May 2013


Hope College

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Records, 1859-1938. 2.00 linear ft.

Abstract

Men's literary society of the Hope College Preparatory School/Department. The Meliphone Society was organized in 1857 under the leadership of Rev. John Van Vleck, who brought the idea of a Meliphone society from his Alma Mater, Union College. Its object was to help its members acquire a correct use of grammar. Members were to prepare compositions, poems, stories, essays, orations to be read for the group. These readings were then criticized by the audience. The “A” and “B” classes of the Prep School were given these academic duties while the “C” and “D” students were given minor tasks to perform for the society. They also held debates and discussions and gave time for voluntary speaking. The society also instructed its members in parliamentary law, i.e. being able to successfully run an organized body. For many students, these years were a drastic change from the rural farms or big cities from which they came. They were in need of instruction in manners, speech, and an introduction to the greater world. Many important persons were members including: Gerrit Diekema, Matthew Kolyn, E. J. Blekkink, Albert Oltmans, and George Kollen. Between 1899 and 1892, the society divided into two sections called the Alpha and the Promethean. John E. Kuizenga was an Alpha member as well as A. T. Godley. The society may have lasted until the disbanding of the Preparatory School during 1934-1938. Collection consists of printed programs, typed papers read to members for criticism; minutes; constitutions; treasurer's reports; history of first 50 years; and humorous paper written by the Meliphone Society.

Accession No: H88-0416
Provenance: Meliphone Society
Donor: Meliphone Society
Photographs: 11 images (Box 2_
Processed by: Michael Douma, July 2003

History

The Meliphone Society was organized in 1857 under the leadership of Rev. John Van Vleck, who brought the idea of a Meliphone society from his Alma Mater, Union College. Its object was to help its members acquire a correct use of grammar. Members were to prepare compositions, poems, stories, essays, orations to be read for the group. These readings were then criticized by the audience. The “A” and “B” classes of the Prep School were given these academic duties while the “C” and “D” students were given minor tasks to perform for the society. They also held debates and discussions and gave time for voluntary speaking. The society also instructed its members in parliamentary law, i.e. being able to successfully run an organized body. For many students, these years were a drastic change from the rural farms or big cities from which they came. They were in need of instruction in manners, speech, and an introduction to the greater world. Many important persons were members including: Gerrit Diekema, Matthew Kolyn, E. J. Blekkink, Albert Oltmans, and George Kollen. Between 1899 and 1892, the society divided into two sections called the Alpha and the Promethean. John E.
Kuizenga was an Alpha member as well as A. T. Godley. The society may have lasted until the disbanding of the Preparatory School during 1934-1938.

Scope and Content

Collection consists of printed programs, typed papers read to members for criticism; minutes; constitutions; treasurer's reports; history of first 50 years; and humorous paper written by the Meliphone Society.

Container List

Box 1

Background information, *Milestone*, 1905-1930
Constitutions, 1900, 1914, 1931 (3 folders)
Historical Information, 1905-1907
Member Compositions
   1908-1920 (2 folders)
   “Devoted to Meliphone,” Nicholas Bruinix, 1922
Inaugural Addresses, 1914-1922
President’s Messages, 1907, 1909, n.d.
Minutes, 1859-1931 (7 folders)

Box 2

Photographs
   Edward J. Wolters, 1915
   Individuals, 1922 (9 images)
   Society, 1911
Programs, 1893-1931
Treasurer’s Report, 1923-1931
Scroll Writing, Humor, 1892