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Princeton University Student Christian Association Records, 1855-1967: Finding Aid

Summary Information

Call number:	AC135
Location:	Princeton University Library. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library. Princeton University Archives. 65 Olden Street Princeton, New Jersey 08540 USA
Size:	21.91 linear feet (15 archival boxes, 1 half-box, and 13 custom boxes)
Language(s) of material:	English.
Abstract:	The Student Christian Association and its predecessors were the dominant religious organizations at Princeton University for almost a hundred and fifty years. The Philadelphian Society, founded by a small group of students in 1825, was the quasi-official campus religious agency by the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1930 the Student-Faculty Association (SFA), organized by the Dean of the Chapel, took over the Society's programs, focusing on community service. In 1946 the Student Christian Association (SCA) replaced both the Society and

the SFA, coordinating both religious and community service activities in campus. The Student Volunteers Council succeeded the SCA in 1967.

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History of the Princeton University Student Christian Association

The first student religious societies appeared at the College of New Jersey before 1770; later groups included the Nassau Hall Bible Society (1813) and the Nassau Hall Tract Society (1817). On Christmas Eve, 1824, a small group of students founded a secret fraternity called Chi Phi, dedicated to its members' spiritual life and personal holiness. In February 1825, they changed the group's name to the Philadelphian Society. The Society had exclusive membership requirements and very strict codes of behavior; students had to testify to a personal experience of conversion and be unanimously elected. Exclusive and student-directed, it became popular as a student-directed alternative to the college's all-inclusive and compulsory chapel services and Bible classes.

In 1877, three members of the Society helped to found the Intercollegiate YMCA Movement; one, Luther Wishard, became the Movement's first secretary. The Society became known as the "Mother Society" of the Movement, the dominant national student organization through World War I. The Philadelphian Society built the movement's first building, Murray Hall (1879), later joined by Dodge Hall (1900). Philadelphians went on to become prominent in the Student Volunteer Movement (which focused on missions) and the World's Student Christian Federation.

The 1890s saw an increasing role for the Society. College faculty members, less interested in organizing campus religious life, by default turned it over to the Society, making it the college's quasi-official religious agency. The Society organized Bible study and other courses, as well as coordinating student volunteer activities in the community. By 1897 the Society employed a full-time general secretary to run its expanding programs; to help pay the secretary's salary, the college's trustees created a board of directors for the Society, made up of alumni and faculty members. The Society became the university's all-inclusive religious organization, incorporating all elements of campus religious life; in 1914 it included as members all students who belonged to evangelical (broadly defined) churches. The Society ran a campus-wide campaign to raise funds for its work and for other charities. In 1905, at the request of the International YMCA, the Society founded a settlement house in China, called Princeton-in-Peking; this mission became Princeton-in-Asia. In 1906 the Society founded the Princeton Summer Camp for inner-city boys.

World War I marked the peak of the Society's work. In 1919 followers of Frank Buchman, an itinerant evangelist, joined the Society's staff and used Buchman's often-controversial evangelical methods on campus. In 1926 the resulting conflict led President Hibben to appoint a special committee to investigate the Society's work; while the Society was cleared of scandal, it never regained its standing on campus. Its explicitly religious work was largely taken over by the Dean of the Chapel, appointed in 1928. The Student-Faculty Association, created by the Dean in 1930, coordinated student volunteer activity, the campus fund-raising drive, and other campus good works (such as an emergency loan fund for students and faculty-student social events) under the direction of the Assistant Dean of the Chapel. A skeletal Society board raised money for and held title to the camp in Blairstown, New Jersey.

After the dislocations of World War II, the university reorganized its religious life by replacing the Society and the SFA with the Student Christian Association, a more explicitly religious organization that coordinated student community service and religious societies. It also connected students to national and international student religious movements. In 1967 the SCA was replaced by the Student Volunteers Council, which concentrated on community service without an explicitly religious component.

Description

While these three organizations had different names and operated under different charters, they shared a common tradition and filled the same role in campus life. This collection documents their activities on campus and elsewhere, with both official documents (minutes, letters, memoranda) and clippings from the *Daily Princetonian*. The collection is incomplete, being informally assembled by many people over the years.

Series 1, Philadelphian Society Records, 1855-1946

Series 1, Philadelphian Society Records, 1855-1946, consists of bound volumes and files containing the Society's charter and by-laws, membership lists, and minutes of Society, board, and cabinet (undergraduate officer) meetings. (The bulk of the collection ends in 1930, while board minutes and correspondence continue until 1946, relating to business matters of the Princeton Summer Camp.) Files contain reports of general secretaries and committee chairs to the board and the cabinet. Committee records include bound volumes and files of membership and financial information, including information on the annual campus fund-raising drive, plus material relating to the Society's religious and social work. Among the Society's publications are several journals, the Student Handbook, and a newspaper. Files regarding Buchmanism contain testimony before President Hibben's committee of 1926, the committee's report, and clippings and correspondence related to the controversy. Several scrapbooks include correspondence, circulars and clippings regarding the Society's work on and off campus.

Series 2, Student Faculty Association Records, 1930-1946

Series 2, Student-Faculty Association Records, 1930-1946, contains primarily papers from the files of the Assistant Dean of the Chapel, who served as the SFA's director. This series includes the SFA's board minutes and materials relating to the Association's various good works. Most important were its Depression relief activities and its programs to bring faculty and students together socially.

Series 3, Student Christian Association Records, 1946-1961

Series 3, Student Christian Association Records, 1946-1961, also largely drawn from the files of the Assistant Dean of the Chapel, contains the SCA's charter, and minutes of its board and cabinet. The bulk of the collection relates to the SCA's activities on campus (including the campus drive), in the local community, nationally (including the Student Christian Movement and the YMCA), and internationally (including the World's Student Christian Federation). A small group of files describe the activities of other campus religious societies grouped under the SCA's umbrella.

Arrangement

The Student Christian Association records are organized into three series, arranged as follows:

Within each series, the records are arranged hierarchically, starting with constitutions and minutes, followed by material describing activities, and concluding with clippings.

Series 1, Philadelphian Society Records, 1855-1946

Series 2, Student Faculty Association Records, 1930-1946

Series 3, Student Christian Association Records, 1946-1961

Access and Use

Access

Collection is open for research use.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information

Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. Permission to publish material from the collection must be requested from the University Archivist. Copyright is held by the Trustees of Princeton University.

Acquisition and Appraisal

Provenance and Acquisition

This collection documents the activities of these organizations from 1855 (the earliest records of the Society were lost in the Nassau Hall fire of 1855) through 1967. It includes constitutions and by-laws, board and cabinet minutes, committee reports, membership lists, correspondence, publications, clippings and scrapbooks. Particularly important are documents relating to the Buchmanism controversy of 1926-1927 and the Philadelphian Society's long relationship with the Intercollegiate Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Movement. Numerous important Protestant churchmen served as officers or staff of the Society during their Princeton years, including Luther Wishard, Samuel Shoemaker, Henry Pitney Van Dusen, Eugene Carson Blake, John D. Rockefeller III, and John Oliver Nelson.

Related Archival Material

Nassau Hall Bible Society Records, University Archives [AC# 038]

Nassau Hall Tract Society Records, General Manuscripts, University Archives

Dean of the Chapel Records, University Archives, [AC# 144]

Historical Subject Files, University Archives, [AC# 109]

–Student Religious Organizations

–Selden Papers on the Princeton Summer Camp

–Princeton-in-Asia

H. Alexander Smith Papers (regarding Buchmanism) [MC# 120]

Daniel Sack, “Disastrous Disturbances: Buchmanism and Student Religious Life at Princeton University, 1919-1935” (Princeton Dissertation, 1995)

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Princeton University Student Christian Association Records, Box and Folder Number; University Archives, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton

University Library.

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Daniel Sack in Summer 1995. Finding aid written by Daniel Sack in Summer 1995.

Encoding

Machine-readable finding aid encoded in EAD 2002 by Techbooks and Cristela García-Spitz on November 03, 2006.

Descriptive Rules Used

Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*.

Subject Headings

These materials have been indexed in the [Princeton University Library online catalog](#) using the following terms. Those seeking related materials should search under these terms.

- Buchman, Frank -- Contributions in religion.
- Philadelphian Society (Princeton University)
- Princeton Summer Camp (Blairstown, N.J.)
- Princeton University -- Societies, etc.
- Princeton-in-Peking Program.
- Student-Faculty Association (Princeton University)
- Young Men's Christian Association -- New Jersey -- Princeton.
- Charities -- New Jersey -- Princeton.
- College students -- New Jersey -- Princeton -- Societies and clubs.
- Deans, Cathedral and collegiate -- New Jersey -- Princeton -- 20th century.
- Lay ministry -- New Jersey -- Princeton.
- Religious camps.
- Religious education -- New Jersey -- Princeton.
- Student volunteers in social service -- New Jersey -- Princeton -- 20th century.
- Clippings.
- Constitutions.
- Correspondence.
- Minutes.
- Scrapbooks.
- Princeton University

Contents List

Series 1: Philadelphian Society

Series Description

Series 1, Philadelphian Society Records, 1855-1946, consists of bound volumes and files containing the Society's charter and by-laws, membership lists, and minutes of Society, board, and cabinet (undergraduate officer) meetings. (The bulk of the collection ends in 1930, while board minutes and correspondence continue until 1946, relating to business matters of the Princeton Summer Camp.) Files contain reports of general secretaries and committee chairs to the board and the cabinet. Committee records include bound volumes and files of membership and financial information, including information on the annual campus fund-raising drive, plus material relating to the Society's religious and social work. Among the Society's publications are several journals, the Student Handbook, and a newspaper. Files regarding Buchmanism contain testimony before President Hibben's committee of 1926, the committee's report, and clippings and correspondence related to the controversy. Several scrapbooks include correspondence, circulars and clippings regarding the Society's work on and off campus.

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>BOX</u>	
Constitution and membership (bound volume), 1874-1896	1	
Constitution and amendments, membership lists (bound volume), 1865-1873	2	1
Constitution and by-laws, 1874, 1883, 1884, 1887	2	2
Charter and by-laws, 1914, 1927-1929	2	3-4
Minutes–Society (bound volumes), 1855 March-1905 April	2	5-8
Minutes–Society (bound volume), 1899 March-1905 April	3	1
Minutes–Board of Directors, 1925-1946	3	2
Minutes–Cabinet (bound volume), 1898 November-1906 May	3	3
Minutes–Cabinet, 1927-1930	3	4-5
General Secretary–Secretary's book (bound volume), 1897-1900	3	6
General Secretary–Town Work, Library, and Summer Conferences Book (bound volume), 1897-1898	3	7
General Secretary–Address book, 1897-1898	3	8

Series 1: Philadelphian Society ... (Continued)

General Secretary–Reports to the board of directors 1911, 1915, 1916, 1920, 1925-1927	3	9
President–President's book (bound volume), 1900-1906	3	10
Minutes of the board of directors (bound volume), 1915 September-1925 June	4	
Cabinet–Committee reports (bound volume), 1883-1891	5	1
Cabinet–Statistical record and reports, 1892-1896	5	2-4
Cabinet–Reports to the Society President, 1927 April	5	5
Cabinet–Reports, 1927-1929	5	6-7
Bible Study Committee–Chairman's book (bound volume), 1893	5	8
Bible Study Committee–General Secretary's book (bound volume), 1897-1901	5	9
Bible Study Committee–Chairman's book (bound volume), 1891-1901	5	10
Bible Study Committee–Policy book (bound volume), 1902-1907	6	1
Deputation Committee–General Secretary's book (bound volume), 1897-1900	6	2
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Deputations Committee–Correspondence, 1927-1930	6	4-6
Finance Committee–General Secretary's book (bound volume), 1897-1901	6	7
Finance Committee–Chairman's book (bound volume), 1898-1906	6	8
Finance Committee–Dues record, 1898	6	9
Finance Committee–Ledger (bound volume), 1908-1915	7	1-2
Finance Committee–Ledger (bound volume), 1921-1926	7	2
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Finance Committee–Financial Statements, 1928-1929	7	4
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Series 1: Philadelphian Society ... (Continued)

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Finance Committee–Investments, 1938-1944	7	9
Library Committee–Chairman's book (bound volume), 1897-1904	7	10
Library Committee–Catalogue, 1877, 1883, 1886	7	11
Library Committee–Catalogue (bound volume), 1904	7	12
Membership Committee–Statistical record (bound volume), 1894-1897	7	13
Membership Committee–Preparatory schools of members (bound volume), circa 1893-1896	8	
Membership Committee–General Secretary's book (bound volume), 1898-1899	9	1
Membership Committee–Chairman's book (bound volume), 1897-1903	9	2
Membership Committee–Membership roll (bound volume), 1898-1905	9	3-10
Missionary Committee–General Secretary's book (bound volume), 1897-1901	10	1
Missionary Committee–Chairman's book (bound volume), 1897-1903	10	2
New Student Committee–General Secretary's book (bound volume), 1897-1902	10	3
New Student Committee–Reports (bound volume), 1903-1904	10	4
Religious Meetings Committee–General Secretary's book (bound volume), 1897-1899	10	5
Religious Meetings Committee–Chairman's book (bound volume), 1897-1899	10	6
Student Volunteer Band–Constitution and minutes, 1900-1904	10	7
Correspondence–Board of Directors, 1923-1930	10	8-9
Correspondence–Board of Directors, 1931-1946	11	1-4
Correspondence–General Secretary, 1900-1918	11	5
Correspondence–Cabinet, 1927-1930	11	6-7
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Activities–Lists, 1928-1930	11	9
Activities–Boy Scouts, 1928-1930	11	10

Series 1: Philadelphian Society ... (Continued)

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Activities–Princeton Summer Camp, 1917	11	13
Activities–Town Club (I) (bound volume), 1900-1901	11	14
Activities–Town Club (II) (bound volume), 1900-1901	12	1
YMCA– <i>College Association Buildings</i> by John R. Mott, 1895	12	2
YMCA–Conference, 1917-1928	12	3
YMCA–Correspondence, 1927-1930	12	4
YMCA–Intercollegiate Movement (booklets), 1881, 1885	12	5
YMCA–Intercollegiate Work in New Jersey (bound volume), 1882-1891	12	6
YMCA–Local, county, and state, 1906, 1917-1919, 1927-1928	12	7
YMCA–Middle Atlantic Field Council, 1925-1928	12	8
YMCA–National Council, 1927-1930	12	9
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YMCA–Week of Prayer, 1927-1928	13	2
Publications– <i>The Philadelphian</i> 1 (bound volume), 1887 January-June	13	3
Publications– <i>The Philadelphian</i> 2 (bound volume), 1887-1888	13	4
Publications– <i>Philadelphian Bulletin</i> 1, 1891-1892	13	5
Publications– <i>The Philadelphian</i> 1-3, 1902-1904	13	6
Publications– <i>Princeton Men in India</i> (bound volume), 1911	13	7
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Publications– <i>One Hundred Years, 1825-1925</i> , 1925	13	9
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Series 1: Philadelphian Society ... (Continued)

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Publications– <i>Student Handbook</i> , 1900-1901, 1911-1912, 1910-1911	14	3
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Buchmanism Controversy–Clippings, 1926-1970	14	8
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Scrapbook (Clippings), 1915, 1919-1924	21	
Scrapbook (Clippings), 1924-1927	22	
Scrapbook (Clippings), 1927-1930	23	

Series 2: Student-Faculty Association Records**Series Description**

Series 2, Student-Faculty Association Records, 1930-1946, contains primarily papers from the files of the Assistant Dean of the Chapel, who served as the SFA's director. This series includes the SFA's board minutes and materials relating to the Association's various good works. Most important were its Depression relief activities and its programs to bring faculty and students together socially.

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>BOX</u>	<u>FOLDER</u>
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Board of Directors–Committee Reports, 1931-1943	14	11

Series 2: Student-Faculty Association Records ... (Continued)

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Activities–Campus–Freshman Advisory System, 1930-1931	24	1
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Activities–Campus–Student Loan Library, 1934-1943	24	5
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Activities–National–YMCA, 1930-1931	24	12
Activities–International–Grenfell Mission, 1931-1940	24	13
Activities–Miscellaneous, 1930-1946	24	14

Series 3, Student Christian Association Records

Series Description

Series 3, Student Christian Association Records, 1946-1961, also largely drawn from the files of the Assistant Dean of the Chapel, contains the SCA's charter, and minutes of its board and cabinet. The bulk of the collection relates to the SCA's activities on campus (including the campus drive), in the local community, nationally (including the Student Christian Movement and the YMCA), and internationally (including the World's Student Christian Federation). A small group of files describe the activities of other campus religious societies grouped under the SCA's umbrella.

Series 3, Student Christian Association Records ... (Continued)

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>BOX</u>	<u>FOLDER</u>
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Charter and By-Laws, 1946-1954	24	16
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Cabinet–Reports, 1946, 1949, 1950, 1958	26	5
Cabinet–Correspondence, 1947-1961	26	6
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Activities–Campus–Bicentennial Conferences, 1946-1947	26	9
Activities–Campus–Biennial Conferences, 1955-1966	26	10
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Activities–Campus–Campus Fund Drive, 1947-1963	26	12-15
Activities–Campus–Foreign Service Committee, 1956-1957, 1962	26	16
Activities–Campus–Home Preceptorials, 1947-1949, 1958-1959, 1962-1963	27	1
Activities–Campus–Loan Fund, 1946-1949	27	2
Activities–Campus– <i>Perspective</i> (correspondence), 1948-1950	27	3
Activities–Campus–Speakers, 1946-1964	27	4-5
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Series 3, Student Christian Association Records ... (Continued)

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Series 3, Student Christian Association Records ... (Continued)

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Student-Faculty Association Minutes, 1930-1943	30	
Jeremiah S. Finch, 1947-1955	30	