

**The Club (Montpelier, Vt.)
Records, 1905-1994
Doc 208-211 and MSA 424**

Introduction

This collection consists of the records, histories, member information, printed programs, news clippings, and members' presentation papers from The Club, an intellectual forum which met weekly in and around Montpelier, Vermont, from 1905 until 1994. In 1975 The Club designated VHS as repository of its records. The collection is an accumulation of papers and materials deposited by Club members over the years, including a gift from the Montpelier Historical Society in 2006 (ms. acc. no. 2006.7). It is housed in four archival document storage boxes and one archival flip-top box which occupy 4.5 linear feet.

Historical Sketch

The Club was founded by John H. Senter of Montpelier in December 1905 when he enlisted 22 men to revive the defunct Shakespeare Club, a literary club which had disbanded in 1902. The Club's purpose was to be the "...pursuit of ideas, a search for insights and meanings, and renewed acquaintance with events of the past...all with a cordial affiliation." Each member was to present one paper per year on any topic other than religion or politics, of 30-60 minute duration, with discussion following. Topics included biography, science and technology, economics, history, reminiscences, philosophy, hobbies, education, commentary on the times, Vermont lore, and public policy. The scope of subject matter ranged from global to local, scholarly to humorous.

The membership, initially set at 26, was reduced to 25 in 1925, with each member responsible for hosting one meeting per year in addition to presenting his paper. The Club met, in suit and tie, every Saturday evening in a member's home or a public meeting place from the first week in September to the last week in June (in later years, from late October till May 1). A "lunch" (snacks) was served. Following the informality of the Shakespeare Club, the fledgling Club kept no records and had no by-laws. After 1911, records were kept, with the missing six years' minutes reconstructed from Club press releases in the local newspaper, since every meeting since inception was reported in the press.

Club membership was only for men and by invitation. Membership was for life or until a member resigned. During its 90-year existence, The Club had a total of 210 members who were prominent in the Montpelier community – state officials, clergymen, physicians, lawyers, merchants, educators, insurance men, bankers. Male guests were welcome at any time but could not present papers. Until 1972, all members lived in Montpelier. Many members had a connection to the Calais/ East Montpelier area of Central Vermont (Messrs. Kent, Dwinell, Davis, Morse, Cate). The Club had no by-laws or formal incorporation. Culture and traditions shaped the rules of order which remained unwritten over the years.

In early days, women were only allowed to attend the rare Ladies' Nights. When the meeting was held in her home, a wife was expected to stay "in the kitchen" and keep her children "well hidden." After 1968, concessions were made when Ladies' Night became an annual event featuring a speaker and dinner.

The Club met regularly from 1905 until 1994, when it voted itself out of existence. By 1981, The Club was characterized in a news article as an "anachronism" and a "pure Victorian throwback" by member Paul Giuliani. After the 1980s, the club went to bi-weekly meetings, reducing member responsibilities from annual to biennial. Concessions to 'modern life' were made.

By 1990, several members publicly stated they would be willing to admit women to The Club. In 1994, members voted to disband The Club. The primary reason given for the group's demise was that life was "too busy." Membership had dwindled to 12 men. In its last years, The Club's records were kept on little scraps of paper rather than in big leather-bound books.

Scope and Content

The papers of The Club contain a nearly unbroken record of the organization's history from 1905 to 1994. The materials include member rosters, club proceedings, annual program booklets (or "Yearbooks"), attendance records, financial records, correspondence, newspaper articles, and members' biographical information and obituaries.

The Club collection is valuable to the researcher on at least four levels: 1) As a historical record of a men-only club of Montpelier, Vermont; 2) as evidence of the changes in "times and *mores*" over The Club's 90-year existence; 3) as a repository of original scholarly papers, many of particular interest to the Vermont historian; and, 4) as an important source of biographical information for its 210 individual members.

The collection falls into five series: I. The Club History; II. Member Information; III. Yearbooks; IV. Club Business; and V. Presentation Papers. The quality of the record-keeping varies over the years, but information overlaps and duplication across categories can usually fill any voids. For example, member lists can be found in the 1980 Club history, in the member information series, in the yearbooks, and in the club records. A researcher should check all series.

I. The Club History - Three official club histories written by members are found in the collection: One written in 1938 with a 1949 supplement by Dorman B. E. Kent; one written in 1960 by Harold Bailey; and one in 1980, by Lloyd Hayward and Hiram Hunn. These provide an excellent introduction to The Club.

II. Member Information - This series includes member lists and biographical information for individual members, including obituaries. It also includes correspondence pertaining to individual member acceptances and resignations, letters containing

biographical information, and newspaper articles about members. The Club's official member rosters always list members in the order in which they joined. For ease of reference, Folder 208:0 contains an alphabetical listing of the club's 210 total members.

III. Yearbooks - The collection contains a complete set (minus one year) of The Club's annual yearbooks. The yearbook is The Club's 'Bible.' It is a printed schedule of all papers to be presented for the coming year, listing titles, presenters and hosts. In addition, the yearbook contains the roster of all active and honorary members as of that year, and lists that year's officers. The yearbooks provide a focal point for the researcher. The collection contains a complete set of yearbooks from the earliest, printed in 1908, to the latest, for the 1992-93 season, minus only one year – 1978-79. There was no program printed for 1911-12. Also included are annotated duplicates of some yearbooks with changes or corrections.

IV. Club Business - This series contains records of club proceedings – meeting minutes, attendance records, financial records, policy, programming, club correspondence, and incidental member lists, from The Club's inception to its demise. A group of program reminder postcards are also found in this section. Formal club records in any form are rather scant around 1976. After 1985, records are kept on impossibly small scraps of paper. In general, the quality of The Club's record-keeping declines over time.

V. Presentation Papers - The member presentation papers were the focus of The Club's activities. A broad sampling of papers is found here, ranging widely in quality and content. The collection assembles 323 of these papers, dating between 1909 and 1993, and written by 49 of the 210 members. In the collection, they are arranged alphabetically, by author, for ease of retrieval. Appended to this finding aid is a detailed inventory of papers listed alphabetically by author, giving titles, date, and subject, noting items of particular Vermont interest. This list is also sorted by date. Chronological lists of papers may also be found in the Yearbooks (Series III). Another 26 presentation papers, by five more members, are found in other VHS library locations, noted below in "Related Collections." This series also contains a large group of press releases and news articles containing abstracts of presentation papers. The presentation papers and abstracts provide a comprehensive account of the members' concerns and interests; they furnish valuable historical commentary at the local, national and global levels. A complete inventory of presentation papers may be found in Folder 208:0.

Related Collections

The following related three-dimensional items are found in the museum's collection:

1. A gold-headed "President's Cane," first owned by member George Wing, which was used ceremonially by all subsequent Club presidents. Accession #1994.26, was donated by member Louis Peck.

2. Black plastic portfolio cover, approximately 9" x 9.5," with "The Club" imprinted in gold lettering on the front. Accession #2006.50 was separated from this collection.

An additional set of The Club Yearbooks is found in the library collection at 374.2 M768c.

Presentation papers by The Club members that are housed in other collections are:

1. Harold L. **Bailey**: "Two Hundred Forty Six," presented in December, 1941, is housed in MSS 23 #71. Re: Vermont town government. (*)
2. James N. **Currie**: 18 papers presented to The Club between 1953 and 1970 are housed in *X 080 C936.
3. Stephen A. **Douglas**: A paper presented on April 6, 1940, is housed in MSS 19 #81.
4. Harold A. **Dwinell**: "Dorman B. E. Kent," presented April 21, 1962, is housed in MSB K4146. (*)
5. Phil S. **Howes**: "Benedict Arnold," presented in 1931, is housed in MSB Ar64ho.
6. Dorman Bridgman Eaton **Kent**: "The Club. 1905-1930," a paper on which the first printed Club history was based, is housed in MS 974.31 M76ck. (*)
7. Charles D. **Mather**: "Samuel Adams and other Sons of Liberty," presented Oct. 11, 1924, is housed in *X 973.3 M42s.
8. Charles F. **McKenna**: "Our Local Airport," presented in 1934, is housed in MS387.7 M199. re: Knapp Airport. (*)
9. Charles F. **McKenna**: "From the Bottom Up," presented January 23, 1943, is housed in MSS 26 #101. re: Daniel Willard. (*)

(*) = Vermont topic

Group photos of The Club from various years may be found in the VHS Picture File, F-ORG, The Club. Photos of individual club members may be found in the Picture File under F-PO-[last name, first name].

A typed list of The Club members from founding to 1935 is contained in MSS 23, #34. It has been photocopied and placed in Doc 208:4.

Inventory

I. The Club History

- Doc 208:1 Club history, 1938 (Kent) final version, 2 copies.
 _____, 1949 (Kent) supplement - ms, unedited proof, and final version.
 _____, 1960 (Bailey) - ms, edited ms, and final version.
 _____, 1980 (Hayward and Hunn) – original ms, photocopy of same, and edited ms. (NOTE: The 1980 history contains a list of all members, #1 through #196, with members' vocations.)
 :2 Newspaper articles, 1916-1994.

II. Member Information

- .3 Roster book for Members #1-175. (Members were numbered chronologically, in the order in which they joined.)
 :4 Papers and photos. Additional member rosters, biographical information, member and club photos, lists of officers and guests.
 :5 Letters, 1920-1980 (with breaks), and undated. Members' acceptances, resignations, and other correspondence of biographical interest.
 :6 Newspaper articles, 1951-1992 (with breaks) and undated, concerning individual members.
 :7 Necrology. Some member obituaries, 1896-1993 (with breaks) and undated.
 _____, 1959. Death certificate of William S. Nichols.

III. Yearbooks and annotated copies

- :8 Yearbooks, 1908-09 (the earliest yearbook printed) to 1919-20. (There was no program printed for 1911-12.)
 :9 _____, 1920-21 to 1929-30.
 :10 _____, 1930-31 to 1939-40.
 :11 _____, 1940-41 to 1949-50.
 :12 _____, 1950-51 to 1959-60.
 :13 _____, 1960-61 to 1969-70.
 :14 _____, 1970-71 to 1979-80, missing 1978-79.
 :15 _____, 1980-81 to 1992-93.
 :16 _____, 1982-83, 1983-84, 1988-89, 1991-92. Drafts and proofs.

IV. Club business – including minutes, attendance records, financial records, policy, related correspondence.

- :17 Record Book, Volume I, 1905-1922.
 :18 _____, Volume II, 1923-1937.
 :19 _____, Volume III, 1937-1949. Contains copies of yearbooks for some years.
 :20 Records, 1949-50 season. Contains a yearbook.
 :21 _____, 1950-51 season. Contains a yearbook.

- :22 _____, 1951-52 season. Contains a yearbook.
 Doc 209:1 _____, 1952-53 season. Contains a yearbook.
 :2 _____, 1953-54 season. Contains a yearbook.
 :3 _____, 1954-55 and 1955-56 season. Contains a yearbook.
 :4 _____, 1956-57 season. Contains a yearbook.
 :5 _____, 1957-58 season. Contains a yearbook.
 :6 _____, 1958-59 season. Contains a yearbook.
 :7 _____, 1959-60 season. Contains a yearbook.
 :8 _____, 1960-61 season. Contains a yearbook.
 :9 _____, 1961-62 season. Contains a yearbook.
 :10 _____, 1962-63 season. Contains a yearbook.
 :11 _____, 1963-64 season. Contains a yearbook.
 :12 _____, 1964-65 season. Contains a yearbook. Skips 1965-66.
 :13 _____, 1966-67 season.
 :14 _____, 1967-68 season.
 :15 _____, 1968-69 season.
 :16 _____, 1969-70 season.
 :17 _____, 1970-71 season.
 :18 _____, 1971-72 season.
 :19 _____, 1972-1976.
 :20 _____, 1976-1980.
 :21 _____, 1981-1984.
 :22 _____, 1985-1994.
 :23 Other correspondence, 1920-1948, with breaks.
 :24 Other financial records, 1972-1985.
 _____, account book, 1959-1963.
 _____, ledger book, 1973-1985.
 _____, financial summary, 1974-1977.
 :25 Other attendance records, 1940-1992, with breaks.
 :26 Program postcards. 1965, 1972-1994.
 :27 Miscellaneous papers, most undated. Includes script for skit, 1942.

V. Presentation papers and abstracts (see separate detailed inventory for titles)

- :28 Anderson, David V., 1931-1954.
 :29 _____, 1955-1967.
 :30 _____, 1968-1978, and abstracts.
 :31 Bailey, Harold L., 1952.
 :32 Barrows, Max W., 1971, and abstracts.
 :33 Brigham, Loriman P., ca 1922-1939.
 :34 Brooks, George W., M.D., 1987, and undated.
 :35 Burke, William, 1969, and abstracts.
 :36 Cady, Wallace, ca 1954-1961.
 :37 Carpenter, Warren, 1953.
 :38 Cate, Weston A., Jr., 1971-1985, and abstracts.
 :39 Chastney, Robert H., 1971, and abstracts.
 :40 Coburn, David A., 1992.

- :41 Crane, Charles E., 1938.
- :42 Davis, Forest K., 1984-1991.
- :43 DeBoer, Joseph, 1909.
- :44 Doyle, William T., 1967-1970, and abstracts.
- :45 Dwinell, Harold A., 1935-1943.
- :46 _____, 1944.
- :47 _____, 1945-1952.
- Doc 210:1 _____, 1953-1959.
- :2 _____, 1961.
- :3 _____, 1962.
- :4 Eaton, George, 1974-1984, includes slides.
- :5 Elwert, Philip F., 1989, and undated.
- :6 Giuliani, J. Paul, 1979-1981.
- :7 Giuliani, Peter, 1940.
- :8 _____, 1964.
- :9 _____, 1967.
- :10 _____, 1975.
- :11 _____, 1977.
- :12.1 _____, 1979-1988, undated, and abstracts.
- :12.2 Goodrich, Julian, 1984 (floppy disk only)
- :13 Hayward, Lloyd J., 1967-1980, and abstracts.
- :14 Holden, John, Jr., 1982-1986.
- :15 Hopkins, Carl H., 1953-1970, and abstracts.
- :16 Hopkins, Hermon D., 1911-1919.
- :17 _____, 1922-1928.
- :18 _____, 1929-1935.
- :19 Howe, Luman B., 1970 and undated. (ca. 1935-1970).
- :20 _____, ca. 1935-1970, and abstracts.
- :21 Huden, John C., 1955.
- :22 Hunn, Hiram S., 1973-1984.
- :23 Hunt, George L., 1913-1927.
- Doc 211:1 _____, 1929-1940.
- :2 _____, undated.
- :3 Irvine, William L., 1969, and abstracts.
- :4 Jackson, Charles Augustus Goodrich, ca.1905-1912, "Humanities".
- :5 _____, ca. 1905-1912, "Common People".
- :6 _____, ca. 1905-1912, "Dickens".
- :7 _____, ca. 1905-1912, on poetry.
- :8 _____, ca. 1905-1912, on technology and writing.
- :9 _____, ca. 1905-1912, "Epic".
- :10 _____, ca. 1905-1912, on evolution.
- :11 _____, ca. 1905-1912, "Robert Burns".
- :12 Kelley, Stephen M., 1945-1966, undated, and abstracts.
- :13 Kimball, Elbert T., 1956.
- :14 Laqueur, H. Peter, M.D., 1978.
- :15 Martin, Eldon H., 1965, undated, and abstracts.

- :16 Merrill, Perry, 1957, 1966, undated, and abstracts.
- :17 Morse, Harry, 1979-1987.
- :18 Morrisson, Leonard W., 1956.
- :19 Noble, Ralph E., 1952, and abstracts.
- :20 Pressey, C. M., 1989-1992.
- :21 Reed, Frederick J., 1973-1977.
- :22 _____, 1978-1982.
- :23 _____, 1983-1993.
- :24 Ryan, William J., ca. 1959-1970s, and abstracts.
- :25 Slayton, Ronald, 1974-1977, includes drawings.
- :26 Steele, Frederick E., M.D., 1940.
- :27 Thomas, John Martin, 1934-1941.
- :28 Tibbitts, Arnold, 1982-1986, 1992.
- :29 Van Meter, Herbert, 1973-1980.
- :30 Wood, Richard G., M.D., 1973-1980?.
- :31 Woodruff, Harrison Gordon, 1921-1923.
- :32 _____, 1929-1933.
- MSA 424:1 _____, 1934-1937.
- :2 _____, 1938-1942.
- :3 _____, 1943-1947.
- :4 _____, 1948-1949.
- :5 Abstracts of papers, by author, A-T. Papers by members other than those listed above
- :6 _____, 1952-1974 and undated. Newspaper clippings re: papers.

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