



Grems-Doolittle Library
Schenectady County Historical Society
32 Washington Ave., Schenectady, NY 12305
(518) 374-0263

Guide to the Fortnightly Club Records, 1940 – 2007 (2016.49)

Creator: Fortnightly Club

Accession Number: 2016.49

Extent:

Source: Various

Inclusive Dates: 1940 – 2007

Access: Access to this collection is unrestricted.

Abstract: The collection is composed of memorabilia and records of the Fortnightly Club.

Scope and Content Note:

The collection is composed of memorabilia and records of the Fortnightly Club, an organization dedicated to “the intellectual and social entertainment of its members.” The collection encompasses a number of textual items, including Club minutes, copies and/or original manuscript versions of papers presented, and correspondence. Most of these are dated between the 1980s and the early 2000s, though some are from as early as the 1950s. The collection also includes annual and financial reports, lists of Club members, invitation cards for various meetings, pamphlets and booklets, and several bound items that are typically a combination of minutes, collections, and financial notes. Some items are uncategorized, as it is unclear whether they were intended to supplement papers presented for the Club, or whether they were intended for a different purpose.

Company History:

The Fortnightly Club of Schenectady, NY was founded in 1894 or 1895, though at a meeting of the Executive Committee held in December of 1943 at the home of President Burges Johnson, the first meeting of January 1944 was resolved to be observed as the Club’s fiftieth anniversary. Meetings were to be held every other Monday evening through winter and part of spring; this was later expanded to a period that began in October and ended in May. The idea of the Club had first been proposed by Dr. and Mrs. Raymond after they had moved to Schenectady upon the former’s appointment as President of Union College. They had belonged to a certain intellectual society in their former home of Albany, in which papers had been given by members and discussed, and they expressed interest in starting such a “club for intellectual things” in Schenectady.

The Fortnightly Club worked early matters out primarily on a social basis. It drew its first members largely from the attendees of a lecture given on November 9, 1894, by Dr. Edward Everett Hale. These people were either themselves friends of the Raymond’s or otherwise part of those friends’

wider social network; it seems that none, at this point, were particularly young, though that would begin to change after the Club had been going for a year or more. From the beginning, the Club sought to conduct itself with a certain high mindedness, expressed through the practice of “plain living.” The yearly Club due was a dollar; refreshments were to be kept simple and minimal; members typically came and went completely on foot, barring particularly troublesome weather; and the Club relied entirely on do-it-yourself style programs. This simplicity may have been in response to the 1893 – 1897 economic depression, which possibly affected Club members themselves. In direct opposition to science and business clubs, meetings were to be held in private homes rather than in rented halls. Furthermore, women were allowed to become members, though they did not initially give papers and seldom contributed to the conversations in the Club’s early years. With certain limitations, guests could also be invited to meetings by Club members. The only prohibitions seem to have been that no reports regarding the papers given for the Club were to be printed in newspapers, and discussions about politics and religion were to be avoided.

The Fortnightly Club has particularly been credited with helping establish goodwill towards newcomer company General Electric in the 1890s. The company, its workers, and workers’ families had been characterized by Schenectady natives as “new people” and were regarded somewhat uneasily by the longtime residents. However, by having some of these “Edison men” present papers for the Club, General Electric was soon brought into touch, socially, with both the City and the College, finally making it part of the community.

The Fortnightly Club disbanded in 2007

Condition Note:

Most of the materials in the collection are in good condition. Some items are fragile due to age, or were produced on onionskin paper, and should be handled with care.

Finding Aid Created By/Date: Angela Matyi, 29 April 2016

Item/Box/Folder Listing:

Box	Folder	Folder Title
1	1	Annual Reports
1	2	Financial Reports
1	3	Member Lists + Mailing Lists (I)
1	4	Member Lists + Mailing Lists (II)
1	5	Lectures + Reports (I)
1	6	Lectures + Reports (II)
1	7	Lectures + Reports (III)
1	8	Lectures + Reports (IV)
1	9	Speaker Lists, Schedules
1	10	Program Lists
1	11	Minutes 1970 – 1979
1	12	Minutes 1980 – 1981
1	13	Minutes 1982
1	14	Minutes 1983
1	15	Minutes 1984

1	16	Minutes 1985
1	17	Minutes 1986 – 1987
1	18	Minutes 1988
1	19	Minutes 1989
1	20	Minutes 1990
1	21	Minutes 1991
1	22	Minutes 1991 – 1992, 1992 – 1993
1	23	Minutes 1993 – 1994
1	24	Minutes 1994 – 1995
1	25	Minutes 1995 – 1996
1	26	Minutes 1997 – 1998
1	27	Minutes 1998 – 1999
1	28	Minutes 1999 – 2000
1	29	Minutes 2000s
1	30	Minutes, Other or Unknown Dates
2	1	Correspondence (I)
2	2	Correspondence (II)
2	3	Correspondence (III)
2	4	Pamphlets + Booklets (I)
2	5	Pamphlets + Booklets (I)
2	6	Minutes Lists
2	7	Lectures/Reports (Uncertain)
3	1	Bound Items (I)
3	2	Bound Items (II)
3	3	Bound Items (III)
3	4	Uncategorized (I)
3	5	Uncategorized (II)
4	N/A	Club Invitation Cards