

## Clubs of Provincetown.

Since the beginning of time men have banded together for protection against a common enemy or for the good of the whole. The old English proverb, "Birds of a feather flock together" shows that in old England at least people of similar tastes or occupations were usually found together whether for good or evil. Who has not heard of the "Old Coffee House" of Addison's time or the Actor's Club of Shakespeare's, where they feasted both body and mind.

The clubbing together or uniting forces is seen among the Pilgrim Fathers who built a common house for better and safer living conditions.

When the people prospered and settlements were made, then came the meeting house around which the social life clustered. A sewing bee was held for some neighbor, a quilting bee for the minister's wife, or a house raising for a new couple. It was a joining of forces for the betterment and help of all just as our club life is today.

No very good record was ever kept of the societies or clubs of our town yet we all know there were many. Artemas Ward once said of a town: "It has no newspaper but it has a sewing circle." We also can say that long before the newspaper we had a sewing circle. In fact have always had one.

Who managed these Dorcas Clubs as they were called is not known. Yet we frequently see quilts of home made cloth with dainty stitches done by several hands which puts to shame our modern work.

The earliest record we have is in 1841 when the Provincetown Female Charitable Society was formed with Mrs. Louisa W. Crocker, President. Its meetings were held the first Thursday of each month in the Village Hall at 5:30 o'clock. A membership fee of 25 cents was charged and each absent member was fined 3 cents. Fifty members enrolled. Gentlemen were allowed honorary membership. The work consisted of binding shoes, knitting braces, mittens, gloves, and socks, making shirts, bosoms, dickies and quilts.

One item says "Bought 14 yards of factory cloth at 9 cents a yard" which seemed unusual. Another item says, "That an album quilt was drawn by lottery" and at one meeting "it was voted to hold a levee." This item may be of interest: "After using our tongues and needles in a glib and agreeable manner for the space of three hours we adjourned to meet three weeks from tonight."

This was not the only circle is shown in this article. "This society met according to appointment but was disappointed as we expected to hold it in the hall, unfortunately for us the Orthodox society had appointed their meeting the same time, we therefore, to oblige them, met in the schoolroom of the Union Academy. Our next meeting will be held at Village Hall."

In writing these records the old fashion s (fs) were used.

The name of Mr. Hosea Ballou, one of the early Universalist divines, a writer of world wide fame is on the membership list.

In 1848 was formed the Universalist Benevolent Society with Mrs. Sarah M. Lothrop, Vice Pres. Among these members were men and women of note who helped to mold the character of the younger generation, sending them into the world an honor to the old town.

The earliest written record of the Congregational Church sewing circle is in 1852. Mrs. Catherine Paine, President. Men, women and children were allowed to join, adults paying 25 cents and children 12½ cents.

These meetings were held at the homes beginning at 6 o'clock with scripture reading and prayer. At one meeting twenty ladies were present and twenty four gentlemen. The amount of work accomplished was 3 shirts, 2 bosoms, 7 dickies, and 1 pair socks. 33 cents was paid into treasury for cutting a dress.

When a general store became common, then the men met in its back room in winter, or the bench outside in summer, to talk over the day's work, tell jokes, and discuss familiar topics, helping themselves to a bit of salt fish, a cracker or an apple by way of refreshment. This was the nucleus of our modern club, from these meetings with their endless discussions came our idea of debates.

In 1871 and '72 we had Evans Singing School attended by the musical element and we also had the Union Brass Band, S. H. Ghen, leader, and later the Puritan Band. During these years we had a Gymnasium for young men. Also Base Ball Clubs called Dead Beats and Big Frauds, which did some lively match work.

The fire companies were formed in the early days and the work which they did was wonderful considering their ancient apparatus. The old Washington engine was the first. The first company was in 1836, fire buckets being used previous to that time.

Temperance was not forgotten and in 1873 we have the Fairbanks Lodge named in honor of David Fairbanks, an influential citizen of the early

days. This lodge existed for ten years or more and was conducted by some of the most able people of the town. It was in this year that a lyceum was organized and noted lecturers and speakers were hired. Mrs. Mary Livermore and Miss Anna Dickinson were two of the number.

The newspaper says in 1875 that the Athletics, a base ball club, were given the use of Mr. Gideon Allen's meadow in which to play a match, so baseball still continued popular.

The Young People's Union of the Universalist Church and the Social Union of the Center Church were literary and social societies much enjoyed by all.

The Literary Circle of '77 whose object was general improvement had for its speakers Dr. Blaisdell, Herman Jennings, R. Perry Bush, Dr. A. H. Newton and H. A. Freeman.

We had a Young Men's Republican Club, Mr. M. N. Gifford, President. The Yacht Club whose meetings were in the Custom House building had these names among its members: Thomas Lowe, Henry Whorf, Benj. Lancy, Chas. A. Cook, Jr., and A. P. Hannum.

The Franklyn Club of young men was a political club which existed for a few years.

The Patterson Club connected with the Universalist Church was a very large and popular one, furnishing some of the most expensive and instructive entertainments ever held in town.

A fine boys' club called King Arthur Club, conducted by Rev. Geo. A. Gay was popular for awhile. Various military clubs have been organized. The Zouaves for young boys under the leadership of Mr. George Nickerson, another under Rev. Mr. Cotton.

The King's Daughters, a charitable society did good work for a number of years in town.

At present we have the sewing circles of the five churches with their various social and charitable societies, the Freeman's Post, Woman's Relief Corps, New England Order of Protection, the Boy Scouts who are being well trained under Mr. J. H. Weeks.

For the musical, there are several orchestras and a brass band.

For the athletic—Base ball and basket ball, this latter is enjoyed by both girls and boys.

Neighborhood social life has its part and there are numberless clubs of this kind.

With the growth of the town it has become necessary to form clubs for special work. The Nurses' Association for the support of the district nurse, the Red Cross and War Relief for help in our great war.

We have a large club of men—The Board of Trade, whose work is to better the conditions of our fisheries and its influence is used in all government and business propositions which shall be for the welfare of the town.

The Sunshine Club lives up to its name and dispenses sunshine to the sick and sorrowful of that home and abroad.

The Research Club members are Mayflower descendants and have for their object the keeping alive of old traditions and that spirit of loyalty which made the early settlers of the town, work, struggle and sacrifice in its interests.

Woman's influence to-day has become so great that throughout town, state and country are organized woman's clubs. These are federated in both state and nation and are under the control of the leading women of the country. To this federation belongs the Nautilus Club. From the state and the nation it receives instruction how its influence shall be used for the good of the country and it faithfully tries to fulfill its obligations, doing between times its town and social work.

So today clubs have become a part of our every day life and by organized effort great work is being done.

For years debating clubs were the popular entertainment and were very numerous.

One such club called the Lyceum used to meet in the room over the old Savings Bank, another met over Union Store. Some of the speakers were Mr. Elkanah Paine, Mr. John Atwood, Mr. Ditson.

In 1858 The Sons and Daughters of Temperance met in old Marine Hall, often having its meetings public with a general discussion on Temperance.

We are told of an old gentleman who wishing to emphasize the penetrating odor of wine, arose and said: "Children, dont use it! It is like Arabian Balsam. You know when you take that you can smell it on your robin (which was the old fashioned name for undershirt). This illustration so amused the young folks that it was never forgotten.

In 1865 there was another Lyceum Debating Club. Besides the regular paper of the evening on some popular topic, question box was used. The question drawn was discussed. One question was "If one should reach the North Pole in what direction would the needle point?" This gave the sea captains a chance for some lively talk. The question was finally settled by one of the members writing to Kane, the famous Arctic explorer, who said it would point south.

Some of the debaters in this club were Hon. James Gifford, Hon. John Davis, Hon. B. F. Hutchinson, Dr. Stone, Dr Shortle and Mr. A. L. Putnam.

There has hardly been a generation without its Shakespeare Club. All the plays were read and studied and in some of the early clubs ably acted.

Dramatic Clubs were as popular and many are the tales told of these clubs and their plays given in Ocean and Adams Hall.

The amateur actors would have made a name had they taken up the work as a profession.

Of course we had the Masonic Order in 1795 and the Odd Fellows in 1845, both while not considered as a club are in that order fraternizing and helping to uplift the character of each generation.