



## **FINDING AID TO THE IRVING LITERARY SOCIETY RECORDS**

**Purdue University Libraries  
Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections  
Research Center  
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West Lafayette, Indiana 47907-2058  
(765) 494-2839**

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Processed by: Virginia Pleasant October 14, 2013

## Descriptive Summary

<b>Creator Information</b>	Irving Literary Society, 1881- 1924
<b>Title</b>	Irving Literary Society records
<b>Collection Identifier</b>	MSP 34
<b>Date Span</b>	1875-1925
<b>Abstract</b>	The collection includes ledgers documenting meetings of the society, event programs, handbooks, and other clippings relating to the activities of the Irving Literary Society
<b>Extent</b>	1 cubic foot
<b>Finding Aid Author</b>	Virginia Pleasant
<b>Languages</b>	English
<b>Repository</b>	Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University Libraries

## Administrative Information

<b>Location Information:</b>	ASC
<b>Access Restrictions:</b>	Collection is open for research.
<b>Preferred Citation:</b>	MSP 34, Irving Literary Society records, Karnes Archives and Special Collections, Purdue University Libraries
<b>Copyright Notice:</b>	Purdue University
<b>Related Materials Information:</b>	Philaethean Literary Society records, MSP 101 Carlyle Literary Society records, MSP 141 George Ade papers, MSA 4 Emersonian Literary Society records, MSP 142 Eurodelphian Literary Society records, MSP 124

## **Subjects and Genres**

### **Organizations**

Irving Literary Society

### **Topics**

Literary Societies.

Purdue University--Students--Social life and customs

### **Form and Genre Types**

Event Programs

Handbooks

Logs (records)

## History of Irving Literary Society

The Irving Literary society was started at Purdue less than a year after the University's inception (making it the first extracurricular activity available at Purdue). The first meeting was held January 29, 1875 by students interested in founding a society devoted to the intellectual pursuit of literature and debate. At this first meeting, fifteen charter members adopted a constitution and bylaws, as well as nominated the first president, JB Harper. The Irving society was well known for its annual events, the first of which was held on December 15, 1875. As the society continued to grow and gain prominence, the University allowed the society's use of Irving Hall for its meetings, beginning in November 1878, so that it might have a dedicated space. The Irving Literary society was joined in 1878 by the first women's society at Purdue, the Philalethian Literary society. As the Irving continued to grow in numbers, peaking at over 70, dissonance amongst members became more common, resulting in the resignation of 26 members and subsequent founding of the Carlyle Literary society (1881). The Irving also played a role in the early days of the *Exponent* student newspaper- its early staff was comprised wholly of members of the University's literary societies, a fact that was reflected by the paper's focus on editorial commentary in its early years. After the turn of the twentieth century, the University's seven male literary societies were restructured and reduced to four. As a result, the Irving Literary society was subsequently known as the Irving-Emersonian Society (1924). Later records indicate that as interest in literary and debating clubs decreased, the number of societies was reduced even further. In 1936, the Irving-Emersonian was absorbed by the honorary literary fraternity Kappa Phi Sigma (founded at Purdue in 1922), effectively joining three literary societies. Kappa Phi Sigma was active through 1937, when it no longer appeared in the student handbook lists of activities and organizations. Prominent alumni of the Irving Literary society include George Ade and James A. Lilly.

### *Sources:*

Handbook of the Irving Literary Society, Box 1 Folder 2, Irving Literary Society records, Karnes Archives and Special Collections, Purdue University Libraries

Debris Yearbooks, Purdue University, Karnes Archives and Special Collections, Purdue University Libraries

Irving Literary Society records, Karnes Archives and Special Collections, Purdue University Libraries

## Collection Description

### Scope

The Irving Literary Society records (1875-1925, 1 cubic foot) document the meetings and events of the Irving Literary Society before it was eventually merged with other literary societies at Purdue. The collection includes records books that detail meeting minutes and financial information. The record books also have various documents included in their pages, from correspondence to annual event programs. The ephemera portion of the collection consists primarily of annual event programs (both formal and prototype copies), but also includes the 1875 constitution and bylaws of the society and the 1886 handbook. Unfortunately, the ephemera portion of the collection only goes to 1906, and no portion of the collection addresses the later incarnations of the society (Irving Emersonian Literary Society or Kappa Phi Sigma). The collection might be useful to researchers interested in literary societies, extracurricular activities of students, Purdue University history, the student life of George Ade, and material culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Types of materials include: records ledgers, correspondence, event programs, receipts, and printed materials. The records are organized into two series:

### Arrangement

#### **1. Ephemera, 1875-1906 (0.2 cubic feet)**

This series includes programs for Irving Society annual events in both prototype and final form, as well as programs from combined literary society events that were held periodically. Also included are a handbook, a copy of the society's constitution, and clippings from the Debris yearbook. Materials in the series are arranged chronologically and by type.

#### **2. Ledgers, 1879-1924 (0.8 cubic foot)**

The ledgers and included loose papers document the meetings and actions of the Irving Literary Society through meeting minutes, treasury reports, and correspondence. Also included are copies of annual event programs, attendance records, and topics discussed and debated. Materials in the series are arranged chronologically except when loose papers were previously filed out of order.

### Descriptive Rules Describing Archives: A Content Standard

### Processing Information

Whenever possible, original order of the materials has been retained. Metal clips and staples have been removed. All materials have been housed in acid-free folders and acid-free boxes.

## **DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION**

### **1 Box**

#### **Irving Literary Society Ephemera, 1875-1906**

(0.2 cubic feet)

##### Folder

1. Programs, 1876-1879
2. Programs, 1880-1889
3. Programs, 1890-1899
4. Programs, 1900-1906
5. Constitution and Handbooks, 1875-1886  
Including original constitution and by-laws, drafted and printed in 1875
6. Debris Clippings 1891-1904

#### **Irving Literary Society Record Ledgers, 1879-1924**

(0.8 cubic feet)

##### Item

1. Record Ledger, 1879-1883
2. Record Ledger, 1883-1890
3. Record Ledger, 1890-1902
4. Record Ledger, 1902-1913
5. Record Ledger, 1913-1924