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## MS-055: Papers of the German Literary Society

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## MS-055: Papers of the German Literary Society

### **Description**

The Papers of the German Literary Society collection consists of manuscripts from the proceedings of the Society from the 1830s to the 1860s. However, there are also three manuscripts that were likely given to the Literary Society at some point during its existence.

The collection contains the constitution and minutes of the Literary Society from its first period of existence during the late-1830s. Researchers will also find the organization's minute book, dated 1856 to 1860, as well as the 1867 version of the Society's constitution. These manuscripts, along with the Society's ledger book, allow one to understand the organization and proceedings of a college literary society that flourished during the mid-19th Century.

In addition, it includes an article written by Professor of German Karl J. Grimm that discusses the history of German societies at Pennsylvania College, ranging from the German Literary Society in 1836 to the German Verein in 1906.

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### **Keywords**

Gettysburg College, Pennsylvania College, German Literary Society, German societies, collegiate societies

### **Disciplines**

Cultural History | History | Intellectual History | Social History | United States History

**Guide to the  
Papers of the German Literary Society**



**Gettysburg College, Musselman Library  
Special Collections & College Archives**

**Processed by Keith Swaney  
Translation Assistance: Drs. Arthur McCardle and Michael Ritterson,  
Department of German**

**May 2004**

## **MS-055: The Papers of the German Literary Society**

*Processed by: Keith Swaney*

*Translation Assistance: Drs. Arthur McCardle and Michael Ritterson, Department of German*

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### **Provenance:**

After disbanding in 1868, the German Literary Society bequeathed its papers to the faculty of Pennsylvania College. Thereafter, the library of Pennsylvania College became the repository for these materials.

### **Agency Sketch:**

In 1836, a group of students at Pennsylvania College formed the German Literary Society: an association for “the cultivation of a practical knowledge of the German language and literature.” This organization, which encouraged discussions, debates, orations, and readings of essays concerning the pertinent moral, political, and social issues of the time, conducted its meetings solely in German. Both students and scholars attended the meetings, engaging in discussions about these issues and the literature which discussed them.

The longevity of this society was very brief, indeed. German Professor C.E. Schaeffer reorganized it in 1856; for whatever reason, however, the Society lost its appeal and fizzled out by 1868, leaving its collection of 250 German volumes to the College. Not until Professor of German Samuel G. Hefelbower organized the *Deutsche Gesellschaft* in 1903-04 did another German society emerge on campus. *Der Deutsche Verein*, organized in 1906 under the leadership of Dr. Karl J. Grimm, was the third such society at Pennsylvania College.

See Dr. Karl J. Grimm’s piece entitled “Sketch of the History of the German *Verein* in Gettysburg College” for the history of German societies at Gettysburg (Pennsylvania) College (Box 2 - Folder 2 of the Collection).

### **Scope and Content Notes:**

The Papers of the German Literary Society collection consists of three boxes of processed materials, approximately one cubic foot. Most of the manuscripts originate from the proceedings of the Society from the 1830s to the 1860s. However, sub-series A contains three manuscripts that were likely given to the Literary Society at some point during its existence. See the following inventory for descriptions of these items.

Boxes one and two contain the constitution and minutes of the Literary Society from its first period of existence during the late-1830s. In addition, researchers will find the organization’s minute book, dated 1856 to 1860, as well as the 1867 version of the Society’s constitution. These manuscripts, along with the Society’s ledger book, allow

one to understand the organization and proceedings of a college literary society that flourished during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century.

In addition, researchers should consult the folder entitled “Manuscripts found in the Minutes Book” for an article written by Professor of German Karl J. Grimm that discusses the history of German societies at Pennsylvania College, ranging from the German Literary Society in 1836 to the German *Verein* in 1906.

Inventory, 3pp.

**Box 1**  
**Box-Folder**

**1-1**            **Ledger Book** - n.d., AMs, 126pp. (original). In English.

The book is organized by individual’s name and lists various fines, taxes, and dues owed by each member to the Society.

**1-2**            **List of Fines** - n.d., AMs, 1p. (original & photocopy). In English.

This manuscript lists infractions of rules of the German Literary Society and the fines that correspond with each infraction.

**1-3**            **The Constitution and Minutes of the German Society, “Organized in the College at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June, 1836”** - AMs, 225pp. (original). In German.

**Box 2**

**2-1**            **Minutes Book, 1856-1860** - AMs, 114pp. (original & photocopy-see folder 2-3). In German.

**2-2**            **Manuscripts found in the Minutes Book**

“Sketch in the History of the German *Verein* in Gettysburg College,” by Karl J. Grimm, Professor of German” - 1941, TMs, 1p. (original & photocopy). In English.

Notes, taken on the Society’s minutes from June 17, 1856 – June 8, 1860 – n.d. on the manuscript, AMs, 3pp. (original & photocopy). In English, except for monthly headings (i.e. “Juni” is the German word for “June.”)

Notes entitled “Topics” (a secondary source based on the minutes) - n.d., AMs, 5pp. (original & photocopy). In German. Author provides citations and poses a number of questions that deal with moral and scholarly issues;

e.g. "Ist es notwendig zum Studium der deutschen Literatur eine wirkliche Kenntnis der deutschen Sprache zu haben? 13:1 yes."

[English translation of the German: "Is it necessary to have a real understanding of the German language in order to study German literature?"]

**2-3**            **Photocopy of the Minutes Book** (see description of folder 2-1), 114pp.

**2-4**            **Constitution** - 1867, AMs, 37pp. (original). In English and German.

First section of the manuscript is devoted to the German Literary Society's constitution. Topics include: Duties of Officers, Members, Amendments, Performances, Order of Business, and Dues and Fines. Each article is written in both English and German.

The final three pages of the manuscript is a record of the names of the Society's members and their respective hometowns.

#### **Sub-Series A--Manuscripts Presented to the German Literary Society**

**2-5**            *Der Zehnte Jahres-Bericht des Staats-Geologen Professor Rogers* ("The Tenth Yearly Report of State Geologist Professor Rogers"), Gelesen im Senat, den 1sten Februar 1838 ("Read in the Senate, the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1838). TMs, published in Harrisburg, Pa. by Joseph Ehrenfried, 104pp. (original). Inside cover notes that the text was presented by W.A. Reushaw [sp.?] to the German Society.

#### **Box 3**

**3-1**            *Einleitung zum Geschäftsstile....* - 1824, AMs, 189pp. (original). The majority of the text is in German; however, it also includes some Latin.

The text provides instruction on the composition of legal documents; e.g. birth records, contracts, and even illegitimate children records. It seems to have been written for Catholic priests.

**3-2**            *Fortsetzung des I. Theils der Pastoral Theologie....* - n.d., AMs, 470pp. (original). The majority of the text is in German.

The text is a series of articles written about pastoral theology. It is a continuation (*Fortsetzung*) of the first part of this work.