Descriptive Summary
Repository: Martha’s Vineyard Museum
Call No.
Title: Literary Societies of Martha’s Vineyard, 1837-1890
Creator:
Quantity: .5 cubic feet
Abstract: This collection includes three bound volumes relating to the literary societies of Martha’s Vineyard. These ledgers contain membership lists, constitutions, by-laws and the recorded minutes of meetings of The Edgartown Lyceum 1837 - 1853, a later organization of the same name which met from 1876 – 1890, and the Cottage City Literary Society 1880-1884. The collection also includes selected transcripts of meetings of the first Edgartown Lyceum.

Administrative Information
Acquisition Information:
Processing Information: Betsy Campbell
Access Restrictions: none
Use Restrictions: none
Preferred Citation of Publication: Martha’s Vineyard Museum, Literary Societies of Martha’s Vineyard, Record Unit 394.

Index Terms
Edgartown Literary Societies
Edgartown Lyceum
Cottage City Literary Society

Series and Subseries Arrangement
Series I: Edgartown Lyceum, 1837-1853
Series II: Edgartown Lyceum, 1876-1890
Series III: Cottage City Literary Society and Cottage City Lyceum, 1880-1884
**Historical Note**

The original Edgartown Lyceum was founded in 1837 by a group of men whose goal was “the improvement of the intellect and cultivation of faculties by which mind can communicate with mind.” The group met regularly from 1837 to 1853. Programs included lectures and debates on social, moral, political and philosophical topics. Local issues were not chosen as subjects for debate. Instead, topics were of national or historic interest. After each debate a vote was taken to choose the winning side. The first president of the organization was David Davis, also tax collector for the town of Edgartown.

In 1876 a new Edgartown Lyceum was formed. This group patterned itself on the earlier club of the same name. The structure, by-laws, and program format of the two groups are very similar. Debate topics covered a wide range of concerns. For example: “Is it possible that the United States will sink into decay which befell the nations of antiquity?” “Should capital punishment be abolished?” “Would the condition of society and of women be improved by placing the two sexes on an equality with respect to civil rights and duties?” The club disbanded in 1890.

The Cottage City Literary Society was founded in 1880 for “mutual improvement and social intercourse.” Membership included men and women. Programs consisted of vocal and instrumental music, poetry readings, recitations, lectures, choral singing and charades. This society met during October and November 1880. In December 1883, the Cottage City Lyceum was organized with much the same membership as the earlier literary society. The first meeting was held at The Wesley House, November 7, 1883 with fifty-three people in attendance. The last recorded meeting was in February 1884.

**Scope and Content Note**

The .5 cubic foot collection includes three bound volumes. One volume records the organizational details, membership lists and minutes of meetings of the Edgartown Lyceum 1837-1853. A second volume contains similar records for the later Edgartown Lyceum which met from 1876-1890. A third volume contains records of the Cottage City Literary Society and The Cottage City Lyceum. This book was also used to record the minutes of the Sunday School Board of Cottage City 1888-1892. A pamphlet containing a Fourth of July poem written by David Davis is filed separately. Selected transcripts of the meetings of The Edgartown Lyceum are in a separate folder.
Series Descriptions

Series I: Edgartown Lyceum, 1837-1853
Folder 1: David Davis poem, 1836
Folder 2: Bound Volume, 1837-1853
Folder 3: Loose Paper Found in Bound Volume
Folder 4: Selected Typed Transcripts of Bound Volume

Series II: Edgartown Lyceum, 1876-1890
Folder 5: Bound Volume, 1876-1890

Series III: Cottage City Literary Society, 1880-1884
Folder 6: Bound Volume, 1880-1884