

mssc131a

**MsSC 131A**

**LONGFELLOW CHAUTAUQUA LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC CIRCLE,  
TACOMA, WA, records, 3 v.**

**Abstract:** The Longfellow Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle was organized in Tacoma, W.T. in October 1886.

**History:** The Chautauqua movement began in 1874 at Lake Chautauqua, NY. Originally, it was intended to provide cultural enrichment for rural teachers, however, it soon became place where individuals and families gathered for several days of inspiration, education and enjoyment. There were well-known speakers, bands and orchestras, plays, and other events. In 1878, Chautauqua established the first “book club” or circle and, eventually, there were more than 10,000 local reading circles throughout the country

The first Chautauqua reading circle established on Puget Sound was in Seattle in September, 1884. At about the same time, a Chautauqua reading circle was organized at the First Congregational Church in Tacoma, and a year later, in early October of 1885, it reorganized as the Longfellow Circle and held its first meeting on the 4th. Both men and women attended the circle, which was held at individual member’s homes. Originally scheduled to meet “each and every” Monday, the meeting schedule soon became much less regimented. There was a ten-cent fine levied for absences, and missing two consecutive meetings resulted in the forfeiture of membership.

There were occasional speakers, but the meetings mostly consisted of discussions of readings or themes assigned at the previous meeting. Geology, astronomy, literature, history (particularly Classical), and medicine were but a few of the many topics covered in the meetings. There were infrequent musical entertainments, as well.

By the mid-1890s participation appears to have diminished and the minutes end in May of 1897.

**Scope and content:** The records consist of three minutes books, 1886-1897, and a history of the Longfellow Circle written in 1897. Entries for each meeting include the residence where the circle was held, those in attendance, and the topics discussed.

**Inclusive dates:** 1886-1897

**Restrictions:** None

**Volume:** 3 v.

**Accession numbers:** 1919.153; 1926.19.13

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**Box 1**

<b>Folder</b>	<b>Contents</b>
1	Minutes book, 4 October 1886—21 January 1889
2	Minutes book, 30 September 1889—3 September 1892
3	Minutes book, 12 October 1895—18 May 1897
4	History, 1886-1897, 5 p.