

CRANFORD BOOK CLUB RECORDS, 1853-2016

4.85 c.f. (7 document boxes, 3 flat boxes)

ABSTRACT

The Cranford Book Club is Charlotte's oldest book club, organized in 1891. Fourteen prominent Charlotte ladies began the club, including Mary Anna Morrison Jackson. Mrs. Josephine Durant served as its first president. The ladies selected the name of their club from Elizabeth Gaskell's popular book Cranford, and chose the motto "fun as well as study."

Membership in the Cranford Book Club is limited, but young women are brought in to the membership periodically. Meetings take place in a different member's home each month. The club's objectives are focused on two areas: "circulating the best in current literature among the membership, and selecting an annual topic to explore in all its facets."

This collection contains clippings, documents, minutes, publications, photographs, and scrapbooks.

ACCESS

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PREFERRED CITATION

Cite as: Cranford Book Club Records, 1853-2016, Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library

ACQUISITION

Presented by the Cranford Book Club 1988-2016.

Processed by Hannah Cox, 2016.

HISTORICAL NOTE

Charlotte's first book club, the Grace King Book Club, began around late 1891-1892, although it eventually ceased meeting. The Cranford Book Club is Charlotte's oldest continuous book club, organized in 1891. It began when Kate Shipp and Mrs. Lucian Walker became dissatisfied with austerity of the Grace King club, withdrew their membership, and decided to form a club of their own that included a social hour in the program.

The Cranford Book Club was officially formed in October 1892, at the home of General John Young. There were fourteen charter members, among them, Mrs. Walker, Miss Young, Miss Shipp, Mrs. "Stonewall" Jackson, and Mrs. Durant. Mrs. Durant was named the president of the group, a title she held for fifty years, until her death.

The ladies chose the name "Cranford" from Elizabeth Gaskell's popular nineteenth century English novel of the same name. Similar to several of the novel's characters, a number of club members were also spinsters. They selected "fun as well as study" as their club motto.

The Cranford Book Club's programs have covered a wide range of topics over the years, and their objectives are focused on two areas: "circulating the best in current literature among the membership, and selecting an annual topic to explore in all its facets." Although membership is limited to only a few, the most important quality a member needs is an "appreciation for fine arts and for creating a gracious atmosphere." Members continue to meet in their homes monthly (excepting summer), circulate and discuss current books, and present diverse topics centered around an annually selected theme.

REFERENCES

Cranford Book Club. *Cranford Profiles: The First Hundred Years of a Charlotte Book Club*. Charlotte, NC: Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, 1992.

Porter, Thomas B. *The Cranford Book Club: A Century and Beyond of a Sisterhood of the Heart*. Charlotte, 2002.

RELATED MATERIALS

Book Clubs. (CALL NUMBER: NCR Vertical Files)

Cranford Book Club. *Cranford Profiles: The First Hundred Years of a Charlotte Book Club*. Charlotte, NC: Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, 1992. (CALL NUMBER: NCR 028.9)

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Cranford Book Club Records consists of items related to club operations and social endeavors, and membership. The bulk of the collection is from 1900-2016. The series include clippings, correspondence, financial records, histories, minutes, programs, publications, photographs, and scrapbooks.

Clippings, 1920s-2016, includes general articles, announcements, and obituaries clipped from the newspaper (typically the *Charlotte Observer*). Funeral programs are also included in this series with their corresponding obituary clipping.

Correspondence, 1882-2014, consists of a variety of correspondence to and from club members and personal correspondence of members.

Financials, 1990-1992, is comprised of deposit slips and statements for the club during these years.

Histories, 1939-2006, encompasses 50th and 100th Anniversary items, biographical information, and club histories.

Minutes, 1900-2013, includes meeting minutes from many of the club's meetings. These are incomplete, with the largest gaps being from the club's earliest years, and 1901-1913.

Programs, 1905-2005, encompasses the yearly programs for the club, which include officers; date, location, hostess, and topic of each meeting; and the book list for the year.

Publications, 1853-2012, consists of articles, books, and brochures relating to the Cranford Book Club, their members, or organizations of interest.

Photographs, 1892, 2008, includes a group photo of the 1892 club members, and individual pictures of the 2008 club members.

Scrapbooks, is comprised of three scrapbooks from the club, showing various events.

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