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Graham Society records, 1817-1831. RG0722

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English

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Congregational Library & Archives

14 Beacon Street

Boston, MA 02108

URL: <http://www.CongregationalLibrary.org>

Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Historical Note	3
Scope and Contents	5
Arrangement	5
Administrative Information	5
Controlled Access Headings	6
Collection Inventory	6

Summary Information

Repository:	Congregational Library & Archives
Creator:	Graham Society (Boston, Mass.)
Title:	Graham Society records, 1817-1831. : [manuscript]
ID:	RG0722
Date [inclusive]:	1817-1831
Physical Description:	.18 Cubic Feet (1 document case)
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	Founded in Boston, Massachusetts in 1817, the Graham Society was an all-female benevolent society that provided clothing to students and seminaries at the Phillips Academy and Andover Theological Seminary, both in Andover, Massachusetts. The Graham Society records include the official records of the society, including founding documents, meeting minutes, and officer lists, membership lists, member donation records, and correspondence with an Amherst sewing circle.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], in the Graham Society records, 1817-1831, RG0722. The Congregational Library & Archives, Boston, MA.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Historical Note

Founded in Boston, Massachusetts in 1817, the Graham Society was an all-female benevolent society that provided clothing to students and seminaries at the Phillips Academy and Andover Theological Seminary, both in Andover, Massachusetts. The birth of this society reflects the growth of charitable institutions in New England between the latter part of the 18th-century and the first part of the 19th-century: during this period, the number of Bible societies, missionary societies, Masonic lodges, orphanages and other charitable organizations in New England grew from approximately 50 to approximately 2000. These organizations were significant in women's history, since they allowed women to serve in management and leadership roles that were otherwise not permitted to them. It was argued

during this period that women were "too frail, inexperienced, and frivolous to manage the affairs of a charitable corporation"; other New Englanders believed that the very nature of women made them better suited to serve those in need. In any case, the Graham Society was one of many women's charitable organizations.

The Graham Society essentially sought to assist those who "were reputed to be not only pious but orthodox... who are procuring an education with a view to the Christian ministry and who are recommended by those holding the same sentiments". It was governed by the Board of Directors, who were selected by ballot at the annual meeting, held in December of each year. The board consisted of five directors, a treasurer, a secretary and five assistants. The first five directors of the society were: Mary Bowers, Isabella Homes, Margaret C. Welch, Martha Ropes, Abigail Salisbury and Susan Huntington. Sarah Ann Hopkins served as secretary, Harriet Moore as treasurer and Margaret Cooper, Elizabeth Hazen, Mary Perry, Abigail Phillips and Susan Moore were assistants. The founding members of the society were: Mary Bowers, Isabella Homes, Martha Ropes, Susan Huntington, Mary Perry, Lucia G. Swett, Mary Ingraham, Harriet Moore, Susan Moore, Abby Salisbury, Susan Dorr, Elizabeth Cummings, Margaret C. Welch, Phebe Cutler, Louisa Farnham, Elizabeth Hazen, Abigail B. Phillips, Lydia Hopkins, Abigail G. Vose, Abigail G. Salisbury, and Sarah Ann Hopkins. Please see the Appendix for officers from other years. Note that many of the members of the Graham Society were also members of the Corban Society.

Graham Society members paid an annual subscription fee of \$1 for adults and 50 cents for children. In this way the Society accumulated funds to purchase clothing and fabric; the funds were also invested by the board of directors in "productive stock." The Society held annual meetings on the last Tuesday of January; the constitution stipulated that meetings were opened with prayer and a reading of the minutes.

There is some evidence that the Society also assisted local sewing circles with donations of fabric. There is a report from an Amherst sewing circle whose purpose was to aid "pious indigent young men in the college in that town." The report describes the activities of the group and discusses the number of subscribers. The report mentions a donation of 50 yards of cotton by the Graham Society.

Due to the declining size of the Society, the organization unanimously voted on February 27, 1831 to dissolve the Graham Society and "to add the fund to the Corban Society [another Boston, Massachusetts women's charitable society], and to be united in their efforts."

Many of the women in the Graham Society were married to or related to founding members of the Boston Society for the Moral and Religious Instruction of the Poor. See City Missionary Society Records, 1820-1991 for biographical information on these men.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Contents

The Graham Society records include the official records of the society, including founding documents, meeting minutes, and officer lists, membership lists, member donation records, and correspondence with an Amherst sewing circle.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Arrangement

The collection is arranged by chronological order by start date.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Restrictions on Access

Access to this collection is unrestricted and open to the public.

Restrictions on Use

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Acquisition Information

The collection was donated as part of the Corban Society materials and arrived at an unknown date with no accession number.

Processing Information

Collection was originally processed and described in 1995. Re-processed and updated for ArchivesSpace by Zachary Bodnar, December 2017, using DACS Second Edition.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Controlled Access Headings

- Benevolent societies.
- Organizations.
- Women--Societies and clubs

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances	
Graham Society Records, 1817-1831 <u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1817-1831	box 1	volume 1
Scope and Contents		
This volume contains the society's founding documents, constitution and minutes of meetings; the minutes include lists of officers, lists of those assisted, the approximate financial amount of the annual contributions and the annual income from annual subscriptions.		
Graham Society Subscription Lists, 1817-1826 <u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1817-1826	box 1	volume 2
Scope and Contents		
This volume contains the Society Constitution and a list of subscribers which lists their names, their subscription payments, donations, and their place of residence.		
Report from Amherst Sewing Circle, 1818	box 1	folder 1

Date: 1818

Scope and Contents

This letter is an 1818 report from an Amherst sewing circle. It was originally folded and inserted in the volume titled the Graham Society Records. It briefly describes the activities and membership of the circle and thanks the Society for its gift of 50 yards of cotton.