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AVERY RESEARCH CENTER  
FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN  
HISTORY AND CULTURE

**Inventory of the  
Friendly Moralists Society, 1841 - 1856**

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## Descriptive Summary

<b>Title:</b>	Friendly Moralist Society,
<b>Dates:</b>	1841 - 1856
<b>Creator:</b>	Friendly Moralist Society.
<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>The Friendly Moralist Society was a benevolent society, established in Charleston SC, 1838 for free men of mulatto or mixed race. The group served the community by providing burial aid, purchasing plots and assisting during funerals, for those in need. The organization also worked to provide charitable assistance to needy widows and orphans of deceased members. Each member was entitled to certain rights of membership, namely financial assistance in times of illness or financial strain. Among the society's most prominent members were men from the Holloway, Sasportas, and Wilkinson families.</p> <p>The records of the Friendly Moralist Society contain one volume of minutes highlighting the Society meetings from 1841 to 1856. The volume is divided into two sections: Absentees Book (1842-1849) and Proceedings Book (1841-1856). The absentees section details member attendance from May 9, 1842 to February 12, 1849. Many of the entries are annotated with explanations for member absences. Notations are also made of those members fined for non-attendance, along with quotes on amounts levied. The proceedings section consists of minutes taken at the organizational meetings from August 9, 1841 to November 1856. The meetings consist of opening prayer, collection of dues and arrears, followed by new business. Among the important events documented are the group's Annual Day meetings in June, with copies of two annual meeting speeches (for 1848 and 1853) copied in, elections of new members and officers, as well as resolutions approved to dedicate memorial pages to several deceased members (C. Henry Wood, Henry F. Moon, and Edward Cotton).</p>
<b>Extent:</b>	.5 linear feet(1 archival box)
<b>Repository:</b>	Avery Research Center at the College of Charleston
<b>Call Number:</b>	AMN 1009
<b>Language of Material:</b>	Material in English

## Historical Note

The Friendly Moralist Society was a benevolent society, established in Charleston SC, 1838 for free men of mulatto or mixed race. The group served the community by providing burial aid, purchasing plots and assisting during funerals, for those in need. The organization also worked to provide charitable assistance to needy widows and orphans of deceased members. Each member was entitled to certain rights of membership, namely financial assistance in times of illness or financial strain. Among the society's most prominent members were men from the Holloway, Sasportas, and Wilkinson families.

## Collection Overview

The records of the Friendly Moralist Society contain one volume of minutes highlighting the Society meetings from 1841 to 1856. The volume is divided into two sections: Absentees Book (1842-1849) and Proceedings Book (1841-1856).

The absentees section details member attendance from May 9, 1842 to February 12, 1849. Many of the entries are annotated with explanations for member absences. Notations are also made of those members fined for non-attendance, along with quotes on amounts levied.

The proceedings section consists of minutes taken at the organizational meetings from August 9, 1841 to November 1856. The meetings consist of opening prayer, collection of dues and arrears, followed by new business. Among the important events documented are the Annual Day meetings in June, with copies of two annual meeting speeches (for 1848 and 1853) copied in, elections of new members and officers, as well as resolutions approved to dedicate memorial pages to several deceased members (C.Henry Wood, Henry F. Moon, and Edward Cotton).

The minutes also highlight the financial affairs of the Society, namely its investment of member funds into local businesses and the eventual financial pains stemming from the departure of several members including the board of trustees (Feb.-Mar. 1849). The records also provide insight into conflict between free black and "brown" (mulatto) individuals in this period.

There are several incidents of exclusion of prospective members due to their being black rather than "brown." (May 1844, Oct 1848). One member definition of brown is also provided (Oct 1848). The annual meeting speech for 1848 addresses the issues of being colored versus being black or white; and the speech for 1853 gives a history of the Society.

## Collection Arrangement

1. Organizational Papers

## Restrictions

### Access Restrictions

No restrictions.

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## Subject Headings

African American businesspeople -- South Carolina -- Charleston -- History.

African Americans -- Race identity -- History.

African Americans -- South Carolina -- Charleston -- History.

African Americans -- South Carolina -- Charleston -- Societies, etc.

Fraternal organizations -- South Carolina -- Charleston.

Free African Americans -- South Carolina -- Charleston.

Friendly Moralist Society (Charleston, S.C.) -- Records and correspondence.

Holloway family.

Racially mixed people -- South Carolina -- Charleston -- History.

Sasportas family.

Wilkinson family.

## **Administrative Information**

### **Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item], Friendly Moralist Society, Avery Research Center, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC, USA.

### **Processing Information**

Processed by Ervin Barnes, 2006

Encoded by Melissa Bronheim, July 2010

Edited by Melissa Bronheim

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### 1. Organizational Papers, 1841-1856

Box 1 Folder 1

The Friendly Moralist Society Minute book, 1841-1856

Includes sections with notes regarding members attendance and reasons for missing meetings. It also documents amount fined members for being absent. The proceedings are recorded by the elected secretaries and detail the meetings. Highlights include Annual Day festivities, induction of new members, and meetings. Minutes reveal the working of the Society and its role in providing burial aid and financial support to widows and orphans. Also explored is the intra-racial strife between free blacks and those of mixed parentage; minutes from May 1844 and October 1848 show the exclusion of free blacks from membership. In addition, the minutes chronicle the financial affairs of the group, with many references to the Society investment practices and financial troubles in the late 1840s. Of note are two June annual meeting addresses (1848 and 1853), the former discussing the status of mulattos caught between black slave and white populations, and the need for education and banding together for the benefit of all of their class; and the latter giving a history of the society and the various schisms.