

Washington Literary Society resolution memorializing President Mckinley

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1901

Title Statement

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Author: Ellen Welch

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Descriptive Summary

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Unit ID

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Unit ID

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Unit Date

1901

Mixed Materials [X030272109]

RG 23 - Additions Box 2 (box)

Container

1 of 1 (folder)

Language

English

Extent

0.04 Cubic Feet 1 folder

Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

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Biographical / Historical

The Washington Literary Society and Debating Union (also known as "the Washington Society" or "the Wash") is a literary and debating group at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. "The Wash" was founded in 1831 with the goal of promoting the art of oratory to the UVA community.

A Literary society in nature, from the beginning the group utilized the name "Washington Literary Society" in popular parlance, but less often, and in certain contexts used its Greek letter name Sigma Beta Phi ($\Sigma\beta\Phi$ or $\Sigma\beta\phi$). Eventually the group settled in to use its nickname, "The Wash".

In its early years, the society was active in University affairs with a literary focus, co-sponsoring from 1847 to 1851 (with the Jefferson Literary and Debating Society, the Philomethean, and Aesculapian Societies) a literary magazine called the Jefferson Monument Magazine, whose purpose was both to raise funds for a memorial to the University's founder and to provide a literary outlet for the students. Following the collapse of the Jefferson Monument Magazine, the society co-sponsored the University Magazine with the Philomathean and Jefferson Societies, beginning in 1851.[5]

In 1913, the Washington Society joined forces again with the Jefferson Society to sponsor a "speaking league" for public and private high school students throughout the state.[10] However, the activity of the society subsequently fell off until it completely died out during the 1920s. Briefly reforming in 1939 as a society with the aim of "encouraging intellectual curiosity, gentlemanliness, congeniality and the idealization of the Virginia gentleman," it soon became extinct again until its modern refounding in 1979. In 1980, Leslie Eliason, the first female president and fifth member, established or reestablished most of the traditions that continue today.