American Bank Building. Quite a number attended, and they proceeded to form a temporary organization..." Charter members were: A. Holland, Miles Hale, W.W. Morgan, Isaac Thayer, Thomas Lewis, W.A. Canfield, James H. Miles, H.M. Coe, B.L. Deming, J.W. Adams, T.J. Vanderslice, J.A. Peeples, W.F. Cloud, William L. Hays, David Kendall, James Clark, Dr. Claggett,

Meetings originally were held on the first Monday of each month, but later were moved to the second Monday. Over the years, meetings were most frequently held in a room at the Kansas City Public Library at 9th and Locust or at the downtown YMCA building either at 810 Wyandotte or at 10th and Oak. Other meeting locations included the American Bank Building, Midland Hotel parlor, Gratton Hall, Pepper Building, Spalding Hall at Spalding College, and sometimes at various members’ homes. The annual summer picnic held in July was most frequently held at Budd Park, but other locations included Swope Park, Washington Park, and Troost Park.

Patriotism was important to the group. They always tried to meet on February 22, George Washington's birthday. That meeting was their annual meeting and was always a little more lively and elaborate. There would be special music, festive banners, pictures of the president, addresses, veterans featured and special guests in attendance representing various local patriotic societies. The minutes show that in 1901, Emery Bird Thayer department store gave the group a flag and this act precipitated the passage of a special proclamation. Mr. W.B. Thayer gave an address at the flag presentation which can be found on p. 63 of Ledger Book #2.

The monthly meetings usually started with an invocation or Lord's Prayer, roll call, reading of the minutes, a musical number by the Old Men's Quartette which was organized in 1897, reception of members, committee reports, new and old business, a speech or address by an invited guest or by one of the members, and discussion time. Music was also provided and enjoyed by all with the playing of popular phonograph records. At times the person assigned to give the speech didn't show up and then the group had an afternoon to just reminiscence. Ministers from various churches in the area were frequently invited to speak. Perhaps because of this, the group was frequently invited and did attend different denominational church services on many Sunday mornings.

Scope and content note

The collection consists of two handwritten ledger books and the group’s published constitution and by-laws. Ledger Book #1 begins November 27, 1893 and ends February 22, 1899 and contains 196 pages. Ledger Book #2 starts with February 22, 1899 and ends at March 11, 1918 and contains 301 pages. These books were found to be in fragile condition with the binding coming apart. During processing the books were disassembled into approximately 20 page sections and placed in 24 folders contained in one box. The ledger books contain the organization's minutes, membership rolls, honorary member rolls, cash accounts, a chronological index to speakers and their topics, and some ephemeral items. Newspaper clippings are found on some pages which contain the minutes and these have been photocopied and arranged as a group in a folder at the beginning of each ledger book. A photocopy has also been placed with the page that contains the clipping. Photocopies of newspaper articles concerning the group from the department's newspaper clipping collection have also been included with the collection.

The membership roll lists cover the dates of 1894-15 and are found in both ledger books. Included with the list are columns for the following: date, member name, address, remarks (used to give death date), born, nativity, and dues paid at meetings. In Ledger Book #2, p. 276, can be found an alphabetical list of members and is dated January 1, 1909. The honorary member rolls cover 1894-1909 and usually include columns for the following: date, name, address, age, remarks (used to give death date), year born, and nativity. The cash account
pages cover the dates 1895-99 and have columns for date, name, and amount. Ledger Book #2, p. 294, also contains a list entitled "Autobiography of members rec'd by Secretary" and lists 21 names. However, these autobiographies are not in the collection. Also included in the same book on p. 298-300 is "Known Deaths of Members of Old Mens Assoc." and gives the birth and death date of the member.

The group's hand written Constitution is found on p. 3 of Ledger Book #1. It contains six articles and defines the group's name, membership qualifications which include age and residence in Jackson County, membership fees, officers, annual meeting date for election of officers, and date and time of the meetings. Although the organization was meant for men, women could belong as honorary members.

Interesting people visited the group over the years. Ezra Meeker of Oregon Trail fame stopped by on April 13, 1908. According to the minutes, "Captain Ezra Meeker, a patriarchal looking old gentleman, resident of Oregon, who is endeavoring to locate and establish and perpetuate by suitable monuments and markers, the old Santa Fe and Oregon Trail of 50 years ago, now almost forgotten, being present, addressed the Association for half an hour, earnestly, and eloquently upon his special work." (See attached record) Local visitors included Thomas Crittenden who gave his war reminiscences, Judge J.S. Botsford who gave personal recollections of President Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Case speaking about the generals under whom he had served, William Johnson speaking on the Shawnee Indian Mission which his father built, Col. William F. Cloud who spoke about the Mexican War as well as the Civil War, and many others. Some of the newspaper articles accompanying the minutes describe the programs.

There were other items of special interest noted in the minutes. A number of valuable oil paintings that Governor T.T. Crittenden owned were offered to the group by the governor's widow in November of 1910. According to the minutes, the group accepted the gift and formed a committee which reported at the December 12, 1910 meeting. The ultimate disposition of the paintings is not given however. The group chose to pass a prohibition resolution, Ledger Book #2, p. 143, 159. The Daughters of Old Westport attended the July 9, 1917, meeting and let their wants be known. They were interested in building a monument between Washington Street and Broadway dedicated to the pioneers of old Westport. The 50th anniversary meeting of the Battle of Gettysburg held at the battle site in 1913 was mentioned in Ledger Book #2, p. 196. The minutes read, "Mr. Holland spoke of the meeting to be held at Gettysburg. Judge Stone told us of the Mo. preparation for that meeting, and also told one object of the meeting was to lay the corner stone of the Lincoln monument. The old soldiers were urged to go." The group always hoped that a home for older men could be established in Kansas City. This proved to just me talk and a dream unfulfilled.

Names prominently associated with the group over the years include Alexander Holland, Judge Stephen Twiss, S.M. Philbrook, Frank Holsinger, Edward L. Dimmitt, Thomas Lewis, Judge W.R. Brown, and many others. Located at the end of the collection inventory is a list of names of people whose deaths were mentioned in the minutes. "There are other remarkable characters in the Old Men's association and altogether they are a cheerful, good-natured, happy lot. Their meetings are bright and interesting, instead of being dull affairs devoted to the discussion of how soon they may pass away from earth. Everyone of them has accomplished some good in this world and the sunset of their lives is crowned with the golden light of duty well done." Kansas City World, Dec. 21, 1902, written by Anna MacGillis, found in department's newspaper clipping collection under the name of the organization. Material pertaining to this group
Collection Inventory

Box 1

- Folder 1 - Ledger Book Number 1, 1893-1899 - Photocopied newspaper articles found in this ledger book, articles dated 1894-1898, 8 p.
- Folder 2 - Ledger Book Number 1, 1893-1899 - Meeting minutes, p. 3-20, November 27, 1893 - May 7, 1894
- Folder 3 - Ledger Book Number 1, 1893-1899 - Meeting minutes, p. 21-42, June 4th, 1894 - February 22, 1895; photcopies of newspaper clippings from p.28, 35
- Folder 4 - Ledger Book Number 1, 1893-1899 - Meeting minutes, p. 43-58, March 4, 1895 - September 9, 1895; photcopies of newspaper clippings from p.47, 52, 56
- Folder 5 - Ledger Book Number 1, 1893-1899 - Meeting minutes, p. 59-82, October 14, 1895 - June 8, 1896; photcopies of newspaper clippings from p.60, 65
- Folder 6 - Ledger Book Number 1, 1893-1899 - Meeting minutes, p. 83-100, July 13, 1896 - February 22, 1897
- Folder 7 - Ledger Book Number 1, 1893-1899 - Meeting minutes, p. 101-124, April 12, 1897 - April 11, 1898
- Folder 8 - Ledger Book Number 1, 1893-1899 - Meeting minutes, p. 125-150, May 9, 1898 - February 22, 1899; photcopy of newspaper clipping from p.126
- Folder 9 - Ledger Book Number 1, 1893-1899 - Roll of regular members, 1894-1899 (Includes date, name, address, remarks with death date, birth and nativity, dues pd.); Roll of honorary members, 1895-1899 (Includes date, name, address, age, remarks with death dates, year born, nativity); Cash Accounts, 1895-1899 (Includes date, name, amount), p. 151-196
- Folder 11 - Ledger Book Number 2, 1899-1918 - Front cover, speakers with dates and topics arranged in chronological order (1899-1908); newspaper clippings photcopied from the cover
- Folder 12 - Ledger Book Number 2, 1899-1918 - Meeting minutes, p. 1-20, February 22, 1899 - December 11, 1899; continuation of speakers with dates and topics as in Folder 11 (1908-1910); sheet music to "My Old Violin" by Dan Carpenter
- Folder 13 - Ledger Book Number 2, 1899-1918 - Meeting minutes, p. 21-40, January 8, 1900 - June 10, 1900; photcopy of newspaper clipping from p. 37
- Folder 14 - Ledger Book Number 2, 1899-1918 - Meeting minutes, p. 41-60, August 15, 1900 - September 9, 1901
- Folder 15 - Ledger Book Number 2, 1899-1918 - Meeting minutes, p. 61-80, August 15, 1900 (cont.) - June 8, 1903; photcopies of newspaper clippings from p.66, 69, 74
- Folder 16 - Ledger Book Number 2, 1899-1918 - Meeting minutes, p. 81-100, June 8, 1903 (cont.) - July 4, 1905; photcopies of newspaper clippings from p.83, 85, 96, 100
- Folder 17 - Ledger Book Number 2, 1899-1918 - Meeting minutes, p.101-120, September 11, 1905 - March 11, 1907; photcopy of newspaper clipping from p.108
- Folder 18 - Ledger Book Number 2, 1899-1918 - Meeting minutes, p.121-140, April 8, 1907 - February 8, 1909; photcopies of newspaper articles from p. 124, 129, 137, 139
Index of deaths mentioned in ledger book #1, 1893-1899

- A-B - John W. Adams, p. 107-08, 114-16; John Brandenberg, p. 93-94; Alfred Brant, p. 122(Civil War vet); Mason Brayman, p. 43, 96
- H - J.W. Houston, p. 137-38
- K - Jacob W. Keefer, p. 113-14
- L - Mrs. Thomas (Margaret Ann) Lewis, p. 63, 65 (obit.), 68
- M - Calvin D. McDonald, p. 127; Horace Merriam, p. 93, 98; James Monahan, p. 107-08
- P - J. Pangburn, p. 126 (obit.), 127-135; J.A. Peeples, p. 31
- V - Mrs. Margaret Van Norstrand, p. 67
- S - Frederick E. Sickles, p. 46, 48, 96

Index of deaths mentioned in ledger book #2, 1899-1918

- C - O.J. Cardwell, p. 203; Theodore Case, p. 32-34; James Clark, p. 170-71 (obit.); W.F. Cloud, p. 96-98 (See ledger book #1, p. 47
- D - Benjamin L. Deming, p. 35, 38; C.P. Denny, p. 184-85; Almon Dickinson, p. 73; Capt. E.P. Diehl, p. 134; Edward L. Dimmitt, p. 240, 241; Michael Divily, p.64
- F - Elizabeth Fitch (wife of Lyman M. Fitch), p.46-47; S.M. Fitch, p. 144; Enos Foreman, p. 83; Frederick A. Freeman, p. 79; F.M. Furgason, p. 144, 158
- G - Thomas B. Gentry, p. 109-10; Joseph G. Gilbert, p. 95, 97; Manheim Goldman, p. 121, 122; Eli H. Gregg, p.67
- H - Mr. Hagerman, p. 185; George W. Harder, p. 119; Alex Holland, p. 210; Susanne Holland, p. 5; Frank Holsinger, p. 219; May F. Holsinger, p. 129
- J - Thomas M. James, p.66
- K - J.M. Kenmuir, p.72; Abram Kimmell, p.74-76
- L - Thomas Lewis, p.28-31; Bernard Liebstajter, p. 173 (obit.)

N - Henry Nagle, p. 149


R - Brother Radcliff, p. 188-89; Capt. S.C. Ragan, p. 139; Martin Rice, p. 83; E.F. Rogers, p. 106; George W. Rowley, p. 210 (obit.)

S - W.G. Shafer, p. 95, 97; James Henry Stephens, p. 15; Capt. D.R. Stevens, p. 159; Richard G. Sumner, p. 64-65

T - Charles D. Thomas, p. 67

V - T.J. Vanderslice, p. 67

W - Mrs. John R. Walker, p. 203; Royal J. Wentworth, p. 77-78; Joseph D.F. White, p. 96-97; Oliver M. Wilson, p. 124; S.S. Wiltsee, p. 95, 97; H.E. Woodcock, p. 170-71 (obit.); Isaac A. Wright, p. 124