Bixby Memorial Free Library
Special Collections

Title: Addison Social Library Records	**Accession #:** 19635
Dates: 1818-1848	**Object ID #:** 2013.006
Creator: David Chambers	**Condition:** Fair
Provenance: Addison Social Library	**Location:** History Room
Language: English	**Unit:** Cart A
Quantity: One notebook	**Shelf/Drawer:** Shelf 1

Description:
One fragile, handwritten record book with a cardboard cover on which the printed title has faded. The cover is stained, as are some pages. A significant number of back pages were cut out.

Significance:
Even as early residents of Addison were establishing homesteads and businesses, they saw utility and importance in reading. So a group in town established a cooperative lending library.

Historical Note:
“Social libraries were public libraries before there were modern public libraries. Seldom mentioned in general histories, they played a significant role in promoting access to print culture in the early United States. Social Libraries were not publicly governed or paid for by government revenue, but were independent local groups interested in sharing books and spreading 'useful knowledge'. They were generally open to all respectable people, mostly adult white males, and helped prepare the way for public libraries. Antebellum America was not accustomed to government-supported institutions like schools and libraries.

Americans had to go through a period of cultural experimentation in which the relative popularity but failure of voluntary libraries gave way to the growth of publicly governed and funded libraries. Social libraries were therefore a necessary stage in institutional development to prepare America for tax-supported public libraries.”

(Source: “America's Antebellum Social Libraries: A Reappraisal in Institutional Development” by Patrick M.Valentine, pp. 32-51, Published online: 7/18/2013)

Scope & Content:
The volume begins with the constitution written in 1818 to establish the Addison Social Library. The volume contains minutes for meetings held through 1848. Some pages were cut out, but it isn't clear if they ever held records. The end of the book contains records of individuals conveying their shares to others.

Within the volume it is recorded that ten men established the private library, pledging to pay $2 for a share and then 50 cents a year per share to cover expansions of the library. If borrowers failed to return books at the quarterly meetings, they had to pay 25 cents.

Key Search Items:
Addison, social library, founders Ira Strong, Frederick Smith, Charles C. Ernst, David Chambers, Chilion Wines, Justus S. Hough, John M. Strong, Sedgwick T. Woodford, and Samuel H. Woodford

Inventory:

- One handwritten book

Related Materials:
NA

Surveyed by: Nancy Remsen **Date:** June 24, 2021