

THE STRATFORD CLUB

1881

1883 - 1965

The Stratford Club had its beginning in the fall of 1881 at the invitation of Miss Ellen Morrill whose intention was to read Shakespeare. The group began with the history of the time preceding the historical plays, and in the spring read "King John." Out of ten clubs existing at various times throughout the years, this is the only one devoted to the reading and study of Shakespeare that has been in continuous existence. This is mainly due to the limitation of the active membership to sixteen carefully chosen interested women. No dues are paid, the treasury consisting of small fines for absence or tardiness.

Meetings were held in homes until the Fowler Library was opened on October 18, 1888. The best room, by the thoughtfulness of Clara M. and William P. Fowler, was set apart for the use of the Shakespeare Clubs of Concord. All ten contributed to the furnishings and enjoyed its use.

When the City Library was erected, a room on the second floor was set apart, given legal status, and furnished with the contents of the former one. Since February 5, 1940 meetings have been held there from November through April on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month from 3:00 to 5:00 P.M.

It is noteworthy that Concord is probably the only city in the country that has had so many Shakespeare Clubs and a room for their special use. Also the present Stratford Club is as old if not older than any other in the United States.

Both the American Shakespeare Theatre of Stratford, Conn. and Mr. Papp's free performances in Central Park have been loyally supported.

The spirit of the club is best expressed by the following sonnet composed by one of its members, Susan J. Woodward, and first heard on December 2, 1895.

Dear group of those whom most I love to meet,
Who oft with me have sailed the troubled main,
Reached "vext Bermoothes" with a tattered fleet,
Or fought with Henry on great Shrewsbury's plain;--
So intermingled are you in my soul
With those immortals whom you picture out,
That in your voices stately measures roll,
And from your faces tragedies peep out.
Some one will reason with wise Portia's tone;
And, sometimes, passing through the crowded street,
I hear fair Beatrice laugh, catch Romeo's moan,
Or fall like him at some fair Juliet's feet.
And yet, despite all this, I sometimes fear,
It is yourselves I love, who most are dear.

Ms. Arthur Webster Stevens President

Ms. Dorothy Leonard Smith Vice-President

Ms. Wilbur Frederick Cameron Secretary-Treasurer