
Guide to the Proceedings of the Anaximandrian Society, 1935-1945

Archives

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Organizational History

The Anaximandrian Society at Caltech was formed early in 1935 by a group of undergraduates from biology interested in studying the history of physiology. The society continued at least until August, 1945, when the last of its proceedings were distributed.

Details of the founding, membership, and subsequent history of the society may be found in short chronicles bound into each of the eleven volumes containing the proceedings. A few highlights may be mentioned here.

The society was formed originally by five students, to which body two more were elected in the first year. Membership was limited to juniors and seniors. Monthly meetings were held, at which a member would deliver a paper conforming to a predetermined general theme. The theme for the first year was "Early European Physiology to 1700." The society chose its name based on the fact that Anaximander was "the most obscure and ancient physiologist known to the founders." The group met, and continued to do so for most of its life, at the home of Professor Henry Borsook, who appears to have acted as unofficial mentor to the society in its early days.

By the end of the third year it was decided to open the society to graduate students and faculty. Although the society continued during the World War II, its character changed. Borsook was mostly absent, although he returned in the last year. Undergraduate members fell away, leaving a few graduate students with mostly faculty, plus invited visitors, to swell the ranks.

A description of the society may be found in the oral history of Henry Borsook.

Eleven volumes bound in eight. [Volume numbering on the spines is incorrect, as vol. 8 is omitted. Volumes are numbered internally 1-7 and 9-12.] Feb. 1935-Aug. 1945.