

McLean County Museum of History

Philomathean Reading Circle Collection

Processed by
JoAnna Mink
Autumn 2022

Collection Information

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| VOLUME OF COLLECTION: | 2 boxes |
| COLLECTION DATES: | 1880-1993 |
| RESTRICTIONS: | None |
| REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: | Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History |
| ALTERNATIVE FORMATS: | None |
| OTHER FINDING AIDS: | None |
| LOCATION: | Archives |
| NOTES: | Past Perfect #2025.0032 See also: Evelyn Woods scrapbook in Miscellaneous Scrapbook Collection |

Brief History

The Philomathean Reading Circle served as an all-in-one history, literary, art, travel, and current events club. "Philomathean" means "love of learning," but the founders wanted it to mean also "informal friendliness." According to a paper celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Reading Circle (see item 1.1), initial members were Mrs. W. C. Young, Mrs. Keen, Mrs. Bedinger, Mrs. Bowen, Mrs. Steele, and Mrs. Grier. Additional members were Mrs. J. F. Welch, Mrs. Bishop, Mrs. Alice Packard, Maud Kellar Hardesty of Champaign, Mrs. Kate (C. A.) Hamilton, and Mrs. Lila (A. C.) Hamilton.

In its early years, the group followed the Bay View Association's course of study, a then-popular "continuing education" program with books and a magazine. In the early years, local Philomatheans met every Monday afternoon from September through June. The local chapter eventually dropped the Bay View Association program in favor of members giving papers on various topics. In its latter years, the club reduced the number of meetings to twice a month. It appears the Philomathean Reading Circle was last active in late 2004 or 2005.

Scope

Program booklets comprise the bulk of the Philomathean Reading Circle Collection. The run is almost complete from 1900 through 1993. Minutes for 1880-1882, 1922-1923, and 1973-1992 are included. Papers on the history of the Circle, correspondence, and miscellaneous newspapers clippings and ephemera comprise the remainder of the collection.

Box and Folder Inventory

Box 1

Folder 1: Organization and History

- 1.1 Synopsis of the paper written by Irene French and read by Isadore E. Brown recounting the 25th History, December 30, 1918, 12pp.
- 1.2 Philomathean Reading Circle by Hester/Hister Williams Smith, on the 50th anniversary, 1945, 2pp.
- 1.3 Paper by Irene French read at the Closing Luncheon, May 8, 1961, at Coachman Hotel, 3pp.
- 1.4 Paper by Irene French read on May 8, 1974, at the 80th anniversary celebration, 5pp.
- 1.5 Draft of paper item 1.4, handwritten, 10pp.
- 1.6 Constitution of the Philomathean Reading Circle, Bloomington, Ill., Oct. 20, 1907, typescript in fragile condition, in 3 sleeves.
- 1.7 Copy of Constitution and By-Laws, typed, undated, 4pp.
- 1.8 Constitution and By-Laws, 1963, 2 copies.
- 1.9 Amendments to the By-Laws of Philomathean Reading Circle, February 1975.
- 1.10 Proposed Revision of By-Laws, October 13, 1980.
- 1.11 Envelope containing the above documents when collection was donated.

Folder 2: Program Booklets, 1900-1910

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------|-----|-----------|
| 2.1 | 1900-1901 | 2.5 | 1906-1907 |
| 2.2 | 1901-1902 | 2.6 | 1908-1909 |
| 2.3 | 1903-1904 | 2.7 | 1909-1910 |
| 2.4 | 1905-1906 | | |

Folder 3: Program Booklets, 1910-1920

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------|------|----------------------|
| 3.1 | 1910-1911 | 3.6 | 1915-1916 |
| 3.2 | 1911-1912 | 3.7 | 1916-1917 |
| 3.3 | 1912-1913 | 3.8 | 1917-1918 |
| 3.4 | 1913-1914 | 3.9 | 1918-1919 |
| 3.5 | 1914-1915 | 3.10 | 1919-1920 (2 copies) |

Folder 4: Program Booklets, 1920-1940

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|-----|----------------------|------|----------------------|
| 4.1 | 1920-1921 | 4.7 | 1934-1935 |
| 4.2 | 1923-1924 | 4.8 | 1935-1936 (2 copies) |
| 4.3 | 1924-1925 | 4.9 | 1936-1937 |
| 4.4 | 1931-1932 | 4.10 | 1937-1938 (2 copies) |
| 4.5 | 1932-1933 (2 copies) | 4.11 | 1938-1939 (2 copies) |
| 4.6 | 1933-1934 | 4.12 | 1939-1940 |

Folder 5: Program Booklets, 1940-1960

| | | | |
|------|-----------|------|-----------|
| 5.1 | 1940-1941 | 5.10 | 1950-1951 |
| 5.2 | 1941-1942 | 5.11 | 1951-1952 |
| 5.3 | 1942-1943 | 5.12 | 1952-1953 |
| 5.4 | 1943-1944 | 5.13 | 1953-1954 |
| 5.5 | 1945-194 | 5.14 | 1954-1955 |
| 5.6 | 1946-1947 | 5.15 | 1955-1956 |
| 5.7 | 1947-1948 | 5.16 | 1956-1957 |
| 5.8 | 1948-1949 | 5.17 | 1957-1958 |
| 5.9 | 1949-1950 | 5.18 | 1958-1959 |
| 5.19 | 1959-1960 | | |

Folder 6: Program Booklets, 1960-1980

| | | | |
|------|-----------|------|-----------|
| 6.1 | 1960-1961 | 6.11 | 1970-1971 |
| 6.2 | 1961-1962 | 6.12 | 1971-1972 |
| 6.3 | 1962-1963 | 6.13 | 1972-1973 |
| 6.4 | 1963-1964 | 6.14 | 1973-1974 |
| 6.5 | 1964-1965 | 6.15 | 1974-1975 |
| 6.6 | 1965-1966 | 6.16 | 1975-1976 |
| 6.7 | 1966-1967 | 6.17 | 1976-1977 |
| 6.8 | 1967-1968 | 6.18 | 1977-1978 |
| 6.9 | 1968-1969 | 6.19 | 1978-1979 |
| 6.10 | 1969-1970 | 6.20 | 1979-1980 |

Folder 7: Program Booklets, 1980-1993

| | | | |
|-----|-----------|------|-----------|
| 7.1 | 1960-1961 | 7.7 | 1986-1987 |
| 7.2 | 1961-1962 | 7.8 | 1989-1990 |
| 7.3 | 1962-1963 | 7.9 | 1990-1991 |
| 7.4 | 1980-1981 | 7.10 | 1991-1992 |
| 7.5 | 1981-1982 | 7.11 | 1992-1993 |
| 7.6 | 1982-1983 | | |

Folder 8: Minutes and Attendance, 1922-1923

Minutes of meetings in 1922 and 1923, typed on lined paper, in fragile condition. Also included are attendance charts. Note: These are in the folder in the order in which they were removed from a three-ring binder. Since only month and day of the meeting are provided in the minutes, it is impossible to organize them chronologically.

Folder 9: Correspondence

- 9.1 Letter from Mabel Copeland to Mrs. French, March 17, 1961, accepting invitation to join the Philomathean Reading Circle.
- 9.2 Letter from Evelyn Lantz to Irene French, March 19, 1961, accepting invitation to join the Circle.
- 9.3 Note from Mrs. James E. Hayden to Mrs. French, March 21, 1961, accepting invitation to join the Circle.
- 9.4 Note from Sadie Barton to Mrs. French, March 12, 1961, accepting invitation to join the Circle.
- 9.5 Letter from Edith Squier to Mrs. Havinghurst, July 18, 1982, thanking her for photo of group, with reminiscences of being a member of the group. Some members are listed.

- 9.6 Note from Loraine Hazard to Irene French, August 21, 1980, thanking her for friendship, in envelope.
- 9.7 Note from Mabel Copeland to Evelyn Lantz, September 6, 1980, with personal news, in envelope.
- 9.8 Note from Vera Fishbaugh to Lou Klynstra, February 17, 1981, with new address.
- 9.9 Collection of letters on the occasion of Milre Clark's birthday, September 13, 1992. Notes are from Lucille Hildebrand, Lois Golliday, Evelyn Lantz and Jo Tate.
- 9.10 Letter from Jo Tate of personal news, September 3, 1992, 2pp.
- 9.11 Letter to Mary Alice from Evelyn Lantz, September 13, 1992, with personal news, 3pp.

Folder 10: Miscellaneous

- 10.1 Program for Banquet of The Philomathean Chapter of the Bay View Reading Circle, May 26, 1905, 2 copies.
- 10.2 Deposit slip for First National Bank, April 7, 1915.
- 10.3 Receipt for dues 1915-1916 and list of members paying; invoice from Nimrod Mace Printer for 100 calendars, May 15, 1915.
- 10.4 Valentine jingles for each member written by Helen Haskell, February 14, 1949, 3pp with envelope.
- 10.5 Tabletop(?) Friends are Special...
- 10.6 Booklet, Bloomington/Normal's Literary History 1879-1987 by Bloomington Public Library to commemorate its centennial year by honoring Bloomington-Normal Literary Societies. List and description of societies, including some members' names.
- 10.7 Note, purpose unknown.
- 10.8 "League celebrates golden anniversary," *Pantagraph*, November 13, 1983.
- 10.9 "Valiant woman award for Mrs. Bertholf," undated, and "Tates to mark golden year," April 7, 1979. In *Pantagraph* (?).
- 10.10 "Writing poetry, Vida Townsend sees in a new way," *Pantagraph*, undated.
- 10.11 "Rushdie appears at CU event" and "Security tight for talk by Rushdie," *Daily Camera* (Boulder, Colorado), September 9, 1992.
- 10.12 Item about Novel of the Americas Symposium, *Daily Camera* (Boulder, Colorado), undated. Speakers are William Styron and Amy Tan.

Folder 11: Woods scrapbook miscellany

(Scrapbook housed in the Miscellaneous Scrapbook Collection; items below were loose)

- 11.1 Color scan of front of scrapbook.
- 11.2 Gift agreement, John Woods and estate of Evelyn Woods, for a Philomathean Reading Circle scrapbook, 1971-72 to 1978-79, October 15, 2025.
- 11.3 Newspaper article, "Elected federation president" (Rudelle Goodwin), source, date unknown.
- 11.4 Manila envelope with handwritten note on front: "Tributes to members."
- 11.5 Letter, Ralph E. Browns to Portia Alexander, February 19, 1961, regarding Browns' late wife Lois, a Reading Circle member.
- 11.6 Memorial / tribute, partial (top torn off and missing), Pearl ____?, by Irene French, no date, 1 p.
- 11.7 Memorial, Charlotte Behr, 190_-1978, 1 p.
- 11.8 Memorial, Lois Browns, no date, 1 p.
- 11.9 Memorial, Mattie Brock, who died September 20, 1949, 1 p.
- 11.10 Memorial, Gladys Grubb, 1979, 1 p.
- 11.11 Memorial, Helen Haskell, 1961, by Irene French, 1 p.
- 11.12 Memorial, Mrs. Pledger, September 25, 1956, by Irene French, 1 p.
- 11.13 Memorial, Hester Smith, no date, 1 p.

11.14 Memorial, Effie Roe Tatus, no date, 1 p.

Box 2

Loose items:

Meeting minutes January 17, 1880, to December 1, 1882, and Rules by which the Philomathean Society shall be governed. Handwritten. Bound book, green boards and some pages loose, 7 x 8.5", image of flowers on cover, fragile condition.

Meeting Minutes February 12, 1973, to March 21, 1981. Handwritten. Some include treasurer's reports and newspaper clippings of meeting announcements. Bound book black boards with maroon corners and spine, 7.5 x 10".

Meeting Minutes April 13, 1981, to April 20, 1992. Handwritten. Some include treasurer's reports and newspaper clippings of meeting announcements. Bound book black boards with maroon corners and spine, 7.5 x 10".

See also:

Evelyn Woods scrapbook in Miscellaneous Scrapbook Collection