

Averett Tradition: Literary Societies

From its early years through the last year of junior college status in the 1970s, Averett College has placed an emphasis on the literary enrichment of its young ladies.

Roanoke Female College:

A Young Ladies' Literary Association was formed at Roanoke Female College around 1870 for the purpose of improving the literary tastes of the students. Teachers often took a personal interest and participated in the weekly Friday evening meetings.

In 1874, the school's Reading Club was composed of the members of the intermediate and the senior English classes, with the purpose of exposing the pupil to the best authors and to concentrate on the art of written thought and feeling.

By 1883 there were two literary societies at the college, the Longfellow and the Tennyson. Their weekly exercises consisted of songs, dialogues, plays, recitations, and readings of original essays, often followed by an hour of innocent amusements and recreations.

In 1889 the Lyrian Literary League met every two weeks to improve student literary taste and culture. Faculty members were invited as guests of the group. Non-residents of the college, including gentlemen, were sometimes invited to social receptions given by the group. The league's annual celebration soon became a part of the college's Commencement exercises.

In 1893 ladies of the Lyrian Literary League had laid the foundation of the college's first reference library, by asking for the donation of any good books and/or subscriptions to wholesome current magazines.

By 1894 the student literary league was called the Philomathian Literary Society.

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Averett College:

The Longfellow and Tennyson literary societies evolved into the Philomathian and Mnemosynean societies that were a focal point of the college years for Averett students from 1907 to 1970. Mnemosynean referred to the Greek Goddess of Memory while Philomathian meant Love of Learning.

The two societies were formed on November 8, 1907, one with the old name, Philomathian, and a new one called Mnemosynean. Every Averett student was automatically assigned to one group or the other. The establishment of these two groups began a friendly rivalry that existed for many years. Each group met twice a month to discuss controversial issues on a subject selected by a program committee.

Over the years Nemo and Philo programs expanded to include panel discussions and even athletic competitions. Faculty critics awarded points for their programs and those groups receiving the most points at the end of the school year won the literary or athletic trophies.

Mnemosynean Literary Society Song

Nemos, we're for you
In heart and spirit true.
We'll back you up in all you do.
We'll fight for colors too.

With pep we're out to win the game
And we're the same
With all our fame.
With flying colors we go forth
To do our best always.
Rah! Rah!
N-E-M-O-S spells our society
We are out to do our best
And first we'll always be.

Philomathean Literary Society Song

Philomatheans, honor to thee.
To your colors true we shall ever be.
Firm and strong, united are we.
Rah Rah Rah for the Philo team
Rah Rah Rah Rah!
Rah! Rah! The old Philos.

Fortunately, the rivalry was always of the friendliest sort and proved valuable because of the stimulus to individual thought and the originality that it encouraged from each girl.