

McLean County Museum of History

Castalian Club Collection

Processed by
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Collection Information

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: One box.

COLLECTION DATES: 1925-1988, with miscellaneous Travel Club article (11/25/21).

PROVENANCE: Unknown.

RESTRICTIONS: None.

REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Historical Society.

ALTERNATE FORMATS: None.

OTHER FINDING AIDS: None.

RELATED HOLDINGS: Margaret Fuller Club.

ACCESSION NUMBER:

LOCATION: Archives.

Historical Sketch

Twelve members of the Travel Club resigned and formed the Castalian Club at the home of Sara Hart in Bloomington, Illinois, on November 23, 1925. It was a women's literary club that lasted until 1988. For the most part, meetings were held on the first and third Tuesday of every month during the club's season, which lasted from October through May. A typical member hosted a meeting in one year and presented a paper on a designated theme the following year. The themes ranged from Nobel Prize Winners to Scandinavian Countries to the American Theatre. Members talked about current events, the club's constitution and by-laws, and payment of dues, and held yearly elections of officers. The officers were the president, vice-president, and secretary-treasurer. There

were also calendar, membership, courtesy, and nominating committees. The club rotated officeholders and committee members on a yearly basis.

Illinois Wesleyan Dean William Wallis, a spouse of one of the members, suggested the club's name. The name refers to a fountain on Mt. Parnassus near Delphi, Greece, or as the poet Ovid called it, the "spring of Castalia." Sacred to Apollo and the Muses, those who drank from the spring were to be endowed with the gift of poetry.

The club's minutes disclose that the club donated money to a local welfare society during the Great Depression. During World War II, members knitted afghans, wrapped Christmas gifts, filled Christmas stockings, and donated money for U.S. soldiers. The club picked Mary Wallis to be the club's first historian in 1950. Iona Lueck succeeded Wallis in this capacity in 1954. This helps to explain the club's studious recordkeeping in spite of the fact that there are no other references to anyone else maintaining the club's records. Members voted to disband the club on February 16, 1988, due to declining membership. On April 19, 1988, the Philomathean Reading Circle invited Castalian Club members to join their club. The Castalian Club held its last meeting the following month.

Scope Notes

The Castalian Club collection consists of the club's minutes, yearly programs, final savings account book, day book, club roster, list of club officers, a fifty-year history, letters, obituaries, newspaper articles, copies of the club's constitution, and a sample program and invitation to join the club. The collection also contains programs and newspaper articles for the Travel Club, the club's predecessor, an article on the Philomathean Reading Circle, its successor, and the Bloomington Public Library's Literary History program, brochure, and form letter inviting the local literary clubs to attend a reception in their honor.

The dates of the materials range from 1921 to 1988. The club's minutes make up the bulk of the material. The minutes give a record of every meeting from November 23, 1925, to May of 1988, and reveal who hosted each meeting and how many members were present. The minutes also disclose that members read, and amended if necessary, the minutes of the previous meeting and discussed current events, followed by a member's presentation on a pre-selected theme. A social hour followed the presentation. The minutes usually reveal what kind of refreshments the hostess served, as well as the names of any guests present, the treasurer's report of the balance on hand, office election results, and resignations or deaths of members. The weather was even mentioned on occasion.

Nearly all of the club's programs are in the collection. The programs list officers, committee members, the year's theme of discussion, the programming schedule, member's names, addresses, and phone numbers, names of associate and honorary members, deceased members, and, starting in 1982-83, a telephone tree. The three Travel Club programs in the collection are very similar in nature.

The Bloomington Public Library folder contains brief historical sketches on seventeen local literary societies, including the Castalian Club. The library honored these societies

on March 22, 1987, and a brochure and flier from the reception are included in the collection. For the reception, the club picked Caroline Rupert as its most influential member. She was a charter member of the club and a founder of the Brokaw School of Nursing. Several newspaper articles about Rupert appear in the collection, as well as articles on other members of the club. The collection includes obituaries of some of the long-time members and several copies of the club's constitution.

Box and Folder Inventory

Folder

- 1 Bloomington Public Library's Literary History form letter (1/21/87), program (3/22/87), brochure (3/22/87)
- 2 Newspaper articles on Caroline Rupert, a charter member of the club, ranging from 1949 to March 29, 1967
- 3 Copies of various editions of the club's constitution; "Do's And Don'ts In Writing Minutes"
- 4 Club roster (1925-45), club officers through 1977-78, a fifty-year history, newspaper articles, letters, speeches, a sample program from 1983-84
- 5 Programs, miniature American flags
- 6 Travel Club programs (1924/25-1925/26), newspaper articles (1921-1954), Philomathean Club newspaper article (9/27/53)

The rest of the box consists of five minutes books (11/23/25-5/88), day book (1925-1962/63), Champion Federal Savings Account book (5/9/83-5/20/88).