

Baylor University . The Texas Collection

BU Records: Philomathesian Literary Society. Inclusive 1859-1951, Bulk 1880-1913

Summary Information

Creator	Philomathesian Literary Society (Creator)
Extent (quantity/size)	8 document boxes and 4 oversized boxes
Language	English
Abstract	The Records of the Philomathesian Literary Society consist of literary and legal productions, financial documents, and correspondence generated during their period of existence at Baylor University. These records include roll books, minutes books, general business records, library records, their constitution, contest records, and records on their fight with the Erisophian Literary Society from 1912-1913.

Subjects

Baylor University. Philomathesian Literary Society.

Administrative Information

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Preferred Citation When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is:

BU Records: Philomathesian Literary Society, Accession #BU/130, Box#, Folder #, The Texas Collection, Baylor University.

Processing Information Described by Megan Wheat and released on 2012-12-17.

Scope and Content

The Philomathesian Literary Society Records were transferred to The Texas Collection from uncatalogued records at an unknown date.

The collection begins in 1859 and ends in 1951, though most of the collection occurs between 1880 and 1913. Most of the collection comprises bound volumes created by the members, especially the officers, of the Philomathesian Literary Society during their existence at Baylor University. The roll books span from 1883-1910, which would be an excellent source for determining membership along with the register book and the numerous membership certificates found throughout many of the bound volumes. The minutes books provide a history of the Society from 1859-1916 that can be added to by the compilation of business records in scrapbook-like bound document volumes. Extensive records on books in the possession and protection of the Philomathesians maintain complete inventories and book circulation from various years, showing the growth of the Philomathesians' collection until they donated all of their books to the Baylor library in the early 1900s. The periodical records from 1896-1900 document which periodicals and formal magazines the society subscribed. One book titled the *Philomathesian Literary Review* documents articles written by members for various volumes of the society's publication from 1869 to 1876. Correspondence records exist in this collection between the Philomathesians and Erisophians that occurred between 1912 and 1913 on a disagreement about how the debates from that year should be structured. These fight records emphasize the tension and rivalry between the two groups.

Administrative/Biographical History

Established in 1851 while Baylor University was located in Independence, Texas, the Philomathesian Literary Society was the first literary society to be established in Texas. The Philomathesians' motto was "Esse quam videri malo," which is Latin for "to be, rather than to seem to be," and their colors were white and blue to represent purity and sincerity. During regular meetings, they held debates, orations, and wrote essays about a variety of controversial and conversational topics not covered in university classes. The society was formed not only to boost oratory skills and intellectual growth but also as a social organization to promote extracurricular activities among the students.

The Philomathesian Literary Society consisted only of male members, as did their rivals, the Erisophian Literary Society, which formed after half of the "Philos" separated in 1867. Baylor also boasted two female literary societies, the Calliopean Literary Society formed in 1867 and the Rufus C. Burleson Society formed in 1888. Society rivalry was rampant between the literary societies, eventually leading to the alliance of the Philomathesians with the "Callies" and the "Sophies" with the "R.C.B.s". Each society engaged in active recruitment; enlisting new members was fiercely competitive and led to members of the male organizations illegally recruiting incoming freshmen while riding the trains to Waco. Students considered committing membership to a society an essential part of student life. One of the editors of the *Baylor Literary*, the monthly publication of the Philomathesians and Erisophians, commented that "no man can be a real Baylor man apart from his society ... the most potent power in Baylor's existence has always been that of her literary societies."

The four literary societies maintained a large collection of books for use of their respective members. By 1900, the Philomathesian Literary Society owned 1,700 books, mostly standard works and classics. About five percent of the collection was religious. The Erisophians held around 1,900 books and the female societies had 700 books, mostly fiction. In contrast, the University library amounted to 4,000 books, but this was not regarded as the best collection, being made up of such donated books as students could spare. The literary societies decided to donate their library collections to the Baylor library once the new building, Carroll Library, was completed in 1903, making their books available for use by all students.

The presence and prominence of the Philomathesians and the other literary societies at Baylor began to decline by the early 1920s due to an increase in interest in athletics and other aspects of student life, such as Greek organizations.

As the literary societies began to decline, other student organizations took interest in the societies' usual activities, such as debate. Baylor's strong background in debate can be directly attributed to the Philomathesians and the other literary societies, which eventually led to Baylor's modern debate team.

Related Resources

Related citations

Eugene W. Baker. *To Light the Ways of Time: An Illustrated History of Baylor University, 1845-1986*. (Waco: Baylor University Press, 1987).

Liz Bishop. "BU debate team No. 1 in country." *The Lariat*. 2004 October 19. (accessed 2012 November 08).

Sean Jordan Rollolazo. "Literary Societies: The Spirit of Baylor University." HESA Baylor History Project. (accessed 2012 November 08).

Archival Arrangement

The Philomathesian Literary Society Records is arranged in 4 series: I. Literary Productions, II. Legal Productions, III. Financial Documents, IV. Correspondence.

Series 1: Legal Documents. 1859-1898, 1907-1916, undated

Administrative/Biographical History

The Legal Documents series contains mainly minutes books from the Philomathesians regular meetings as well as constitutions from different years. Loose material from some of the minutes books has been taken out and put in a separate consecutive folder. Some minutes books have been separated into oversized boxes. The collection is in poor condition.

Item List

Box 1. Folder 1. Minutes Book, 1859-1868
 Box 1. Folder 2. Minutes Book: Loose Material, 1859-1868
 Box 1. Folder 3. Minutes Book, 1873-1875
 Box 1. Folder 4. Minutes Book, 1877-1880
 Box 2. Folder 1. Minutes Book, 1880-1883
 Box 2. Folder 2. Minutes Book: Loose Material, 1880-1883
 Box 2. Folder 3. Minutes Book, 1883-1885
 Box 2. Folder 4. Minutes Book: Loose Material, Unknown
 Box 12 OVZ. Folder 1. Minutes Book, 1885-1890
 Box 2. Folder 5. Minutes Book: Loose Material, 1894, unknown
 Box 12 OVZ. Folder 2. Minutes Book, 1890-1898
 Box 2. Folder 6. Minutes Book: Loose Material, 1896-1897
 Box 9 OVZ. Folder 1. Minutes Book, 1907-1916
 Box 2. Folder 7. Minutes Book: Loose Material, 1902, 1911, 1914-1915, unknown
 Box 2. Folder 8. Constitution, 1885
 Box 2. Folder 9. Constitution and By-laws, 1890
 Box 2. Folder 10. Constitution and By-laws, 1890, 1896

Series 2: Literary Productions. 1883-1910, undated

Administrative/Biographical History

This series contains mostly roll books that maintain membership records. The register book lists members alphabetically along with the date they joined the Society. The dates for this volume were taken from the loose material, and the actual dates when data was entered is unknown. The business records are scrapbook-like volumes in which loose papers and letters referring to general business of the society's officers, committees, and general members have been attached to the inside binding. Much of the documents from these bound volumes have become loose material that was put in separate consecutive folders. The volume labeled the *Philomathesian Literary Review* contains articles written by members for the publication and recorded in this book. The contest records document the outcome of certain contests, such as debates and oral speeches, held between members of Philomathesians and the Erisophians and literary societies at other universities. Some of the business records and the register book have been put into oversized boxes. This series is in poor condition.

Item List

Box 3. Folder 1. Roll Book, 1883-1891
 Box 3. Folder 2. Roll Book: Loose Material 1, 1891-1892, 1902-1903, unknown
 Box 3. Folder 3. Roll Book: Loose Material 2, 1902-1903, 1910-1911, 1916, unknown
 Box 3. Folder 4. Roll Book, 1884-1888
 Box 3. Folder 5. Roll Book, 1890-1893
 Box 3. Folder 6. Roll Book: Loose Material, 1893
 Box 3. Folder 7. Roll Book, 1894-1900
 Box 3. Folder 8. Roll Book: Loose Material, 1900, unknown
 Box 3. Folder 9. Roll Book, 1900-1905
 Box 4. Folder 1. Roll Book, 1907-1910
 Box 4. Folder 2. Business Records, 1885-1892
 Box 4. Folder 3. Business Records: Loose Material 1, 1891-1892, 1894, unknown
 Box 4. Folder 4. Business Records: Loose Material 2, 1892, 1894, unknown
 Box 4. Folder 5. Business Records: Loose Material 3, 1891-1892
 Box 11 OVZ. Folder 1. Business Records, 1891-1894
 Box 4. Folder 6. Business Records: Loose Material 1, 1892-1894, unknown
 Box 4. Folder 7. Business Records: Loose Material 2, 1892-1894, unknown
 Box 5. Folder 1. Business Records, 1895-1898
 Box 5. Folder 2. Business Records: Loose Material, 1892, 1894-1895, unknown
 Box 11 OVZ. Folder 2. Business Records, 1897-1900
 Box 5. Folder 3. Business Records: Loose Material, 1898, 1900, unknown
 Box 10 OVZ. Folder 1. Register Book, 1908-1919
 Box 5. Folder 4. Register Book: Loose Material 1, 1910-1911, 1913, 1915, unknown
 Box 5. Folder 5. Register Book: Loose Material 2, 1910-1911
 Box 5. Folder 6. Register Book: Loose Material 3, 1910-1911, 1913, unknown
 Box 5. Folder 7. Register Book: Loose Material 4, 1908, 1910-1912, 1915, unknown

Box 5. Folder 8. Register Book: Loose Material 5, 1915, unknown
 Box 5. Folder 9. Register Book: Loose Material 6, 1910, 1915, 1919
 Box 5. Folder 10. Register Book: Loose Material 7, 1912, 1915-1916
 Box 5. Folder 11. Register Book: Loose Material 8, 1910, 1912-1913, 1915-1916, unknown
 Box 6. Folder 1. *Philomathesian Literary Review*, 1869-1876
 Box 6. Folder 2. Contest Records, 1897-1905

Series 3: Financial Documents. 1880-1903, undated

Administrative/Biographical History

This series contains records of all of the books in the Philomathesians' possession and includes documentation of book circulation. Each folder retained the original titles of the volumes given by the Philomathesians, some of the volumes contain much of the same information. The periodical records book documents the periodicals and other formal magazines that the secretary subscribed to for the organization's use. This series is in poor condition.

Item List

Box 6. Folder 3. Library Record, 1880-1885
 Box 6. Folder 4. Librarian's Book Register, 1891
 Box 7. Folder 1. Librarian's Book, 1891-1894
 Box 7. Folder 2. Librarian's Book: Loose Material 1, 1901-1903, unknown
 Box 7. Folder 3. Librarian's Book: Loose Material 2, 1892, 1902-1904, 1915, unknown
 Box 7. Folder 4. Librarian's Book, 1894-1896
 Box 7. Folder 5. Librarian's Book: Loose Material, 1896
 Box 7. Folder 6. Library Catalogue, 1893-1899
 Box 7. Folder 7. Library Catalogue: Loose Material, 1894, unknown
 Box 8. Folder 1. Book Schedule, 1889, unknown
 Box 8. Folder 2. Book Schedule: Loose Material, 1873
 Box 8. Folder 3. Periodical Records, 1896-1900
 Box 8. Folder 4. Periodical Records: Loose Material, 1900-1901
 Box 8. Folder 5. Treasurer's Book, 1900-1903
 Box 8. Folder 6. Treasurer's Book: Loose Material, 1902, unknown

Series 4: Correspondence. 1912-1951, undated

Administrative/Biographical History

The correspondence series contains records of a dispute between the Philomathesians and the Erisophians over the arrangement of a debate. The letters in this series show the conversation and repeated attempts to come to a consensus on who is in charge of what during the set-up of a debate. This series is in good condition.

Item List

Box 8. Folder 7. Fight Correspondence, 1913
 Box 8. Folder 8. Fight Correspondence, 1912-1913, unknown
 Box 8. Folder 9. Fight Correspondence, 1913, unknown
 Box 8. Folder 10. Fight Correspondence, 1912-1913, 1951