

The History of Calliopean Society

THE Calliopean Society cannot trace its history without a break to the muse which presides over eloquence, but its records are unbroken from the early thirties. Its existence dates from almost the very beginning of the institution. School was opened in December of '31, and within four years two literary societies—the Wistonian and the Zeta Phi Theta—were founded. But on Christmas Day, Saturday, December 25, 1835, the two societies united to form a stronger organization—the Calliopean Society, with twenty-four charter members. The society obtained a charter from the State legislature March 10, 1836.

At that time the school, known as the Granville Literary and Theological Institution, was situated out on the Old College Farm, south-west of town. Like the school, the society struggled against adverse circumstances, but it was as tenacious of life as was the school itself.

It did not have a permanent meeting-place of its own until '57, but met in students' rooms, in Professor Carter's recitation room, in the chapel, in the "upper building" (as our old frame building was designated before it was moved), and even in the Baptist Church.

The time of meeting was not Friday evening at 7 o'clock, but Saturday forenoon, from 9 until 12. Semi-occasionally a regular meeting was deferred, not to attend a general reception or a class party, but, as was the case in June of '41, to work out road tax, or something more on that order. The time of meeting and the good attendance is sufficient comment on the unbounded earnestness and enthusiasm of the early days.

For a number of years the programs, which were secret, consisted of debates and declamations, with an occasional essay or oration. The debate was the center of interest. The whole society, with the exception of the President, Secretary and possibly one or two others, would choose sides and the question would be debated by eight, ten or, as in one instance, by thirteen men on a side, and then, too, each man had the privilege of speaking fifteen minutes.

The society did not confine its activities to the program, however. The Wistonian Society had collected a nucleus for a library which the Calliopean quite actively increased until '87, when it was turned over to the University Library.

Soon after the organization of the society, honorary members were elected, some of whom are Daniel Webster, James K. Paulding, Nathaniel P. Willis, James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, John Q. Adams and Henry Clay. Their acceptance is voiced in Henry Clay's reply:

WASHINGTON, June 13, 1836.

Dear Sir—I have received, with much satisfaction, your note announcing my election as an honorary member of the Calliopean Society of Granville College, and accept it with pleasure. With best wishes for the success of the society, I am

Respectfully,

H. CLAY.

After living five years without a motto it was found necessary for the welfare of the society to select a Greek phrase signifying the purpose of the organization. The motto, translated, is, "Truth, Excellence, Eloquence."

The installation of the society into its first hall was a red-letter day in its history. This was in the West Dormitory, Middle Hall, fourth floor, East side. When the dormitories were remodeled three years ago, the society was again thrown on the mercy of the professors, and the meeting-place was Willie's or Prexy's recitation room. But at last Calliope can again sing, "There's No Place Like Home."

Calliopeans can look back with commendable pride on the history of the organization. Yet the vital question is not, "Are they proud, or are they ashamed of their predecessors?" but, "Are their predecessors proud, or are they ashamed of them?"