

UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA



The University Archives
and Records Center

A Guide to the
Zelosophic Society of the
University of Pennsylvania
Records, 1829 - 1942

5.5 Cubic ft.

UPS 44.2

Prepared by Jennifer Reiss
under the direction of Mary D. McConaghy
and revised by J.M. Duffin

July 2005, rev. November 2005

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PROVENANCE

The collection was transferred from the University Library to the University Archives and Records Center in two parts, the majority in 1956 and one volume in 2004 (accession number 2004:15).

ARRANGEMENT

The Zelosophic Society records are organized in seven series: Constitution and by-laws, 1829 – 1940; Minutes, 1829 – 1864, 1892 – 1941; Membership, 1829 – 1942; Subject file, 1829 – 1941; Scrapbooks and clippings, 1862 – 1940; Financial, 1920 – 1942; Publications, 1833 – 1940. The series are arranged alphabetically, except for the minutes which are arranged chronologically.

HISTORICAL NOTE

The Zelosophic Society was formed in October 1829 as a response to the Philomathean Society, an exclusive literary society formed on campus in 1813. “Zelosophic” can be translated roughly as “endowed with a zeal for learning or wisdom.” Commonly called “Zelo,” the society’s purpose was to discuss literature and conduct debates (much like the charge of its counterpart group). By the end of its first year, the original core of seven undergraduate members had blossomed into twenty-six and the organization was welcomed by the University faculty.

Debates against their rival the Philomathean Society, began in 1847 and drew large crowds to various Philadelphia auditoriums. On the eve of the Civil War, for example, a debate on slavery took place while pistols lay atop the lectern between the debaters. In fact, for a short time the two groups organized opposing football teams, with Zelo often emerging victorious. In 1862, a committee of Zelo members, including J.M. Power Wallace (twice treasurer, Class of 1865) succeeded in forming a union with similar literary organizations on other college campuses, including Columbia, Brown, and Lafayette. The umbrella group, called the United States Literary League was the first co-operative group of its kind in America, but it seems to have only lasted through 1866.

Zelo’s troubles would not end there. The University’s move to West Philadelphia from the Ninth and Chestnut Streets campus in 1872 would cripple the Society. According to Dr. Robert Ellis Thompson (Class of 1865, once Zelo secretary and University professor):

When I entered the University there was a Saturday session, which terminated at noon. Then the Zelo met by daylight. In 1863 or 1864 this was abolished, and the Zelo had to meet on Tuesday evenings, as the Philo[mathean Society] had pre-empted Friday evenings. This worked to the disadvantage of the Society, kept it from growing, and finally killed it, when to this disadvantage was added the necessity of coming all the way to West Philadelphia on a Tuesday evening.

West Philadelphia was then a suburb of the central residential section of the city proper and transportation was difficult in the evening in this pre-trolley, subway, and automobile era. Zelo also suffered from the competition for the student's interest which the Franklin Scientific Society, formed in 1876. There was not enough interest and students to support two literary societies and one scientific society. Membership in Zelo steadily declined and it ceased to function after the 1874-1875 academic year.

By 1876 the Zelosophic Society discontinued. In the void created by Zelo's absence came the Franklin Scientific Society, which was formed in 1875 and eventually came to occupy the same rooms, to use the same library, and to conduct itself in a similar manner to the Zelosophic Society. For the next sixteen years, the University had only one literary student organization and two different scientific societies. When the last of the scientific societies, the Scientific Society of the University of Pennsylvania, began to lose steam in the early 1890s and eventually died, a group of former members of the Scientific Society decided to try to form a new public lecture and debate society. In the fall of 1892 two members of the class of 1894, Arthur Hobson Quinn and Cheesman A. Herrick, founded the Historical Society of the University of Pennsylvania. The initial response to the organization was encouraging and after a recommendation in an editorial in *The Pennsylvanian*, the society changed its name to the Zelosophic Society of the University of Pennsylvania in December 1892 and received an inheritance (in the form of a room in College Hall, library and archive) from the original Zelosophic Society.

In 1893, Zelo began a campaign to promote intercollegiate debates, the first debate being held that year between Pennsylvania and Cornell University. By 1916 Zelo members formed the nucleus of an independent Debate Council to regulate all debates on campus, as well as those between the University and other schools. This organization remains a vibrant student group on campus nearly one hundred years later. A similar campaign was undertaken the following year to further the cause of intercollegiate oratory, and Zelo members subsequently founded the

Pennsylvania State Inter-Collegiate Oratorical Association. In 1908 the Society branched out once again, this time into drama, an interest begun when Zelo offered to sponsor the Philadelphia performances of a touring English troupe called the Ben Greet Players. With the inspiration of these actors Zelo began to perform plays annually. In 1915, they produced “The Prince of Partha” the first English play published by an American-born playwright, Thomas Godfrey (a friend of Francis Hopkinson, Class of 1757). Two years later, and eighty-eight years after its inception, Zelo was officially incorporated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Throughout its history the Zelosophic Society has produced two principal publications, literary magazines called *The Critic* and *The Zelosophic Magazine*. Each publication was alternately revived and became defunct throughout the history of Zelo. Notable members of Zelo included Herbert E. Ives, the inventor of the first cathode ray tube, which would eventually evolve into the modern television.

The rejuvenated Zelosophic Society existed as an independent group on campus until the mid-1940s. In early 1941 it ceased publishing *The Critic* and, like many student organizations, it had to suspend its activities during World War II. Though a former member, Oliver Crosby, revived Zelo in 1945, it was not able to compete with the various other student groups and eventually ceased to function sometime between 1947 and 1949.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The records of the Zelosophic Society of the University of Pennsylvania are a rich source for documenting the creative energies of university students for part of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The publications of the Society, both in printed and handwritten form, cover a wide variety of topics. In the period of c.1830 to c.1870, the strongest one for this collection, one finds such literary forms as parody, humor, poetry, drama, short stories, historical sketches, and commentary on current events and culture. Though written primarily in English, there is frequent use of Latin and Greek phrases in the text, reflecting the strong classical training prevalent in nineteenth century undergraduate education. The early twentieth century writings in the collection cover much of the same forms as the nineteenth century material except poetry. Additional copies of the printed publications of the Zelosophic Society can be found in the general University publications collections of the University Archives.

The dramatics subject file and scrapbooks have correspondence, newspaper clippings, playbills, and programs which provide a glimpse into the strong performance art focus of the Society in the early twentieth century, particularly its major pantomime “Masque of American Drama” which was co-produced with the Philomathean Society. Some of these files also contain photographs of some of the actors and sets used in these productions.

The organizational structure of the Zelosophic Society and the manner in which it functioned are well documented in the minutes and constitution and by-laws which exist for most of the history of the society (1829-1864, 1892-1941). A glimpse into the financial arrangement of the society during the 1930s can be found in its treasurer’s account books and account statements as well as the membership fine book.

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INVENTORY

Constitution and By-laws

Box 1	FF 1	1829, 1838
	FF 2	c. 1920-1940

Minutes

	FF 3	1829-September 1832
	FF 4	December 1837-July 1841
	FF 5	September 1841-July 1843
	FF 6	September 1843-March 1846
Box 2	FF 1	April 1846-March 1850
	FF 2	April 1850-February 1854
Box 3	FF 1	February 1854-June 1864
	FF 2	1892-1898
	FF 3	1899-May 1908
	FF 4	October 1908-May 1914

Minutes (cont.)

- Box 4 FF 1 October 1914-April 1917
- FF 2 September 1917-April 1923
- FF 3 May 1923-May 1933
- FF 4 January 1934-May 1937
- FF 5 September 1937-May 1939
- FF 6 September 1940-December 1941

Committees

- FF 7 Board of Governors, March 1894-January 1895
- FF 8 Council of Officers, 1840-1851
- FF 9 Executive Committee, February 1933-December 1936

Membership

- FF 10 Roll book, 1829-1877
- FF 11 Roll book, 1829-c. 1863
- Oversize 1 - 1 Register, 1925-1937
- Box 4 FF 12 Fine book, 1840-1843
- FF 13 List, 1829-1853
- FF 14 Lists, applications, and certificates, 1862, c. 1918-c. 1940
- FF 15 Record book of officers, 1857-1873, 1892-1942

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Subject file (cont.)

Box 4	FF 16	Annual oration, "The Power of Thought" by Rev. Benjamin J. Douglass, 1848
	FF 17	"Archives, No. 1" - correspondence, reports, membership, 1829-1845
	FF 18	Catalogue of the Zelosophic archives, 1848
	FF 19	Committee reports and resolutions, 1851-1872, 1906
	FF 20	Correspondence, 1841-1867
	FF 21	Correspondence, c. 1897-1942
	FF 22	The Critic, 1939
		Debating
	FF 22	Debate Council of the University of Pennsylvania, 1916
	FF 23	Public debate contract with American Whig Society of Princeton University, 1907
		Dramatics
Box 5	FF 1	1908-1933, (1)
	FF 2	1908-1933, (2)
	FF 3	1908-1933, (3)
	FF 4	1911-1927, 1940
	FF 5	Playbills, announcements, 1912-1936
	FF 6	Tickets, 1917-1935
	FF 7	Election procedures, c. 1933

Subject file (cont.)

Box 5	FF 8	General activities, programs, 1862-1865, 1906-1907
	FF 9	Impeachments, 1837-1857
	FF 10	Inaugural address, c. 1850
	FF 11	Initiation rites for members, c. 1920
	FF 12	Initiation rites for officers, c. 1920
	FF 13	Library, c. 1850-c. 1900
	FF 14	Master of Archives report, January 1941-September 1941
	FF 15	The Pennsylvania Players, 1936

Scrapbooks and clippings

	FF 16	Clippings and records from Benjamin Keller, 1935
	FF 17	Dramatics Dramatics, 1915-1939
	FF 18	Masque of American Drama (1), 1917
	FF 19	Masque of American Drama (2), 1917
	FF 20	Masque of American Drama (3), 1917
	FF 21	Masque of American Drama (4), 1917
	FF 22	Masque of American Drama (5), 1917
	FF 23	Publicity, 1919-1920
	FF 24	Publicity, 1921, 1937-1939

Scrapbooks and clippings (cont.)

Box 5	FF 25	Publicity, 1926-1927
	FF 26	Records and clippings, 1936-1940
	FF 27	Scrapbook (1), 1862-1917
	FF 28	Scrapbook (2), 1862-1917
Box 8	FF 10	Masque of American Drama, 1917

Financial

Box 5	FF 29	Bills, 1935-1936, 1940
	FF 30	Check books and receipt books, 1934-1936
	FF 31	Check books, 1936-1938
		Checking account statements
	FF 32	1933-1935
	FF 33	1936, 1939-1940
		Treasurer's book
	FF 34	(includes scrapbook), 1920-1921
	FF 35	1935-1938
Box 6	FF 1	1940-1942
	FF 2	Treasurer's report, 1935-1936

Publications

Bound

The Zelosophic Review

Box 7	FF 1	1833
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Publications (cont.)

Bound

The Zelosophic Review

Box 7 FF 2 (and The Critic), 1836-1837, 1840-1841

FF 3 1843

FF 4 1844, (1)

FF 5 1844, (2)

FF 6 1845

FF 7 1846

FF 8 1848

FF 9 1850

FF 10 1854-1858

FF 11 The Clio, 1831-1834

The Critic

FF 12 1847

FF 13 1848-1849

FF 14 1849

Unbound

The Box

Box 6 FF 3 1830s

The Critic

FF 4 c. 1830-c. 1840, (1)

Publications (cont.)

Unbound

The Critic

Box 6	FF 5	c. 1830-c. 1840, (2)
	FF 6	1851
	FF 7	1852
	FF 8	1853-1854
	FF 9	undated, c. 1852-1855
	FF 10	transcribed copy, 1854-1856
	FF 11	1922-1923
	FF 12	1936-1938
	FF 13	"Extracts from Old Papers," 1847
	FF 14	The First Hundred Years of the Zelosophic Society, galleys, 1929
	FF 15	The Reformer, 1831
	FF 16	The Tartar, 1841
		The Zelosophic Review
	FF 17	1830s
	FF 18	1851-1853
	FF 19	1854-1856
	FF 20	1860-1861

Publications (cont.)

Unbound

The Zelosophic Review

Box 6	FF 21	1862
	FF 22	1863
	FF 23	undated, 1863-1864
	FF 24	undated, 1863-1864
	FF 25	January 1864-May 1864
	FF 26	September 1864-November 1864
	FF 27	1865-1867
	FF 28	1868-1869
	FF 29	undated, 1868-1873
	FF 30	1869-1873
	FF 31	Journal title uncertain, c. 1850-c. 1870
	FF 32	Journal title uncertain (mimeograph sheets), c. 1935
		Essays
	FF 34	(1), 1893-c. 1940
	FF 35	(2), 1893-c. 1940
	FF 36	(3), 1893-c. 1940

Printed

The Critic

Box 8	FF 1	Vol. 1, No. 1 (3 copies), 1939
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Publications (cont.)

Printed

The Critic

Box 8	FF 2	Vol. 1, No. 2 (3 copies), 1940
	FF 3	The First Hundred Years of the Zelosophic Society, 1929
	FF 4	An oration before the Zelosophic Society of the University of Pennsylvania ... by Henry Reed, 1848
		The Zelosophic Magazine
	FF 5	Vol. 1, April 1834, February 1835
	FF 6	Vol. 2 (complete), 1835
	FF 7	Vol. 2, April 1835, June 1835
	FF 8	Vol. 2 (2 copies), August 1835
	FF 9	Vol. 92, No. 3 (new series v. 1, no. 3), May 1921

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