The Lyceum in New Orleans, 1840-1860

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THE LYCEUM IN NEW ORLEANS, 1840-1860

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

The Department of Speech

by

Mary Lucille Hamilton
B.A., Mary Hardin-Baylor College, 1947
August, 1948
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The author wishes to express appreciation to Dr. Waldo W. Braden of the Department of Speech, Louisiana State University, for his guidance, encouragement, and interest. Likewise, she is indebted to Dr. Giles W. Gray, Dr. Claude Shaver, and Dr. Harriett Idol for additional suggestions in the writing of this thesis.
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AUTobiography ................................. 93
The purpose of this study was to discover the extent and nature of the lyceum movement in the city of New Orleans during the period from 1840-1860. Specifically an attempt was made to answer such questions as:

1. What organizations fostered the lyceum?
2. What were the aims of these organizations?
3. Who were the lecturers?
4. What types of subjects had the greatest appeal?
5. To what extent was the lyceum popular with the people?

The thesis could logically fall into three divisions. The first part, composed of Chapter II, deals with the cultural background of New Orleans from 1840-1860. The second part, which included Chapters III through VII, is a description in chronological order of the lyceum movement in New Orleans from 1840-1860. Arbitrarily four seasons are included in each chapter. The final part, Chapter VIII, gives the characteristics of the lyceum movement in New Orleans during this period.

The principal sources are The Daily Picayune, The Daily Delta, and The Daily Crescent, leading newspapers of New Orleans. This period, 1840-1860, was chosen because investigation indicated that since New Orleans made her greatest cultural advancements in that period, it would be the most logical one for the greatest advancement of the lyceum.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"In 1815 new winds had begun to blow over the American people. For more than a decade they buffeted the fortresses of old habits and ideas, and then in 1829, with the elevation of Andrew Jackson to the presidency, they gained full sweep."¹ In the twenty years from 1830 to 1850 these new concepts were to dominate American life; they grew established and respectable. Driven by a curious, relentless power the dauntless American became a humanitarian who wished to "reform" society or "convert the world." He started movements to improve prison conditions, treatment of the insane, and the ordinary laborer's working hours. Women fought for women's rights. One of the more spectacular movements was that which went under the "general designation of temperance." Some turned their attention to the cause of world peace, founding an American Peace Society. Others a little more radical attacked slavery in the South. Perhaps of all the movements during this period public education was the most successful for it had the least opposition.²

² Ibid., passim.
American education had been previously neglected. Illiteracy was common; the public school was virtually unknown. Realizing that education for the masses was a vital necessity for American democracy, a few far-sighted people saw a need to improve education in the common school and to promote some type of adult education. More specifically they saw a need for some agency through which interest in common education might be aroused. In answer to that need, an agency called the lyceum was formed to include a system of lecture courses for the promotion of common schools and the diffusion of knowledge. Lyceum attendance would expose "all to the possibilities of learning and subject them to a group enthusiasm for mental cultivation which was not to be resisted." As Thomas S. Grimke of South Carolina said, the lyceum system was one "admirably fitted to confer precisely that degree and that kind of knowledge which is so valuable to the people of this country, which, without making them profound scholars, will enlarge their minds so that they can comprehend the value of learning."  

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4 Ibid., p. 34.

5 Ibid., p. 29.
The credit for founding the lyceum in the United States probably belongs to Josiah Holbrook, who first proposed the organization in October, 1826. He submitted to the educators and the people of the nation by means of the American Journal of Education his plan for an educational society which would reach and affect every part of the nation. He was careful to emphasize the purpose of this lyceum: (1) the improvement of the common schools; (2) the formation of lecture courses and the establishment of classes for the education of adults; and (3) the organization of libraries and museums. Under his guidance, the first lyceum was organized at Millbury, Mass., from a local society of thirty or forty farmers and mechanics.

"The movement, immediately popular, swept the entire country, by 1835 three thousand villages, one county, and fifteen or sixteen state lyceums were in operation." In 1831, a group of enthusiasts organized the American Lyceum, a national organization made up of representatives from lower political divisions. This association, which met annually through 1839, fostered an interest in general

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6 Ibid., p. 1.


10 Ibid.
education which eventually resulted in more public schools and better paid teachers. It is generally agreed that it dis-appeared, not because of its failure, but because its purpose was partially accomplished and other agencies assumed its functions.

However, the village or city lyceum, as a local institution, did not die. Between 1827 and 1850 many of the public lecturers of the country appeared before such groups. To many the local lyceum offered a pleasant means of obtaining information on wide and varied subjects outside the realm of their small worlds. It satisfied their insatiable thirst for information on everything from the formation of the earth to life in the courts of George III. Some of the listeners, it is true, considered it no more than a weekly social gathering; but others sincerely regarded it as an important and necessary means of improving the mind.

Despite its importance little has actually been written specifically about the institution. Such material as has been assembled has been confined largely to the lyceum in New England and the North. To many persons the word "lyceum" brings to mind the famous "Lowell Institute" of Boston or the names of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Wendell Phillips, John B. Cough, Henry Ward Beecher, Bayard Taylor, and James Russel Lowell, all famous New England lecturers.

11 Hayes, op. cit., p. 36.
12 Ibid., p. 22.
Little investigation has been made of the movement in the South. Some writers have intimated that the lyceum of New England had no parallel in the South. In his book *The Rise of the Common Man*, in which the lyceum movement is discussed at some length, Carl Fish ignores the possibility of a Southern lyceum.13 Clement Eaton in *Freedom of Thought in the Old South* says, "the lyceum in the South affected only a few people in the cities. It did not serve, as in the North, as a means of adult education and of popularizing the novel ideas and reforms of Europe." 14 Paul S. Stoddard merely mentions that the lyceum did penetrate as far south as Georgia and South Carolina. However, in general, it seems that what happened to the lyceum below the Mason-Dixon line remains unknown. 15

Operating on the hypothesis that the lyceum must have received at least some attention in the deep South, the writer has conducted an investigation to discover the extent and nature of the lyceum movement in the city of New Orleans during the period from 1840-1860. No attempt is made to trace the movement to its origin in New Orleans.

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13 Fish, *op. cit.*, p. 225.


According to such historians as Carl Fish, from 1840-1860 America experienced a wave of reform movements, social, political, economic, and educational. Further investigation indicated that New Orleans in particular made her greatest cultural advancements in that same period. Thus, the writer has chosen the period 1840-1860 as the most logical one for the greatest advancement of the lyceum, an important element of the general educational movement.

Specifically the writer attempts to discover and present, with reference to these two decades, the answers to such questions as:

1. What organizations fostered the lyceum?
2. What were the aims of these organizations?
3. Who were the lecturers?
4. What types of subjects had the greatest appeal?
5. To what extent was the lyceum popular with the people?

According to Cecil Hayes, the lyceum promoted three important projects: increase in teachers' salaries, establishment of libraries, and a system of lecture courses. Other activities included writing local histories, making maps of towns and counties, and initiating geological and meteorological studies. However, as Fish points out, its main activity was the establishment of lecture courses. The writer, being most interested in the

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16 Hayes, op. cit., p. 50.
"lecture" phase of the lyceum movement, has limited the study to that phase only. Writing in 1865, J. G. Holland insisted that the word defied definition; it included, he said, "all orations, declamations, dissertations, exhortations, recitations, humorous extravaganzas, narratives of travel, harangues, sermons, semi-sermons, semi-demi-sermons, and lectures proper, which can be crowded into what is called a course." 17 Obviously, "lecturing" designated almost "any type of presentation from a lecture platform." 18 The writer accepted only those programs which were recorded by the newspapers as "lectures" or listed in connection with the various lyceum organizations.

The principal sources are The Daily Picayune, The Daily Delta, and The Daily Crescent, leading newspapers of New Orleans, found in the archives of the New Orleans City Library and Louisiana State University Library. The material found in these papers was often limited, including "Special Notices" and "Professional Notices," editorials, and general news items.

The thesis could logically fall into three divisions. The first part, composed of Chapter II, deals with the cultural background of New Orleans from 1840-1860. The second part, which includes Chapters III through VII, is a description in

chronological order of the lyceum movement in New Orleans from 1840-1860. Arbitrarily four seasons have been included in each chapter. The final part, Chapter VIII, gives the characteristics of the lyceum movement in New Orleans. The plan of development is as follows:

Chapter I. Introduction
Chapter II. Cultural Background of New Orleans, 1840-1850
Chapter III. Early Activities of the Lyceum, 1840-1844
Chapter IV. Seasons of 1844-1848
Chapter V. Seasons of 1848-1852
Chapter VI. Seasons of 1852-1856
Chapter VII. Seasons of 1856-1860
Chapter VIII. Characteristics of the Lyceum in New Orleans
CHAPTER II

CULTURAL BACKGROUND IN NEW ORLEANS, 1840-1860

Over two hundred years ago Jean Baptiste de Bienville selected a few knolls rising out of a tree-covered swamp as the site for his capitol because he believed that one day it would grow into a great and prosperous city. In 1722 his capitol consisted of one hundred disorderly, barrack-like buildings, a wooden storehouse, and two or three crude homes. Yet he foresaw a great future for this city, predicting that one day in the not too distant future it would be an "opulent city and the metropolis of a great and rich colony." ¹ From that day forward, each year found New Orleans one step nearer Bienville's dream.

New Orleans paid allegiance to France and Spain alternately until she came under the dominion of the United States in 1803. In March, 1805, New Orleans was incorporated as a city; ² her citizens turned their attention to local affairs. The restless spirit pervading the city during the unsettled years preceding the Louisiana Purchase gradually disappeared. Her future seemed particularly bright.

² Ibid., p. 24.
The first important change noted after New Orleans was ceded to the United States was the rapid increase in population. At the time of the transfer, there were not 8,000 inhabitants. In 1810 there were 24,552 people and by 1840, the year in which this study begins, the population had passed the 100,000 mark. This great influx of people brought many changes in the civic and social life.

Society in New Orleans resembled no other city in the union, being a mixture of almost all nations. First and foremost the Creoles, entirely of French and Spanish parentage, formed the foundation of society. They were a closely knit social group, entering into business arrangements with extreme caution.

New Orleans also shared the influx of European immigrants to western lands; between 1845 and 1850 they averaged 30,000 per year. In 1842 the population was largely mixed with German

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3 The following chart will give additional information concerning the increase in population:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Blacks</th>
<th>Whites</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>8,001</td>
<td>16,551</td>
<td>24,552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1815</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>32,947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>19,737</td>
<td>21,614</td>
<td>41,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>45,336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>21,280</td>
<td>28,530</td>
<td>49,826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>102,191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., p. 73-74.
people who had advanced to a condition of wealth and respect-
ability. Among these German immigrants was one Christian Roselius who played such an important part in this period of civic affairs in New Orleans.

Next came the migrants from the sister states, from the mighty West, from the older sections of the South, and from the North. B. M. Norman in his book, *New Orleans and Environs*, gives credit to the "enterprising Yankees" for vast improvements to the city. Among these men were Samuel J. Peters, John L. Riddell, and Abdiel D. Crossman from Maine, and the Reverend Theodore Clapp from New Hampshire, who were all leading citizens in New Orleans from 1840 to 1860. M. M. Cohen, in his *New Orleans Directory* for 1855, mentions "the enterprise and industry, the go-aheadative, yet shrewd disposition of the New England race" which he felt had done much towards developing the resources of the city. The Yankee from the North proved himself an indispensable part of the city life.

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7 To him the cause of education owes much. He was most active in establishing schools and in seeking the improvement of the rising generation. John Smith Whitaker, *Sketches of Life and Character in Louisiana* (New Orleans: Ferguson and Crosby, 1847), p. 14.

However, in spite of the good-will which seemingly had been established among the Creoles and Americans, still difficulties and disagreements existed among them. Jealousies, party spirit, language, customs, and nationality brought disagreements. By 1836 this strife had culminated in the division of the city into three municipalities; old town or "Vieux Carre," Faubourg Ste. Marie, and Faubourg Marigny. The governments for each unit were distinct with independent powers, but over all was a mayor and council which served as a unifying element. 9 This system has important implications in a study of the social and intellectual development of the city. The second Municipality, Faubourg Ste. Marie, immediately seems to have taken the lead in cultural activities. Interestingly enough in this section lived many such enterprising and influential New Englanders as Samuel J. Peters, 10 who was the leading alderman of the Second Municipality. Many of these adopted citizens from New England and the North were later to take the initiative in forwarding the lyceum movement.


10 "New Orleans may point to this gentleman as to one of the chief movers in its march of prosperity during the last twenty years. To him it owes many of its most important and valuable improvements....The noble edifices, the well paved streets, the prosperity of its system of public education, the admirable municipal arrangements there existing, all evince the activity and energy of this noted alderman." Whitaker, op. cit., p. 74.
The presence of the Creoles, who were direct descendants of the early French and Spanish settlers, and the so-called "Americans," who had but relatively recently arrived, complicated the social as well as the civil life of the city. As Norman pointed out, there were too many restrictions around "Society," making it difficult for a newcomer to take his part in many social activities. The Creoles especially demanded not only "unexceptionable character," but "family background" as well before admitting any outsider to their domestic circles. Thus, the newcomer to New Orleans, who could not always exhibit his family tree, found difficulty in gaining social acceptance. For pastime he had to rely on the theaters, musicales, and other such public entertainment. By 1845, Norman felt it behooved the city to provide more general cultural advantages in the form of public libraries, reading rooms, galleries for fine arts, and lyceums for lectures to establish a new and better order and to break down the social barriers.

Carl Russell Fish has described what America in general was experiencing in the years from 1830 to 1840 as the "rise of the common man" in the form of all types of reform, social, political, economic, and educational. Just so, New Orleans after 1840 began to make many advancements. For example, in 1841,

11 Norman, op. cit., p. 76.
12 Ibid., p. 77.
13 Fish, op. cit., passim.
responsibility for the public school system was assumed by the municipalities, each one being required to establish within its limits one or more public schools. The Second Municipality was by far the most progressive educationally. By 1844 it had three schools, eleven teachers, and six hundred fifteen pupils. In 1850 the enrollment in the public schools was nearly three thousand; the Municipality was spending $73,000 in public education. Peters, who had travelled in the Northern and Eastern states in 1840 was largely responsible for this program and for the close resemblance of the New Orleans school system to that in New England. A part of this educational growth consisted in, or led to, the establishment of the Lyceum Society, which will be discussed in Chapter IV.

In 1847 the University of Louisiana was established in New Orleans. The schools of law and medicine already in operation became part of the system. "Academic faculties were also constituted, and the privilege of establishing a grammar school was granted."  

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14 Rickey, op. cit., p. 110.
15 Ibid.
16 Documents of the First Session of the Third Legislature of the State of Louisiana, 1850, p. 2.
17 Cohen, op. cit., p. 74.
18 In 1884 it became Tulane University.
After 1830 a rapid building program commenced and continued through the years from 1840 to 1860. Bienville's New Orleans of several crude buildings was a far cry from the New Orleans of the eighteen forties. In 1844 more buildings were erected than any previous year. \(^{20}\) The present City Hall was erected in 1849. Many churches were built; the First Presbyterian on Lafayette Square, the Carondelet Methodist Church, and others. Again the Second Municipality took the lead, building "commodious stores and warehouses, handsome dwelling houses, large and splendid hotels and exchanges, rich and gorgeous churches." \(^{21}\)

An article in J. B. D. DeBow's Review for April, 1846, reported that New Orleans then had four libraries open to the public, among which were the Library of the Young Men's Free Association in the First Municipality, the State Library containing three thousand volumes, and a private library owned by B. F. French containing over seven thousand volumes. \(^{22}\)

The recurring deadly disease, yellow fever, was a terrible scourge in the lives of the citizens. Epidemics constantly threatened the people. The surrounding terrain was largely swamp; the ground was too flat for a natural system of drainage;

\(^{20}\) Norman, op. cit., p. 71.

\(^{21}\) Documents, p. 2.

\(^{22}\) DeBow's Review, I (April, 1846), p. 332.
year after year yellow fever imperiled the lives of the citizens. 23 Usually the epidemic started sometime in the middle of summer; in 1853 the first case was reported as early as May. 24 That year yellow fever reached the peak of its devastation. 25 The yearly threat of such epidemics slowed down and in many years curtailed all forms of group activity — the theater, the lyceum, and the churches. This deadly enemy motivated the citizens to demand that some measure be taken to rid the city of its threat. However, medical knowledge concerning the origin of the disease was still fifty years in the future.

23 The following table shows the number of cases of yellow fever admitted to hospitals. No figures are available on those who died without hospital care.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>First Case</th>
<th>Last Case</th>
<th>Adm'd</th>
<th>Dis'g'd</th>
<th>Died</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>July 23</td>
<td>Nov. 17</td>
<td>1086</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>July 9</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>Aug. 2</td>
<td>Dec. 8</td>
<td>1113</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>Aug. 4</td>
<td>Nov. 26</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td>July 10</td>
<td>Dec. 31</td>
<td>1053</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>487</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Norman, op. cit., p. 120.

24 Ibid., p. 50.

25 Rickey, op. cit., p. 49.
In 1840 New Orleans stood on the threshold of newer and greater achievements. She had weathered successfully the financial crisis of 1836. She had made a start in civic improvement and was eager to do more. She possessed a group of energetic men vitally interested in obtaining civic and cultural improvements. She was aware of the need for greater cultural advantages for her people. With such a background it is only natural that during this period, in an effort to meet this need, the lyceum would develop and make its contributions to the cultural life of the city.
CHAPTER III

EARLY ACTIVITIES OF THE LYCEUM, 1840-1844

Obviously a full grown lyceum program did not develop in New Orleans overnight; a beginning was made somewhere. However, in this study the writer was not concerned with how and why the lyceum came to New Orleans, but only with its development during the years from 1840-1860. That a lyceum existed prior to 1840 seems evident for several reasons. First, it is known that an organization called the "People's Lyceum," 1 referred to later in this chapter, supported the public schools up until 1841. Second, the newspapers did not indicate in any way that the lectures offered in New Orleans during the first season investigated, 1840-41, were new to the public; they seem to have been an accepted public performance.

Although a lyceum evidently existed before 1840, seemingly it had yet to receive the enthusiastic support of the later eighteen forties and early eighteen fifties. Consequently, activities of the lyceum from 1840-1844 are characterized somewhat by unorganized effort. Most of the lecturers who came to New Orleans were itinerants who gained audiences by advertising through the newspapers. There was no organization as yet for the specific purpose of sponsoring a definite program in New Orleans.

1 New Orleans Daily Delta, October 24, 1845.
Season of 1840-41

The season of 1840-41 found three men lecturing in New Orleans. Late in November Professor John L. Riddell of the Medical College of Louisiana opened the season with a series of lectures on chemistry, which lasted through March. These lectures were delivered in the College Hall, No. 239 Canal Street, every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evening. Tickets for the series were $20.

In January, 1841, Colonel Lehmanowsky, an old Polish officer who had served under Napoleon, delivered, in the basement story of the church on Lafayette Square, an "exceedingly interesting" course of lectures upon the life of the General.

In February Mr. Louis Fitzgerald Tosistro, author of Travels in the Southern States, arrived in New Orleans. In what was no doubt his own paid advertisement he stated his intention to deliver four lectures on the genius of Shakespeare. Amazingly enough it seems his subject was "entirely new" to the general public of New Orleans; "they considered it a high intellectual treat." Single tickets for the lectures were one dollar each; tickets admitting

2 New Orleans Daily Picayune, November 25, 1840.
3 Ibid.
5 Ibid., February 17, 1841.
6 Ibid., February 19, 1841.
one person to the four lectures, three dollars each; family tickets including one gentleman and two ladies, eight dollars each. Each one of his lectures included, "a brief dissertation on the influence of Shakespeare's writings on the human mind, as connected with education and the pursuits of literature; a critical analysis of some of his most popular plays, interspersed with remarks on dramatic representations." He made a favorable impression with his first lecture and assured himself a fair attendance throughout.

**Season of 1841-42**

The season of 1841-42 produced only one itinerant lecturer, Professor Cubi, who lectured on "a modern science" called phrenology. It is interesting to note that his first lecture was gratuitous, a policy which it seems many itinerant lecturers followed.

It was during this season that the "People's Lyceum," an organization for the advancement of public lectures, was first specifically mentioned. When the People's Lyceum was first

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7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., February 20, 1841.
9 Ibid., February 25, 1841.
10 Ibid., January 19, 1842.
11 Ibid., January 22, 1842.
organized is not known, but in the previous two years no mention is made of it in the newspapers. Under its sponsorship, a public lecture was delivered early in 1842 by W. C. Hamner on "The Effect of Intercourse, by Means of Steam, Upon American Character and Upon Man." 12

Season of 1842-43

The next year with new officers activities of the People's Lyceum were expanded. M. M. Cohen 13 was the newly elected president. With only a few exceptions each week saw a lecture before the lyceum through March 15, 1843. Usually an announcement concerning the attraction for the week appeared in one of the weekly papers a few days before.

The lecturers before the People's Lyceum during this season were all residents of New Orleans. Probably most of them lectured gratis, for there is only one mention of a fee charged. 14 The newspapers do not make known the names of all the lecturers who participated, but mentioned were two professors from the University of Louisiana, C. G. Forshey and R. Grant who delivered lectures on

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12 Ibid., February 3, 1842.

13 M. M. Cohen was a prominent lawyer in New Orleans and later published a New Orleans Directory.

14 "A lecture will be delivered this evening at the 'People's Lyceum', . . . by Mr. Crawford, a member of the Institute, . . . Admittance, twenty five cents." New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 18, 1843.
geology and chemistry respectively. Members of the Second Munici-
paty Council were invited to Professor Forshey's lectures in
order, no doubt, to promote interest in the program. Alexander
Dimitry, later Superintendent of Public Schools in Louisiana,
spoke on one occasion on "The Progress of Society." Other
lecturers discussed "Dramatic Literature and the Poets" and
"Wheatage Tax." 

During this same season five itinerant lecturers came to New
Orleans between January and April, 1843, but not under the sponsor-
ship of the People's Lyceum. I. J. Hitchcock lectured on
"Mercantile Arithmetic"; Mr. Moore on "Animal Magnetism"; Dr. Dionysius Lardner on science; Mr. Bolton on geology; and Count Barato on "Greece."

15 New Orleans Daily Picayune, January 19, 1843.
16 Ibid., March 1, 1843.
17 Ibid., March 8, 1843.
18 Ibid., February 18, 1843.
19 Ibid., January 14, 1843.
20 Ibid., March 1, 1843.
21 Ibid., March 3, 1843.
22 Ibid., April 1, 1843.
23 Ibid., April 8, 1843.
Season of 1843-44

In 1843-44 itinerant lecturers were in the foreground. A new science called phrenology, the study of the conformation of the skull as indicative of mental faculties, caught the fancy of the people of the city when Dr. George Combe came to lecture on that subject. 24

Animal Magnetism proved another intriguing topic. W. Barth, professor animal magnetism, delivered a course of three lectures on March 11, 12, 13 at the Whig Headquarters, opposite the St. Charles Theater. 25 Later in May a Professor de Bonneville delivered a series of six lectures on the same subject. 26

The dates included in these four seasons clearly indicate that group activities such as the lyceum discontinued from May until October or November. The heat and threat of disease demanded an absolute minimum of group activity.

After these limited activities, New Orleans was ready for a period of greater lyceum activity. Interest had been aroused; it was time for definite action.

24 Ibid., January 5, 1844.
25 Ibid., March 12, 1844.
26 Ibid., May 12, 1844.
In the fall of 1844 the Second Municipality continued and increased its leadership in cultural advancement in New Orleans. On November 29, Mr. Samuel Peters submitted to the Council for the Municipality an ordinance providing for the establishment of a new organization, the "Library and Lyceum Society." The citizens as a whole were recognizing the necessity of public schools. Mr. Peters' plan was viewed as another project to advance public education. The *Daily Picayune* argued that the new society would "enhance its usefulness and furnish the means of completing the education of the pupils in a manner to fit them for the highest achievements of literature and science." ¹

Peters proposed to establish the society by contributions of the "scholars" of the public school, no student being allowed to contribute more than twenty-five cents a month. The receipt of nine dollars from any one contributor would entitle him to life membership in the society. No person could be a life member who had not been a pupil in the public schools.²

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¹ *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, November 29, 1844.
The ordinance further provided for securing rooms for a library as soon as the sum of $5,000 was obtained for books. Provision was also made for the erection of a Lyceum Hall, the purchase of scientific apparatus, and the employment of competent lecturers. The lectures were to be presented weekly for eight months each year. The ordinance stated the following:

Be it, etc; That when ten thousand dollars shall have been invested in books, at least one half of the annual income thereafter, shall be applied to purchasing such chemical and philosophical apparatus as may be necessary to aid in imparting a knowledge of the natural science; and for obtaining during eight months of each year, able professors, to lecture weekly on such branches of useful knowledge as may be determined on by the Directors; Provided, That the lecture rooms of the Lyceum shall never be used for any religious or political discussions, and that no person shall be allowed to lecture, therein, without the consent of the Directors previously obtained.

Directors were the same as those of the public schools, with the mayor, recorder, and aldermen as ex-officio members.

According to the plans as submitted it would take two years to accumulate a sufficient sum for the library and two more years to complete the Lyceum Hall.

The similarity between the proposed objectives and provisions of the "Library and Lyceum Society" of New Orleans and those first advanced by Josiah Holbrook in 1828 in New England, as a standard

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3 Ibid., November 29, 1844.
5 Norman, op. cit., p. 166.
6 New Orleans Daily Picasune, November 29, 1844.
for the average lyceum, is striking. Holbrook's aim to advance
popular education and improve the minds of the members was also the
stated aim of the "Library and Lyceum Society." Both stipulated a
sum of money to be invested in scientific apparatus and books. The
weekly lectures were to be on similar subjects, those pertaining
to the sciences. Holbrook suggested twenty dollars as a fee for a
life membership, while the "Library and lyceum Society" required
only nine dollars. In fact, the chief differences seem to be the
fee requirements and the ruling of the "Library and Lyceum Society"
that only a student of the public school could be a life member.
Thus the New Orleans lecture movement followed the general pattern
of the average New England lyceum. 7

On December 3, the Council by a unanimous vote passed the
ordinance for the establishment of the "Library and Lyceum
Society." 8 The project received immediate support. Two days
later the Daily Picayune announced that several life subscriptions
had already been paid. Rivalry had sprung up among the parents,
who vied with each other in their haste to support the society. 9
Thus, the Second Municipality launched an important lecture project
in New Orleans, to be completed five years later. No lectures
were sponsored by this society until 1849.

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7 Information concerning New England lyceum found in
Hayes, op. cit., p. 3.

8 New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 4, 1844.

9 Ibid., December 5, 1844.
The season of 1844-45 was destined to be a significant one. First came a second lecture organization, as has been indicated, the "Library and Lyceum Society," and then came the first lecturer of national importance. In December, the Daily Picayune announced that the noted Professor Benjamin Silliman would visit New Orleans in the early Spring.

Benjamin Silliman was a professor of chemistry and natural history at Yale College from 1802-1853. "As early as 1808 he introduced what was an innovation for a professor in the college when he began to give occasional scientific lectures open to the public of New Haven." In succeeding years he delivered similar lectures in New York and other New England cities. During March and April, 1835, he was asked to deliver a series of geological lectures before the "Boston Society of Natural History." At this time he firmly established his reputation as a public speaker. "In 1836 he lectured in Boston on chemistry and in 1839 he delivered the first series of lectures before the Lowell Institute." Subsequently he lectured in all of the important centers of the country.

In his book Life of Benjamin Silliman, George Fisher mentioned that his Southern tour in 1845 which included New Orleans was partly encouraged by his former students at Yale, rather than being sponsored by any lyceum organization. Prior to his arrival in New

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Orleans he delivered a series of lectures in Charleston, South Carolina, and Montgomery, Alabama. 11 His invitation to New Orleans came from the Medical College and several important citizens, 12 who were probably Yale graduates.

Before he left home, Silliman had to be assured of fifteen hundred dollars; the expense of bringing apparatus and the risk of loss was too great to induce him to come without a certain security. Fifteen hundred dollars was the largest sum recorded as paid to an outside speaker by any New Orleans group during this period. To obtain this, the sponsors asked the patrons to call at the principal book stores and sign a subscription list at the rate of ten dollars for single persons and fifteen dollars for family tickets. 13

His course of twelve lectures began on February 18, 1845. Lucius C. Duncan, who was in charge, obtained permission to use the First Presbyterian Church of the Reverend Scott. 14 As customary, his introductory lecture was free to the public. 15 According to the Daily Picayune, it was attended by one of the

12 New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 5, 1844.
13 Ibid., December 5, 1844.
14 Fisher, op. cit., p. 17.
15 New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 18, 1845.
"largest, most intelligent and fashionable audiences ever seen convened in the city." 16 He outlined the objects, means and results of geology, with its applications, physical, intellectual, and moral. 17

Silliman's lectures received a great deal of attention in newspapers. His style of speaking was praised as "dignified and commanding," yet "simple and impressive without the affectations of oratory." 18 One of his lectures on "Agricultural Chemistry," delivered at the Medical College, was so well received that he was asked to repeat it. 19

The following evaluation confirmed what others said of Professor Silliman's presentations. "Speaking always extemporaneously, he drove home his point with a dignified but compelling eloquence. The experiments which were an important part of his chemistry lectures were ingenious, carefully prepared, and performed with remarkable elegance and skill." In the course of his lifetime, he established the study of science on an equality with the traditional classical culture, and "made a whole nation conscious of its value to mankind." 20

16 Ibid., February 19, 1845.
17 Ibid., February 18, 1845.
18 Ibid., February 19, 1845.
19 Ibid., February 26, 1845.
20 Dictionary of American Biography, XVI, p. 163.
His last lectures were devoted to the history of fossil animals, from the earliest marine up to man. On March 11, he concluded his series of lectures in New Orleans. From there he went to Mobile, Alabama, to deliver a series on geology.

During this same time a lecturer by the name of Hardinge was in the city discoursing on Mnemonics, the art of aiding the memory. On February 24, he was invited to speak before the "People's Lyceum." As a result, two nights later an even larger meeting of citizens gathered at the spacious Baptist Church, 66 Julia Street, to hear the lecturer further expound on his system. On this occasion the interest was so great that some could not find seats. Perhaps this sudden interest was due to the announcement that engraved formulas of Mr. Hardinge's system would be handed to each person buying tickets. This was his only lecture under the auspices of the People's Lyceum.

According to the reporter, Mr. Hardinge's system reduced the Articulation of the Organs of Speech to ten and substituted for

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21 New Orleans Daily Picayune, March 4, 1845.
22 Ibid., March 11, 1845.
23 Fisher, op. cit., p. 20.
24 New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 23, 1845.
25 Ibid., February 26, 1845.
these ten little geometrical signs which represented all the syllable signs. He astounded his audience by the facility with which he remembered words and ideas and called off from memory hundreds of actual dates and events in history. 26

On March 8 he gave a third lecture on Mnemonics. The paper reported that his system was still attracting the "most scientific citizens in New Orleans." 27

Again Professor John L. Riddell and Professor C. G. Forshey of the Louisiana Medical College delivered a series of twelve lectures each in the Chemical Room of the college, on geology and chemistry respectively. The lectures lasted for four weeks, occurring each Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evening at seven-thirty. 28

While the new society was not to sponsor any lectures until 1850, the People's Lyceum continued to be active. It had engaged Hardinge for one lecture, but with this exception, it continued to confine itself to the use of local talent. On March 23, Judge Henry A. Ballard of the Supreme Court delivered an outstanding lecture on the "comparative difference in the condition of man in ancient and modern times." 29 According to reports, he treated his subject in a most unusual way, recording Marcus Tullius

26 Ibid., March 1, 1845.
27 Ibid., March 8, 1845.
28 Ibid., March 29, 1845.
29 Ibid., March 23, 1845.
Cicero's reactions to the earth in 1845 in a series of six letters to his friend Atticus. 30

On April 21, Christian Roselius, attorney general, lectured before the People's Lyceum on "The Influence Which Manners and Laws Exercise Upon Each Other." 31

As late as May 28 of that year, General Sam Houston, ex-president of Texas, addressed a public meeting on several important subjects, including, by request, the then important question of annexation of Texas. 32

Season of 1845-46

The season of 1845-46 was an active one for the "People's Lyceum." In October, a meeting of the Board of directors of the society was called to plan the annual series of lectures. The Daily Picayune announced that the lectures would probably commence the first of November. 33 At this time the Daily Delta took the opportunity to point out that this society deserved public support because it had been founded for the purpose of "promoting education among the rising generation, establishing a library, and instituting a yearly system of public lectures. Before the school law was passed in 1841, the public schools were maintained by the Lyceum." The constitution was most liberal; any person could become a

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., April 20, 1845.
32 Ibid., May 28, 1845.
33 Ibid., October 24, 1845.
member for a year "by paying any sum of money." In addition their lectures were always "required to be free to the public." 34 Such an organization, thought the news writer, truly deserved support.

M. W. Cohen was still president; J. C. Larue and Christian Roselius, vice-presidents; and W. H. Goodrich, 35 treasurer. Members of the Board of Directors were J. L. Riddell, Alexander Dimitry, F. Sawyer, Needler R. Jennings, 36 J. F. Claiborne, 37 James Saul, and W. R. Nicholson. 38

On January 6, Professor Alexander Dimitry, popular New Orleans lecturer, spoke before the "People's Lyceum" at the Washington Armory Hall on "The Relation of Harmony Between Man and the Creation." 39 The Daily Picayune reported that "in spite of bad weather the hall was well filled." His lecture was pronounced a

34 New Orleans Daily Delta, October 24, 1845.

35 The Reverend W. H. Goodrich was pastor of the St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

36 Needler R. Jennings was a member of the Board of Directors of the Second Municipality.

37 J. F. Claiborne was a news editor for several New Orleans' papers, among which was the Jeffersonian.

38 New Orleans Daily Delta, October 24, 1845.

39 New Orleans Daily Picayune, January 4, 1846.
most profound and eloquent discourse. John Whitaker, in his Sketches of Life and Character in Louisiana, called Dimitry a "man of the people, rising from them... an orator and a scholar who has made himself distinguished. As a lecturer, I have not seen his equal in Louisiana... Politics, law, history, religion, metaphysics are elements in which he lives and which he has made his own." 41

The second lecture of the season was delivered by Mr. Charles Schmidt on the subject, "Mexico." To the reporter he appeared to understand his subject thoroughly, taking up the history of the country with the conquest of the Spaniards. Again the Daily Pica
yune reported that "the hall was crowded to its utmost capacity, many leaving for want of room." 42

The Reverend William T. Hamilton of Mobile, Alabama, delivered the third lecture at Armory Hall, January 26, on "The Majesty of the Law." The Daily Delta writer said, "We have frequently had the advantage of hearing Dr. Hamilton, both in the pulpit and before literary societies, and can assure our readers they may anticipate pleasure and instruction. The directors of the Lyceum could not have made a better selection." 43

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40 Ibid., January 6, 1846.
41 Whitaker, op. cit., p. 77.
42 New Orleans Daily Picayune, January 13, 1846.
43 New Orleans Daily Delta, January 25, 1846.
The ladies dominated the audience on February 3 when the Reverend W. R. Nicholson, pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church, delivered the fourth lecture to the "People's Lyceum" on the subject of "The Feudal System, Its Effect on the Political and Social System of Our Times." The Daily Picayune noted that "he was listened to throughout with marked attention, and was rapturously applauded at the close of his lecture." The Daily Delta commented on the "many young men constantly attending these lectures." 45

On February 10, Judge Carleton spoke on the "Human Mind" to a "crowded hall." 46 The sixth lecture was delivered by Professor Dmitry on the "Harmony of Man and Creation," his second lecture of the season on that same subject. Again the Armory Hall was filled to overflowing and many were compelled to leave, unable to find seats. 47

No record of the seventh and eighth lectures is found in the newspapers. The ninth lecture was called off "in consequence of a Military Ball at the Armory Hall on February 23." 48

44 Ibid., February 3, 1846.
45 New Orleans Daily Delta, February 3, 1846.
47 Ibid., February 17, 1846.
48 New Orleans Daily Delta, February 24, 1846.
The largest crowd of the year turned out to hear Sergeant S. Prentiss, noted Southern orator, deliver the tenth lecture in the series. Prentiss was a lawyer by profession, who took an active part in politics. Born and educated in Maine, he came to Mississippi several years after his graduation from Bowdoin College. Here he was a schoolmaster, lawyer, and politician. In 1845 he moved to New Orleans from Vicksburg, Mississippi, after suffering political defeats and loss of his entire fortune. "New Orleans was not the city to deprive herself of the radiance of his oratorical eloquence or of his influence as a public-spirited and cultured person" says Dickey. He was accepted into the civic life of New Orleans; and soon became "one of the city's leading spokesmen, almost a celebrity." 49

This particular lecture was on "The Liberal Arts and the Importance of Their Cultivation in This Country." The Daily Picayune reported that "many hundreds of ladies and gentlemen had to leave unable to get within the entrance of the room." 50

Needler R. Jennings gave the eleventh lecture on "The Moral and Social Condition of Women in Different Eras." 51

51 Ibid., March 15, 1846.
The last of the series was delivered by H. M. Cohen, president, on the "Analysis of Wit and Humor." At the close of his lecture, Mr. Cohen, in the name of the Directors of the Lyceum, ... said that he hoped that the hours spent at the lectures would be looked back to with pleasure, during the period that would ensue until the next year.  

Surely the "crowded halls" were proof enough that the people would look forward to the next season.

There were other itinerant lecturers in the city who were not under the auspices of the "People's Lyceum." Professor C. P. Bronson, professor in the academic and theological departments of Yale College, gave a series of lectures at the Poydras Street Methodist Church on the connection between Reading, Speaking, Singing, and Physiology and Health. He generally lectured on an easy method of deep breathing by use of abdominal muscles rather than the throat and breast, claiming to be the first to teach the specific use of those muscles for healthy breathing. His lectures were no doubt considered novel, for he explained his subject by use of a "manikin." Admission was fifty cents; a season ticket for one, two dollars; for two, three dollars.

52 Ibid., March 24, 1846.
53 Ibid., January 27, 1846.
54 Mary Margaret Robb, Oral Interpretation of Literature in American Colleges and Universities (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1941), p. 110.
55 Ibid., January 27, 1846.
Professor Mitchell delivered a series of lectures on astronomy before a "crowded assembly" in the Methodist Church on April 1. 56

All the readers of the Daily Picayune were urged to hear a Mr. Giles during April deliver a course of lectures on literary subjects, including the following topics: "The Genius of Robert Burns," "The Genius of Crabbe," "The Genius of Goldsmith," "The Genius of Byron," and "The Character of Falstaff." 57

Seasons of 1846-47, 1847-48

After such a crowded season, it was only natural that the citizens of New Orleans should look forward to another eventful year with every prospect for a full season. However, for some reason the season of 1846-47 failed to measure up to their expectations. A checking of both the Daily Picayune and the Daily Delta reveals little activity. From January 1 to April 2 only two men are mentioned as having lectured in the city. One was a Dr. Graham who delivered an "oration," not a real lecture, before the "Physico-Medical Society" at the Medical Hall on February 6, 1847. The occasion was the celebration of the society's anniversary, but the public was invited. 58

56 Ibid., April 1, 1846.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., February 6, 1847
The other was a Mr. Lover whose program consisted of stories, anecdotes, and songs. He appeared before a large audience in Washington Armory Hall and was "applauded vigorously."

The following season, 1848-49, according to the papers, showed little improvement over the preceding one. Itinerant lecturers seemed to dominate the scene. On January 15, Professor Mitchell of Cincinnati began a series of lectures at the Poydras Street Methodist Church on astronomy. Ormsby M. Mitchell was lecturer and writer of works also on astronomy, and founder of the famous observatory at Cincinnati. According to a report in the Daily Delta he was already well-known to New Orleans, having lectured in the city in 1846. His lectures were illustrated with views of the great clusters of nebulae, taken by means of a telescope.

An interesting lecture on the philosophy of the magnetic telegraph with experiments in electricity was given by a Dr. Colton on January 16 at the Armory Hall. The Daily Picayune reported that it was attended by "a numerous and select audience which applauded

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59 Ibid., March 19, 1847.


61 New Orleans Daily Delta, January 15, 1848.
appreciatively." After his philosophical lecture he amused his audience by administering "exhilarating gas" to several men who reacted to produce humor." 63

On January 21 a Mrs. Loomis from Philadelphia entranced her listeners with the wonders of Mesmerism, another name for hypnotism. Her lecture was attended by a "select, but very fashionable audience." 64 However, Mrs. Loomis' early popularity waned. A little skepticism took possession of the public mind in regard to her experiments. The Daily Delta attempted, to no avail, to discourage doubts as to their validity. 65 No further mention of Mrs. Loomis is made after February 1.

In March, Mr. Gliddon, an archeologist, delivered lectures on the "Hieroglyphical Literature of Egypt" at the National Gallery, 13 St. Charles. 66

The first mention in the newspapers of 1848 of the "People's Lyceum" did not come until March 30. At that time Dr. Banning

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62 Ibid., January 16, 1848.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., January 21, 1848.
65 Ibid., February 1, 1848.
66 Ibid., March 14, 1848.
spoke on the "Philosophy of the Human Voice." His purpose was "to disrobe the art of effective delivery of a great mass of elocutionary lumber. He reduced it to two or three simple rules; to stand up like a man, hold up the head, throw off restraint, and to speak loudly and plain." He believed that an improper mode of dress and the fixtures about the speaker tended to make him ineffective.

The People's Lyceum drew added attention with what seemed to be an exceptional event. A debate was held on the question, "Ought capital punishment to be abolished?" The debaters were Messrs. S. R. Glenn and T. N. Nickerson, two young members of the bar. In the words of the Daily Delta, "the audience departed, highly pleased with the literary feast served up to them."

Despite the marked decrease in activity during the last two seasons, the period from 1844 to 1848 was one of progress. The unanimous vote for the "Library and Lyceum Society" and the crowded halls for the meetings of the "People's Lyceum" are proof that New Orleanians were more than ever aware of the value of a lyceum program.

67 Ibid., March 30, 1848.
68 Ibid., March 31, 1848.
69 Ibid.
70 New Orleans Daily Delta, April 27, 1848.
CHAPTER V

SEASONS OF 1849-1852

Season of 1848-49

The season of 1848-49 found the lyceum movement in New Orleans returning to the 1845-46 peak of activity. However, according to the newspapers the "People's Lyceum," which dominated the former season, was inactive.

On February 13 a course of ten lectures was announced for the benefit of the Asylum for the Relief of Destitute Females. The committee in charge of the lectures consisted of M. M. Cohen, James Saul, B. M. Norman, and Charles Gardiner, treasurer. ¹ The Daily Picayune reported that the lectures would be held at the Washington Armory Hall during the months of February, March, and April. ²

Some of New Orleans' most distinguished citizens were secured, including Dr. Scott, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church; The Reverend Theodore Olapp, pastor of the First Congregational Church; The Reverend W. R. Nicholson, pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church; Professor J. B. D. DeBow, professor of political economy at the University of Louisiana; Sargeant S. Prentiss, lawyer;

¹ New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 13, 1849.
² Ibid., February 6, 1849.
Judah P. Benjamin, lawyer and later member of the Confederate Cabinet; Christian Roselius; Dr. J. L. Hawks, pastor of the Christ Episcopal Church; and Professor Riddell of the University of Louisiana. However, some changes were made in the speakers after the course began.

The Reverend W. R. Nicholson delivered the first lecture on February 21 at 7:30 P. M. on the subject of "Civilization in Its Relation to Indigence, or Civilization the Friend of the Poor." 3

Professor Alexander Dimitry, popular local lecturer, was substituted for the second in the series, speaking on "The Beauties of the Natural World, as a Source of Mental Pleasure." 4

Christian Roselius delivered the third lecture on "The American Revolution; Its Influences and Effects." 5

According to the *Daily Picayune*, the lectures had become very popular and the citizens generally were well satisfied. 6

On March 6, Dr. William Hamilton from Mobile returned to New Orleans to deliver the fourth lecture on the "State of the Arts

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5 *Ibid.*, February 27, 1849.
Among the Ancient Hebrews." 7

"Gold: Its Geological Positions, Metallurgical Management, Modes of Assaying, Intrinsic and Conventional Value" was the lengthy and impressive title chosen by Dr. J. L. Riddell for the fifth lecture in the series. 8

Such lengthy titles seemed to be in vogue for the Reverend Scott spoke on "The Immigration to America; Some of Its Results, and Our Duty as American Citizens." 9

On April 3 the Committee announced that the Reverend J. L. Hawks would deliver the remaining four lectures on the "Antiquities and Settlement of America," illustrated by paintings, diagrams, and a collection of sculptured work of the ancient Mexican. They were scheduled for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings. 10 According to the Daily Picayune he invested his early history with "charms which were new and unexpected." In fact, he so intrigued his audience that each evening found increased numbers at the Armory Hall. 11

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7 Ibid., March 6, 1849.
8 Ibid., March 13, 1849.
9 Ibid., March 23, 1849.
10 Ibid., April 3, 1849.
11 Ibid., April 12, 1849.
This series of lectures excited a great deal of interest in the community and it was with regret that it closed. The *Daily Picayune* pointed out that "the interest manifested proved there was no lack of enlightened inquiry on the part of the citizens when something worthy their attention was brought forward." 12

That season also found several other lecturers in New Orleans. M. Louis Dufau, former member of the faculty of the University of Paris and at that time a professor at the University of Louisiana, delivered a series of lectures on the "History of France." His lectures, in French, were free to the public. Young students were especially invited to attend. He lectured in the House of Representatives, Canal Street, every Monday and Friday at 6:00 in the evening. 13

Walter Macready, an English actor on a tour of America, 14 visited New Orleans in March. He read "Macbeth" before a large gathering in Armory Hall on March 17. His splendid elocution was praised by the newspaper; it was also stated that he was "enthusiastically applauded at the end of each scene." 15

The season would not have been complete without some scientific lecture. Dr. Barnard from Alabama gave a private


14 Fish, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

lecture on the polarization of light. The newspaper referred to the subject as one which "abounded in phenomena of the most interesting nature." 16

Season of 1849-50

This season was an eventful one in the development of the Lyceum in New Orleans. Samuel J. Peters' dream of a lecture hall for the Library and Lyceum Society, originated in 1844, became an actuality. On December 18, a "beautiful and spacious hall" in the new Municipality building, dedicated to the use of the Lyceum, was opened to the public. For this important occasion, the Daily Picayune reported, not less than twelve hundred people were present. 17 The galleries were filled with pupils from the public schools. "Side by side the child of the humble mechanic and the wealthy citizen looked down upon the upturned faces of parents and guardians, collected to witness the joining of another link to the chain of improvement unwound for the benefit of their children." 18

Judge Theodore McCaleb, president of the University of Louisiana, delivered the lecture of the evening. According to the Daily Picayune, he expounded with "great truth and force on

16 Ibid., April 6, 1849.

17 Ibid., December 19, 1849.

18 New Orleans Daily Crescent, December 19, 1849.
the advantages that flow from intellectual improvement, and on the bond of knowledge which, in such institutions as the one just opened serves to unite men with one another." 19

Samuel Peters could well be proud of his endeavors. The hall was built on the "best principles of acoustics." Everyone felt it reflected "infinite credit on the foresight, financial skill, and perseverance of Mr. Peters, to whose energy, the Municipality was indebted." 20

The Directors of the Lyceum also announced the passing of a resolution by which the lectures would be open to the public at the following prices: "For a course of eight months, tickets to admit a gentleman and two ladies, $8; single tickets, $5; and tickets for one evening, 50 cents." 21

The opening of the new Lyceum Hall heightened interest in the lecture program of the city. On December 21, the Daily Picayune announced that Professor Mitchell, the astronomer from Cincinnati, would be the first lecturer presented by the Library and Lyceum Society and at the same time expressed its desire for more courses in the natural sciences. The article ran as

19 New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 19, 1849.

20 Ibid.

follows:

We trust they [Mitchell's lecture] will be followed by more courses in the other departments of natural science—mere literary lectures are not to our taste. ... We have no objection to a reasonable quantity of metaphysics; but we highly approve the decision of the committee who desire to make the Lyceum the means of popularizing science. ... The lectures delivered by Professor Silliman here several years ago were productive of much good, and we only regret that they were not followed up the ensuing winter by a series on Chemistry, Astronomy, and other kindred topics. But now that a second attempt is made under such favorable auspices, we trust it will be encouraged by the community. 22

Professor Mitchell was hailed as a "gentleman who possesses all the qualities necessary to the lecturer—a full knowledge of his subject—a prepossessing appearance—a clear, full, round voice, with a command of language." 23 His introductory lecture was attended by eight hundred to one thousand persons of both sexes, including many of the older pupils in the public schools. 24

His course of lectures continued through January 26, "exciting interest in the minds of the general public." 25 In fact, according to the Daily Picayune, his audiences were enthusiastic to the point of being unruly. After his lecture on the "History of the Telescope," the paper reprimanded the audience for the "noisy demonstrations not suitable to the dignity of a

22 New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 21, 1849.
23 Ibid., December 24, 1849.
24 Ibid., December 21, 1849.
25 Ibid., January 1, 1850.
scientific assembly." Strict and silent attention was requested. It was also suggested that it would be of general advantage if the ladies would remove their "bonnets." Incidentally, this type of behavior was characteristic of lecture audiences in other parts of the country. "The lecture was an escape from the monotony of everyday life, an excellent place to catch up on the latest gossip, show off a new hat or dress." According to Harper's Weekly, certain young men and women went to lectures to flirt. In some places, apples and peanuts were eaten before and during the lecture.

When the learned professor left, he had awakened a "spirit of inquiry." The Daily Picayune said, "We hope that he will return next winter to delight and instruct us. It will be difficult for the Committee on Lectures to give us his equal, certainly not his superior." The Library and Lyceum Society next presented Professor C. G. Forshey who delivered a series of lectures on geology. His knowledge of the subject was greatly respected, for he had just served as State Geologist. For this reason he appealed to a

26 Ibid., January 10, 1850.
27 Braden, op. cit., p. 207.
28 New Orleans Daily Picayune, January 26, 1850.
"large and intelligent audience." He was highly praised for his ability to make a dry subject, like geology, interesting.

J. C. Garland, professor from the University of Alabama, delivered twelve lectures on meteorology for the society. During the course he took an opportunity to point out the growing interest in lectures as a "means of abridging the necessity of application to books." 31

At the close of his last lecture on April 16, a unique demonstration took place. The audience was organized into a meeting, with Dr. C. H. Barton presiding. The chair appointed C. B. Singleton, George C. Bower, and F. R. Southmayd as a committee to express the audience's appreciation. The committee presented an address which was printed in the Daily Picayune, part of which is found below:

Sir--The members of the Library and Lyceum Society, who have attended your course of lectures on meteorology, cannot permit you to bring them to a close without expressing their heartfelt thanks for the deep interest which you have thrown around a subject so generally considered dry. 32

29 Ibid., February 1, 1850.
30 Ibid., February 12, 1850.
31 Ibid., March 15, 1850.
32 Ibid., March 19, 1840.
During this last series of lectures the writer for the *Daily Picayune* felt impelled to point out the "favorable opportunities for improving the mind at the least possible sacrifice of convenience and comfort." 33 With such favorable comments, the Library and Lyceum Society closed its first season.

As usual other lecturers spoke in New Orleans. In November, Professor W. P. Riddell conducted an annual course of lectures on chemistry, at the Medical College, giving them four times a week, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. His lectures were usually assured large audiences because he had earned an excellent reputation as a lecturer. "Students and gentlemen interested in research in this science were urged to attend." 34

Literary subjects, particularly Shakespeare, came in for their share of interest. On January 17, William M. Fleming, Shakespearean reader, so delighted his audience that many of the leading citizens requested another reading in a letter in the *Daily Picayune*; it was signed by twenty-one men; among whom were: Theodore McCaleb, Randall Hunt, Needler Jennings, Abdiel Crossman, W. M. Goodrich, Samuel Peters, M. M. Cohen, Seargeant Prentiss, and W. S. Scott. Among the signers were many who had

33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., November 13, 1849.
long taken a leading part in the New Orleans lecture movement. 35

Several days later a Miss E. Kimberly, Shakespearean reader, arrived in New Orleans. The Daily Picayune reported that "her readings had been pronounced by some of the best cities in the Union to be of highest merit." 36

On March 11, Theophilus Fiske of Philadelphia, delivered a lecture at the Armory Hall on the science, "Electro-biology." 37

Season of 1850-51

The plans of the Library and Lyceum Society for the lecture season of 1850-51 were even more extensive than the preceding year. On January 21 the Committee announced the introductory lecture of Professor J. Lawrence Smith, the first of a series of twelve lectures on chemistry. Dr. Smith would be followed, according to the announcement, by other distinguished professors upon different departments of science. 38

Terms of admission to the whole course of lectures for the entire season, "expected to be about forty in number," were as follows: Season tickets, admitting one gentleman and two ladies, $3; admitting one person, $5; admission to a single lecture, 50

35 Ibid., January 18, 1850.
36 Ibid., January 21, 1850.
37 Ibid., March 9, 1850.
38 Ibid., January 21, 1851.
The intention of the organization to sponsor forty lectures during the season indicated their eagerness to enlarge their program.

Dr. Smith's lectures were delivered on Tuesday and Friday at 7:30 in the Lyceum Hall on such subjects as: "Hydrogen, Its Combustibility, and Its Explosive Nature," 40 "Combustion of Carbon with Oxygen," 41 and "Electric Light." 42

After such elaborate plans it is somewhat disappointing to find that after Dr. Smith only one man is mentioned as having lectured in the Lyceum Hall. The Reverend R. H. Stroud, professor and demonstrator of the philosophy of oral sounds, delivered an introductory free lecture on "the discriminating analysis of the human voice and the orthoepical mechanism of the American Language." It was his intention to present this lecture as an introduction to a course on the "Mental Philosophy of Pronunciation." 43 The Daily True Delta stated that his method of "phrenology" had been recommended by the National Convention

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39 Ibid.
40 New Orleans Daily True Delta, January 29, 1851.
41 New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 19, 1851.
42 New Orleans Daily True Delta, February 23, 1851.
43 New Orleans Daily Picayune, March 19, 1851.
Literature, held in Philadelphia in September, 1850. Another lecturer in the city was Phinias T. Barnum who spoke in the Armory Hall on the advantages of temperance. Barnum will be recognized as the man who made the travelling circus famous. According to the *Daily Picayune*, hundreds of curious people were turned away, for the hall was literally jammed. His sense of humor was appreciated; a "merrier audience had never been seen."  

In April, 1851, Professor T. B. Moore, professor of Constitutional Law in the University of Louisiana, delivered a series of lectures on "Federal Government."  

Season of 1851-52  

On November 7, 1851, the Directors of the Public Schools in the Second Municipality met to discuss arrangements which had been made for lectures in the Lyceum Hall for the winter. In the absence of Needler Jennings, chairman of the committee, Mr. Powell presented the plans. He stated that the lectures would commence during the month of December. The committee hoped to obtain Professor Mitchell, Professor Louis Agassiz, and Mr. 

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44 New Orleans *Daily True Delta*, March 19, 1851.  
45 New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, March 6, 1851.  
46 Fish, *op. cit.*, p. 147.  
47 New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, March 7, 1851.  
48 Ibid., April 8, 1851.
They also hoped to increase the number of lecturers. 49

Although some may have occurred, no lectures is mentioned in the newspapers before March, 1852. On March 9, the Reverend L. E. Shaver, president of the Masonic College at Lexington, Missouri, spoke in the Lyceum Hall on education. However, the Daily Delta mentioned "that he was not as well attended as the brethren of the square and compass should have made it." 50

On that same day the committee on Library and Lyceum lectures announced that Professor J. L. Smith of the University of Louisiana would deliver a course of eight lectures upon "familiar and practical subjects connected with natural philosophy and chemistry." The committee also announced that Professor A. L. Koeppen, from the North, had been engaged to deliver a series of discourses on Greece. 51 This committee was composed of Needler Jennings, A. F. Axson, 52 and Frederick Camerden. 53

49 Ibid., November 7, 1851.
50 New Orleans Daily Delta, March 9, 1852.
51 New Orleans Daily Picayune, March 9, 1852.
52 A. F. Axson was a local doctor.
53 Frederick Camerden was a commission merchant.
On March 10 Dr. Joseph McDowell, a leading member of the Missouri Medical circle, gave a lecture at the Lyceum Hall on the "Natural History of the Human Race." According to the Daily Picayune the professor was "very dispirited by the small but intellectual audience who attended." The paper also added that perhaps the "pleasure-loving citizens of New Orleans, knowing physicians have a penchant for dry bones, and quote inkhorn words, were better content at the theaters, where they could look upon prettier anatomy and listen to softer phrases." However, Dr. McDowell "was too proud to lecture to a limited audience and defray his expenses in addition;" so he declined to appear again. 54

The next lecturer on the program, Dr. J. Lawrence Smith, who had lectured in the city before, 55 spoke on "Matter." 56

It is at once apparent that this season did not turn out as expected. None of the lecturers who were mentioned at the November Board meeting were obtained; nor did Professor Koeppen from the North, who had been engaged, appear.

54 New Orleans Daily Picayune, March 11, 1852.
55 Ibid., January 21, 1851.
56 New Orleans Daily Delta, March 13, 1852.
CHAPTER VI

SEASONS OF 1852-1856

Season of 1852-53

The Library and Lyceum Society announced January 8, 1853, that it was attempting to secure Professor Louis Agassiz, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Thomas Francis Meagher to deliver courses of lectures before the Lyceum. According to the Daily Picayune the chief object of the lectures for that year was to raise funds for the benefit of the library which was connected with the organization. Thus, the paper hastened to point out that those who patronized the lectures would have the satisfaction of knowing they were contributing to the advancement of an important public institution in addition to the opportunity to hear these distinguished gentlemen. 1

For some reason Thackeray was not obtained for that season, but Meagher and Agassiz were. On April 5, Mr. Meagher 2 presented his first lecture in the Lyceum Hall on "Australia," a subject affording great opportunity for the speaker's "fine oratorical powers." The Daily Picayune reported that "the manner in which

1 New Orleans Daily Picayune, January 8, 1853.

2 Thomas Francis Meagher was born in Ireland, and came to the United States in 1852. He became virtual leader of the Irish element in New York City. Dictionary of American Biography, XIII, p. 481.
he treated his subject called forth frequently the enthusiastic applause of the audience, who were delighted with the fine and poetic outbursts of the orator.  

On April 12, Professor Agassiz’s series of lectures was announced. This series had to be sponsored by private subscriptions. According to reports the Lyceum Society was not able to sponsor the series because the Council had taken away their source of income.

The reputation of Professor Agassiz as a naturalist preceded him to New Orleans, for many of the citizens were already familiar with his theories. Carl Fish calls him “one of the most picturesque figures in the field of science. . . . Agassiz, a French Swiss, educated with the best resources of Europe, came to America in 1846 as a field for his research in geology and zoology at the age of thirty-nine.” He was appointed to a professorship at Harvard and decided to remain there. He became a leader in interesting new students of nature; “he was the most influential immigrant since Hamilton and Gallatin.”

3 New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 6, 1853.
4 Ibid., April 12, 1853.
5 Ibid., April 15, 1853.
6 Fish, op. cit., p. 240.
7 Ibid., p. 241.
His course of lectures included the following subjects: "The Coral Reefs of Florida," "The Metamorphoses of Insects," "The Gradation of 'animals During the Successive Geological Periods," and the "Relations of Mankind and the Animal Creation." 8

On April 29th, the day of his last lecture, the *Daily Picayune* reported that all his lectures had been attended by large audiences, oddly enough composed largely of women. His last lecture was expected to be equally as successful. 9

Professor Louis Agassiz and Neagher were the principal lecturers of the "Library and Lyceum Society" for that season. In addition Madame Barosse, a French scholar, delivered a lecture on "French Literature in the Nineteenth Century" in the Lyceum Hall, specifically for the benefit of the Camp Street Female Orphan Asylum and the Lyceum Library. 10 Later, on March 19, Madame Barosse gave another lecture in one of the rooms of the City Hall on the "historical influence of women up to the present." 11

The season of 1852-1853 was completed by Dr. A. Crane, who lectured on the "Character Education, and Management of Children." This lecture was delivered in Lyceum Hall, but it is not known whether he was sponsored directly by the Library and Lyceum Society. 12

8 *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, April 12, 1853.
**Season of 1853-54**

The principal series of lectures for the season of 1853-54 was presented by the "Mechanic's Institute," in their own hall. In 1847 the University of Louisiana had granted a square of its land to the "Mechanic's Institute" for the site of a library, lecture room, and cabinets for the use of the mechanics of New Orleans, and for an annual course of lectures on physical science in connection with mechanics. ¹³ This must have been the organization's first attempt at such a program because the newspaper referred to it as the "first annual session." The lectures were free to the public, offered every Monday and Thursday at 7:00 p.m. The program for the entire season appeared in the *Daily Picayune* in the following form:

Free Lectures in Hall of Mechanics Institute

Jan. 16—Dimitry
Jan. 23—On History of the Invention and Application of Steam Engines, Judge Larue.
Jan. 26—China and Japan--Dr. Scott.
Jan. 30—Astronomy, Professor Vallas.
Feb. 2—Popular Education in Europe and the United States, Joseph Brennan
Feb. 6—Coal and Mining, Chilton
Feb. 9—Men's Relation to the Sciences, and His Adaptation to the Planet He Inhabits, Dr. Macaulay
Feb. 13—Chemistry as Applied to Agriculture, Professor Riddell
Feb. 16—Dimitry
Feb. 20—Dr. Bennet Dowler

Feb. 23—Relation of Mechanical Arts to Agriculture, G. Schmidt
Feb. 27—Language, Macaulay
Mar. 2—Chemistry of the Atmosphere, Riddell
Mar. 6—Dr. Nott
Mar. 9—Clapp
Mar. 13—Influence of the Mechanics
Mar. 16—On Human Race, Charles Gayarré
Mar. 20—Extraordinary Development of the Resources of the United States as Contrasted with Other Countries, Christian Roselius
Mar. 23—Bennet Bowler
Mar. 27—Larue
Mar. 30—Schmidt
Apr. 3—E. D. Rand

This series was considered an important provision for the citizens' recreation and instruction. The subjects indicate that the organization was carefully following its original purpose to present lecturing "on physical science in connection with mechanics." The men chosen were all prominent local lecturers, such as Dr. Scott, Christian Roselius, and the Reverend Theodore Clapp.

The Library and Lyceum Society failed to carry on an extensive program during that season. After Professor Alexander Dimitry lectured for the Mechanic's Institute, he was asked to deliver a series of lectures at the Lyceum Hall on "The Development and Decline of Civilization in Greece." On the evening of the Professor's introductory lecture, N. R. Jennings, representing the Lyceum Society, appealed to the

14 New Orleans Daily Picayune, January 15, 1854.
15 Ibid., March 12, 1854.
16 Ibid., January 21, 1854.
audience in behalf of the Professor’s enterprise. He pointed out that in the Northern cities large sums of money were paid to lecturers and that Mr. Dimitry was equally worthy as a literary lecturer. Consequently, the proceeds of these ten lectures were devoted exclusively to the remuneration of the lecturer.

During this season the first woman lecturer on women’s rights invaded New Orleans. Mrs. Francis Dana Gage of St. Louis arrived in March. In Ohio Mrs. Gage was known as the "Aunt Fanny" of the Ohio Cultivator who preached the gospel of discontent to the women on the farm. Throughout her life she was "indefatigable in her efforts to promote the interests of her sex and to crush the liquor evil, and few of her contemporaries equalled her as a writer or public speaker." On March 15, she commenced a course of lectures on women’s rights at the Lyceum Hall. Despite the newspaper predictions that she would not lack hearers, due to the people’s curiosity concerning her subject, Mrs. Gage’s first lecture was delivered to a "slender audience." Undoubtedly the women of New

17 "In 1847 Emerson reported that ordinarily he received fifty dollars in Boston and ten dollars and traveling expenses from the country lyceums. John B. Gough’s yearly average before 1850 never exceeded $25 per lecture. . . . Bayard Taylor in 1856 mentioned that his failure to fill seventeen engagements cost him between $700 and $800." Braden, op. cit., p. 210.
18 New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 2, 1854.
20 New Orleans Daily Picayune, March 14, 1854.
21 Ibid., March 17, 1854.
Orleans were not as discontented with their position in life as their Northern sisters. The *Daily Picayune* compared Mrs. Gage's method of treating her subject to that of Lucy Stone and Lucretia Mott, famous defenders of women's rights.22

**Season of 1854-1855**

The Library and Lyceum Society continued making only spasmodic attempts at carrying on a lecture program. Only one lecturer is recorded as having lectured in the Lyceum Hall during this season. Professor W. P. Riddell, of the University of Louisiana, delivered a series of eight lectures on Chemistry. Four of these lectures included the following subjects: "Pneumatic Chemistry," "Hydrogen," "Nitrogen," and "Carbon and Its Compounds."23

On January 4, Dr. Paige, electrician and physiologist, lectured on electropathy, his new system of medical electricity, at Odd Fellow's Hall.24

One other lecturer by the name of Hines completes the season. He discoursed upon the subject of "Penitentiary Discipline," at the American Theater on January 6.25


23 *Semi-Weekly Creole,* April 21, 1855.

24 *New Orleans Daily Picayune,* January 4, 1855.

Season of 1855-56

A course of lectures commenced by William P. Noble on October 30 in the Lyceum Hall opened the 1855-56 season. The course, consisting of from twelve to fifteen lectures, continued every Tuesday and Friday evening at 7:30. Tickets for the whole course were $2; for each lecture, 25 cents.

By this time the people were vigorously criticizing the spasmodic efforts of the Library and Lyceum Society. It seems probable that the poor program of the preceding season actually intensified the dissatisfaction, causing the newspapers openly to criticize the society. In an editorial in the Daily True Delta the society was censored for its great want of judgement in its management. The Ordinance of the Society was cited as stipulating that weekly lectures were to be presented eight months of the year. The writer thought that the four hundred life members were entitled to hear these lectures. He pointed out that every season a spasmodic effort "with a great flourish of trumpets" was made to meet the requirements; however, the finances of the society were depleted by bringing in a few foreign and Northern performers. According to the Daily True Delta, this deplorable

26 Ibid., October 24, 1855.
state of affairs had a solution. The editorial offered the following suggestion as a possible answer:

We believe that under judicious management a course of lectures might be got up every season at a trifling expense, which would be interesting and popular. ...Let the Committee discard the idea that there is no talent in the South, and that no person is capable of lecturing here unless he comes with a foreign or Northern endorsement. ...There are hundreds of men in the different professions, etc., in this and the adjoining states as capable of delivering lectures on a variety of subjects, who would cheerfully lend their services, at a trifling remuneration and in many instances for no remuneration at all for the purpose of establishing in this emporium of the South a literary institution in which every Southern man might feel a pride. 27

It was believed that these local men would lecture on subjects of far more interest, such as horticulture, agriculture, manufactures, and modes of dress. Such men as Christien Boselius, the Reverend Theodore Clepp, and the Reverend Goodrich were suggested. 28

This editorial indicated that at least some people in New Orleans had seriously evaluated the Lyceum offerings. They were sincerely interested in improving the mind and they wanted to see some real effort expended to provide a well-rounded lecture program. They were also aware of the financial problem in securing outside lecturers. In addition, a feeling of resentment towards lecturers from the North was slowly materializing.

27 New Orleans Daily True Delta, December 11, 1855.
28 Ibid.
Consequently, the remainder of the season found the Library and Lyceum Society active. However, it is interesting to note that the society still did not heed the advice of the paper concerning the use of local talent, but continued to bring in outside lecturers.

The Society was fortunate enough to receive the services of Dr. B. A. Gould, a distinguished Cambridge professor of astronomy, and William Makepeace Thackeray, celebrated English novelist. Unfortunately, the two men were engaged for the same time; there were several conflicts in their lecture schedules.

Dr. Gould arrived in New Orleans around the first of February. His general subject was "astronomy." According to reports, the introductory lecture on "Theory of Probabilities" was delivered to "a large and intelligent audience" on the evening of February 14. He was introduced by N. R. Jennings, who took the opportunity to make some pertinent remarks on the advantages of the library and lyceum. He also pointed out that in the light of the "munificent donations" to lyceum organizations in Boston and other Northern cities, it was only reasonable that the New Orleans institution should be "sustained and enlarged" by small contributions. 29

On March 6, Gould spoke on the "astronomical instruments in America, and the great improvement in the United States in what

29 New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 15, 1856.
is known as the telegraphic communication." 30

Dr. Gould closed his course on astronomy at the Lyceum on March 19. He won many admirers and had stimulated interest in his subject, as witnessed by the Daily Picayune's report that his audiences "increased towards the close." 31

On March 6, William Makepeace Thackeray arrived in New Orleans, having left Mobile, Alabama two days before. 32 New Orleans was the last lap of his lecture tour of the United States, after which he looked forward to going home. 32 Although New Orleans impressed him more than any other city in the Union, he was tired of what he called "ignoble dollar-hunting in the languishing dreary Southern towns between New Orleans and Savannah." 34 Then, too, he was forced into the company of a "very kind hospitable dreadfully stupid set of cotton merchants," who forced him to eat and drink more than he thought necessary. 35 By March 24, his feelings on this subject were expressed more vehemently in a letter home as follows:

30 Ibid., March 6, 1856.
31 Ibid., March 20, 1856.
33 Ibid., p. 577.
34 Ibid., p. 580.
O Lord, how I wish I was in the Gray's Inn Coffee house! I get intolerably home-sick from time to time, and rather testy with all the hospitality offered me. 36

To make matters worse the New Orleans Weekly Delta of March 23 made the mistake of criticizing one of his lectures, which brought forth the following explosion:

Am invariably blackguarded by one paper in every town, perhaps two, with a curious brutal malignity and ignorance that makes me more sad than angry. . . Bon dieu, why will they lie so? . . I am whipped for a malignant attack upon Carlyle in my lectures—the fact being that I mentioned in the very most courteous and kindly terms, Lord Carlisle, . . . in the early reign of George III. Only a malignant blundering Paddywhack could write in this way. 37

Plainly Mr. Thackeray was not happy in New Orleans.

In view of these remarks one might wonder why Thackeray subjected himself to work which in his eyesight was such obvious punishment. The answer was money. He himself said, "I am more tired and bored with this country than I can tell you, but the money still keeps briskly rolling in and I must go gathering as long as the crop is to my hand." 38 In a letter to his daughters he mentioned that the proceeds of his first three months would serve to keep his wife all her life. However, his fees in New Orleans must not have come up to expectations for he also wrote

36 Ibid., p. 585.
37 Ibid., p. 584.
38 Ibid., p. 584.
them that this time their share would be only forty pounds instead of eighty. 39 It seems the Lyceum of New Orleans was constantly plagued with the inability to pay sufficient fees to the lecturers.

Thackeray's five lectures on "The Georges" and "Charity and Humor" were presented on March 6, 8, 11, 15, and 17 respectively, at Odd Fellows' Hall, due to Dr. Gould's previous engagement for the Lyceum Hall. 40 The first lecture on George I was delivered to an audience of some seven or eight hundred auditors. The Daily Picayune reported that the audience was "one of the most attentive" ever seen at a performance of that kind, acknowledging its approval with "hums of assent," "outbursts of laughter," and "rounds of applause." 41

His second and third lectures were on George II and George III. He made use of funny anecdotes, private scandal, and frivolous suggestions connected with the character, morals, intellect, habits, appearance, and dress of the various personages at court, which highly entertained his audience. 43

39 Ibid., p. 577.
40 New Orleans Daily Picayune, March 16, 1856.
41 Ibid., March 8, 1856.
42 Ibid., March 7, 1856.
43 New Orleans Daily True Delta, March 9, 1856.
However, Thackeray himself did not think much of his lectures or his audiences' reactions. For one thing, he had lectured on these subjects so many times he was tired, "utterly sick of the House of Hanover." 44 A letter home carried the following comment:

When people felt inclined to cry as I gave the pathetic end of George II, I felt inclined to cry out, 'don't you know that the Speaker is ashamed of himself whilst he is talking to you, and of you for being so humbugged by his stale declamation? How much longer is this quackery to continue?" 45

Mr. Thackeray's last lecture of the series was delivered to an audience of not less than two hundred people, "all of whom were apparently gratified with what they heard about George the IV and his times." 46

The citizens of New Orleans regretted his departure from New Orleans, but Thackeray was happy when the last lecture was finished and he could leave. On the day of the lecture he wrote to his daughter saying, "I shall be glad when tomorrow comes and the boat will bear me up the river. . . . the time for work is getting very

44 Letters, p. 583.
46 New Orleans Daily Picayune, March 18, 1856.
short, April, then, May, and then—ye gracious powers how glad I shall be to get back." 47

Two other lecturers appeared at the Lyceum Hall during the season. One was Dr. Crawcour, professor at the University of Louisiana, speaking on the practical and useful elements in chemistry. His experiments were reported very "interesting and instructive." The Daily Picayune was particularly gratified that he was a citizen of New Orleans. 48

At the same time Dr. Dewey presented a course of twelve lectures on the "Problems of Human Life and Destiny" at the Reverend Clapp's church, on St. Charles Street. 49 His introductory lecture was attended by the "most intellectual audience" of New Orleans society. 50 His lectures concluded the season.

Interest in scientific subjects was still abounding. Following the pattern of the North, the emphasis now seemed to be placed on outside speakers. The use of local talent was second choice.

47 Letters, p. 586.

48 New Orleans Daily Picayune, March 27, 1856.

49 Ibid., March 16, 1856.

50 Ibid., March 25, 1856.
CHAPTER VII

SEASONS OF 1856-1860

Season of 1856-57

The collegiate department of the University of Louisiana announced on December 4 the regular three months course of lectures to be held on every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 6:00 to 7:00. "The patrons and friends of the university" were urged to attend. Professor R. H. Chilton lectured on geology; Professor W. P. Riddell, on chemistry and natural philosophy; and Professor Louis Dufau and Mr. J. J. Lentil lectured in French on subjects, "literary and historical." ¹

One wonders what New Orleans would have done without the university during seasons such as this one when only one other series was offered. Beginning on Monday, March 2, a second series of twelve lectures was delivered at the Lyceum Hall before the Y. M. C. A. The proceeds went to the "relief of the destitute young men" who arrived in the city. ² Among those who volunteered to lecture were Christian Roselius, the

¹ New Orleans Daily Picascune, December 4, 1856.

² Ibid., February 24, 1857.
Reverend Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 3 the Reverend W. C. Duncan, Judah P. Benjamin, Professor J. L. Riddell, Charles Gayarre, the Reverend J. B. Walker, and Professor R. E. Chilton. Only two lecture titles were reported; one by J. L. Riddell on "Leading Truths Developed by the Natural Sciences" and one by Chilton on "Modern Geology and Its Deduction." 4

Season of 1857-58

According to the Daily Picayune, Captain de Riviere opened the season with a series of lectures delivered at the Lyceum Hall on the "Crimean War." During the war he had commanded a company at the celebrated attack on Malakoff. Other details are missing. 5

On January 26, Captain G. W. Cutter lectured on "National Poetry" in the Lyceum Hall. 6

Evidently the "Mercantile Library Association" sponsored lectures during this season, for on January 21 the Daily Picayune

3 Benjamin Morgan Palmer was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans from 1856 until his death. According to Wayne Eubank, Palmer's speaking was not limited to his Sunday sermons. "His renown as an occasional speaker brought demands for his appearance in many sections of the South and Southwest." Wayne C. Eubank, Benjamin Morgan Palmer: A Southern Divine (Unpublished dissertation: Louisiana State University, 1943), p. 134.


5 Ibid., January 3, 1858.

6 Ibid., January 24, 1858.
reported the second of the Mercantile Library Lectures would be
given by John Mitchell at Odd Fellows' Hall. The Daily Picayune
promised that his treatment of the subject "The English in India"
was sure to prove of "exciting interest." 7

The only other lecturer of any importance was Dr. Boynton,
"distinguished geologist" who was invited to New Orleans by Judge
Theodore McCaleb, Professor J. L. Riddell, Christian Roselius and
others. 8 On February 1, Dr. Boynton delivered his introductory
lecture on "geology and the natural history of creation." The
Daily Picayune reported that he "attracted a very large audience,
the Odd Fellows' Hall being literally filled." Throughout the
lecture, the "highest interest was manifested, the speeches often
being interrupted by applause." 9 A lecture season was not com-
plete without a lecture on geology for the subject seemed
continuously to amaze and fascinate the citizens of New Orleans.

Season of 1858-59

Itinerant lecturers who found their way to New Orleans
dominated the season of 1858-1859. On January 2, Dr. Hale, cited
as a "distinguished professor of electro-biology," attracted
attention by his lectures and illustrations at Odd Fellows' Hall.
The only one of his subjects reported was "Mental Development and

7 Ibid., January 30, 1858.
8 Ibid., January 30, 1858.
9 Ibid., February 3, 1858.
Its Dependencies Upon the Organic Structure." The *Daily Picayune* stated that regardless of what Dr. Hale's theory was, his practices and demonstrations were "exceedingly curious, entertaining, and suggestive." 10 Later in January he delivered a series of six "electro-biological" lectures at Odd Fellows' Hall especially for the ladies. 11

In January, Dr. Thomas Lou Nichols gave a series of lectures at Washington Armory Hall, on the "History, Principles, Doctrines, and Influences of Catholicism and Protestantism." 12 From boyhood Thomas Nichols was "engaged in ceaseless activity to bring about some radical social or sanitary reform." He began studying medicine, abandoned it for journalism, which in turn he dropped in favor of theories on vegetarianism. In 1848 he married Mary Gove, a water-cure physician, and joined her in founding a school for the training of water-cure practitioners. After 1857 he became a Catholic convert and for two years gave lectures on religion and health in the Mississippi valley. His lecture in New Orleans in 1859 falls into this period of his life; thus, the religious subject. 13

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10 Ibid., January 2, 1859.
11 Ibid., January 23, 1859.
12 Ibid., January 5, 1859.
The *Daily Picayune* reported on January 18 that he lectured on health which seems at first somewhat unrelated to his general theme. However, when one understands that he also gave a great deal of his time to studies in hygiene, his choice of subject does not seem so unusual. In this lecture he must have tackled the problem of yellow fever in New Orleans, for the paper went further to say, "If Dr. Nichols will tell us, as he asserts he can, how to save New Orleans from both epidemic and endemic diseases, he will deserve a high reward." 14

Following a tour in Texas and Alabama, he returned on April 13 for a farewell lecture before leaving for "the North and Europe." On April 17 he lectured on "Religious Liberty." 15

Shortly after Dr. Nichols, Professor Orson Squire Fowler, lecturer on phrenology from New York, arrived in the Crescent City. According to the *Daily Picayune* he was "the most celebrated of all those who have ever undertaken the exposition of the science of Gall and Spurzheim," delivering his lectures all over the land. 16 His interest in phrenology was aroused at Amherst College by Henry Ward Beecher, a classmate. He supposed himself able "to solve the problems of every department of knowledge by means of 'phrenology and physiology' alone." His "melange of scientific facts" secured

him an immense reputation. From 1850 to 1870 he spent most of his time in extensive trips in the United States and Canada, "charming ignorant audiences equally by his assumption of scientific knowledge and by the extreme sentimentality of his fundamental outlook on life." 17

"Self-Culture, or good heads and bodies, and how to improve both" was the subject of his first lecture delivered at the Lyceum Hall on January 18. The Daily Picayune predicted that "it would revolutionize the family government of all parents who heard it, and teach all the true road to self-improvement and happiness." 18 On January 19 he spoke on "Matrimony." 19

He became so popular that by general request on February 1st Odd Fellows' Hall he commenced a second course of lectures on "Children and Their Government." 20

This season was marked by the appearance of two women lecturers, both of whom read poetry. On January 21, Mrs. K. Kay Blunt, daughter of Francis Scott Key, read "extracts from the works of Coleridge, Longfellow, Southey, Whittier and other celebrated poets." The Daily Picayune stated, "a deep interest is felt in these intellectual entertainments, not only on the reader's account,

18 New Orleans Daily Picayune, January 18, 1859.
19 Ibid., January 19, 1859.
20 Ibid., February 1, 1859.
but also from the admirable character of the readings themselves.  

Her readings attracted large and intellectual audiences, which 
the Daily Picayune said "it would be difficult to collect, for any 
ordinary occasion." She won, according to the reporter, the "un-
feigned admiration" of all who heard her and was a "brilliant 
success."  

On January 23, the Daily Picayune announced that Miss Eloise 
Bridges, who had read in various parts of the Union, had arrived 
with "highest recommendations." She gave her first reading at the 
Odd Fellows' Hall, reading from "Hiawatha" and "The Raven" by 
Poe. Other selections read during her stay were Tennyson's "May 
Queen" and extracts from Shakespeare.  

P. O. Beirne, editor of the Cincinnati (Ohio) Examiner, de-
ivered a lecture on "The Irish in America," on February 20, at 
the Odd Fellows' Hall. Single tickets were fifty cents; tickets 
for one man and two ladies, one dollar.  

On January 25 T. K. Wharton, Chairman of the Library and 
Lyceum Committee on Lectures, announced the only series of lectures 
sponsored by that group for the season. This series was given at 
the Lyceum Hall for the benefit of the Library of the First  

21 Ibid., January 21, 1859.  
22 Ibid., January 23, 1859.  
23 Ibid.  
24 Ibid., February 8, 1859.  
25 Ibid., February 17, 1859.
District. The announcement stated that "gentlemen of distinguished ability" would be presented.

However, the only name ever to appear in the paper was that of the Reverend Bolles who lectured on "Proverbs in Common Use." Single tickets were fifty cents; tickets for one man and two ladies, one dollar. 26

Season of 1859-60

On November 17 Professor Richard of the University of Louisiana opened the new season with a series of lectures on "Natural History" with especial reference to zoology. Apparently this series was the only one given that winter in the Lyceum Hall. 27

In November, Miss Emma Hardinge, "one of the most popular and eloquent advocates of the Spiritualist Philosophy," arrived in the city to deliver a course of lectures at the Odd Fellows' Hall, beginning December 4 at seven o'clock in the evening. 28

At her first lecture on "The Philosophy of Miracles," "there was a large and very attentive audience; the room was crowded and many went away without being able to obtain admittance." 29

26 Ibid., January 25, 1859.
27 Ibid., November 17, 1859.
28 Ibid., November 27, 1859.
29 Ibid., December 6, 1859.
At the close of each of her lectures she answered any questions from the audience; collections were taken up to defray expenses of the hall. Her popularity increased so much that she was forced to move into the large concert saloon of the Odd Fellows' Hall. 30

Dr. Benton, of the Saratoga Springs Water Cure Institution, gave a series of lectures and experiments at Odd Fellows' Hall on "Psychology and Electricity," proving their ability to cure disease. Tickets were fifty cents. 31

On January 10, Professor J. E. Seman lectured in the Washington Armory Hall, on "The United States in Relation to Progress and Civilization." 32

Thus, the season of 1859-1860 closed in January. It may be that actually no other lectures were delivered or it may be that the newspapers, which were devoting most of their space to the slavery problem at this time, simply failed to report them.

30 Ibid., December 8, 1859.
31 Ibid., January 3, 1860.
32 Ibid., January 13, 1860.
CHAPTER VIII

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LYCEUM IN NEW ORLEANS

The lyceum movement in New Orleans from 1840-1860 revolved principally around two organizations; the People's Lyceum and the Library and Lyceum Society. From 1840 to 1843 the "People's Lyceum" occupied the foreground; afterward, the Library and Lyceum Society took the lead. Like similar New England organizations, both groups answered educational needs within the city. Until the school law was passed in 1841, the People's Lyceum gave assistance to the public schools of New Orleans. In 1844, such prominent men of the Second Municipality Council as Samuel J. Peters realized that the schools needed additional aid, which would only come when the people became more interested in education. Consequently a Library and Lyceum Society was organized to include the public school children. Parents caught the bubbling enthusiasm of their children and vied with each other to contribute. Concrete evidence of that enthusiasm was the erection of the Lyceum Hall, used solely for lectures, and the library, which in 1850 contained over seven thousand volumes.
In addition to the above organizations such as the "Young Men's Christian Association," the "Mercantile Library Association," and the "Mechanic's Institute" intermittently sponsored lectures as a part of their programs. However, the scattered references to them in the newspapers make it difficult to estimate their significance to the lecture movement.

Josiah Holbrook might have written the following objectives, found in the constitutions of these principal organizations: to establish a library and to institute a yearly system of lectures, with the ultimate goal of improving common-school education and adult education.

The success of the lyceum movement was due principally to men such as Samuel J. Peters, Needler Jennings, M. M. Cohen, the Reverend Clapp, Alexander Dimitry, Abdiel Crossman, and Christian Roselius. A definite New England influence from some of these men seems possible. Samuel Peters and the Reverend Clapp, who were from New England, were probably familiar with the lyceum before moving to New Orleans. In addition, in 1840, Mr. Peters made an extensive tour of New England, studying the school systems. He must have been impressed by the work of the lyceums to promote public schools; three years later he proposed the Library and Lyceum Society. Thus, the New England influence may have come to New Orleans somewhat directly, through her adopted New England sons.
However, New Orleans owed much to her native sons, for men like Alexander Dimitry, the "Creole of Louisiana," also stood high in the city as cultural leaders who supported the lyceum. Theodore McCaleb, a strong advocate of the lyceum, was a Mississippian by birth. Certainly Christian Roselius, a German immigrant, cannot be overlooked, for he contributed much to the cause of education and the lyceum.

Among the supporters were men prominent in the civic life of New Orleans: Peters was president of the Louisiana State Bank; Crossman was mayor; Theodore McCaleb was president of the University of Louisiana; and the Reverend Clapp was pastor of one of the largest and most influential churches. Sergeant S. Prentiss was closely identified with the civic life, being considered an outstanding lawyer and leading spokesman. All New Orleans was aware of his oratorical eloquence and of his influence as a "public-spirited and cultural person." Consequently, these men exercised a great deal of influence. It is logical to assume that any project which received their support would be fairly successful. As long as these men took an active part in the lyceum, the movement went forward. The death of Samuel Peters in 1853 was a decided loss to the "Library and Lyceum Society."

Lecturers were either prominent out-of-state speakers or popular local personages. Obviously the University of Louisiana provided many of the local lecturers. Such professors as J. L.
Riddell, J. B. D. DeBow, Louis Dufau, Theodore McCaleb, and C. G. Forshey gave invaluable service, lecturing year after year for one of the two organizations. Out of twenty seasons included in this study only three failed to carry any notice of lecturers from the University. Their lectures before the People's Lyceum were usually gratuitous, for all the lectures sponsored by the organization were "free to the public." Seldom did the Library and Lyceum Society charge enough to pay them any enormous sum.

The professors not only offered lectures for the lyceum groups, but they also offered numerous series at the University, open to the public. Professors J. L. Riddell and C. G. Forshey lectured on chemistry and geology almost every season. Some years the college lectures were the only ones offered. Truly the University of Louisiana played a vital role in the lecture movement in New Orleans.

One cannot say that either outside or local speakers dominated the lyceum. Generally speaking, the People's Lyceum depended on local speakers, while the Library and Lyceum Society brought in more prominent persons from the outside. In addition to the University, one excellent source was the local protestant clergy. The names of the Reverend Theodore Clapp, the Reverend W. R. Nicholson, Dr. Scott, Dr. J. L. Hawks, the Reverend Goodrich, and the Reverend Benjamin Palmer were connected with the lyceum. Local lawyers such as Randall Hunt, Christian
Roselius, Judah P. Benjamin, and M. M. Cohen became popular lecturers, drawing crowds on their own merits. Naturally New Orleans did not overlook her more famous citizens such as Seargent S. Prentiss, an orator and lawyer of national fame, and Charles Gayarre, famous historian and statesman.

The Library and Lyceum Society experienced difficulty in bringing to New Orleans outside speakers, who were usually prominent professors of chemistry, geology, or some similar established science. The two most important figures in this connection were Benjamin Silliman and Louis Agassiz, who were nationally known. William Makepeace Thackeray was the most important literary figure to visit the city. Generally these lecturers came as a part of a tour which followed the Eastern coast, then touched Alabama, New Orleans, and back up the Mississippi. Some undoubtedly arrived by way of the river.

From this it is easy to understand why prominent outside lecturers were hard to obtain. New Orleans was almost "a jumping-off" place for any lecture tour; the journey there was long and arduous; the remuneration small. The result was that, comparatively speaking, few northern lecturers appeared on the New Orleans platform.

Itinerant lecturers who found their way to New Orleans were generally men whose names have now slipped into oblivion. Many of these figures represented new and unusual fields such as "phrenology," "mnemonics," "memoriam," "electro-biology"
and other subjects. The citizens of New Orleans could not resist the fascinating appeals of topics such as "Animal Magnetism"; "philosophy of the magnetic telegraph"; "electropathy, new system of medical electricity"; and "the discriminating analysis of the human voice and the orthoepical mechanism of the American Language." Consequently, these men generally drew crowds as large as the more prominent speakers.

Auditors in New Orleans seemed no different from those in New England when it came to their desire for information on anything and everything. Their enthusiasm for scientific subjects such as zoology, geology, and chemistry was somewhat retarded in comparison with the North. Some ten years prior to 1840 Josiah Holbrook had emphasized the importance of the study of the natural sciences. Chemistry, zoology, and physiology were never dry; New Orleanians eagerly absorbed every word.

"Phrenology;" "mesmerism;" "mnemonics," and "electro-biology" drew much attention. According to Carl Fish, in this period "phrenology was more popular than geology, and mesmerism than anaesthetics." The newspapers referred to them as the "modern sciences" and reported that they drew the intelligentsia of New Orleans. No one seemed immune to their fascination.

Last came the lectures on subjects referring to some phase of the "humanities"; history, literature, elocution, and art. Shakespearean readings were high on this list. Walter Macready,
English actor, was the most important lecturer of this group. Thackeray, by far the most famous literary man to come, lectured on "The Georges," using anecdotes and humorous quotations.

Women in the North such as Lucretia Mott were playing a significant part in the lecture movement, but women lecturers in New Orleans seemed to remain in the background. The one courageous advocate of women's rights who ventured down the river received a cold reception. Seemingly the most popular women lecturers were those who read poetry, such as Mrs. E. Kay Blunt and Eloise Bridges.

As Clement Eaton points out in *Freedom of Thought in the Old South*, reform movements such as women's rights, temperance, and slavery were not popular in the South. During the same period, few reformers ventured to New Orleans. In twenty years the one advocate of women's rights who appeared was coolly received. One other lecturer, P. T. Barnum, spoke humorously about prohibition. Reformers must have been fully aware they would have difficulty finding sympathetic hearers in the South.

Single admissions to the lectures were usually never over one dollar and never under twenty-five cents, which were similar to the fees of the Northern lyceum. Frequently the admission fee would read as follows: Single tickets, 50 cents; one man and two ladies, $1; or season tickets, $5; one man and two ladies, $3. Tickets were usually sold for a series of lectures rather than a season, ranging from two to eight dollars.
However, when a series extended over several months, the fees were likely to be as high as fifteen or twenty dollars. The only reference to the amount of money paid a performer occurred when Professor Benjamin Silliman was obtained for $1500, which was considered a large sum. Thackeray evidently found the fees a trifle small, for he mentioned receiving only forty pounds when he had expected eighty. On occasion the proceeds would go to some worthy charity, such as the Asylum for Destitute Females and the "relief of destitute young men." At other times the money was specifically designated for the public school libraries.

Generally speaking, the newspapers seemed to give the lecture movement their whole-hearted support. There were periods when little was recorded, but this could have been the fault of an organization rather than of the newspaper. Writers for the papers regularly called attention to the valuable opportunities provided by the lyceum program. They also gave constructive criticism of the lyceum from time to time. Probably the organizations would have profited had they heeded some of the paper's suggestions as to lecturers and subjects.

If newspaper accounts are to be believed, audience reception was excellent. Only bad weather and lack of space seemed to keep people away. Almost every newspaper account concluded with a reference to the "crowded hall." Not only did the lectures draw crowds, but they drew the intellectual cream of New Orleans society as well as the average "man-on-the-corner." In fact, according
to newspaper reports for the entire period, it appears that the intellectual group really dominated the audience. If the people enjoyed the lecture, they applauded vigorously and frequently. Sometimes, they even became unruly in their efforts to express their pleasure, which was characteristic of lecture audiences.

In conclusion, the following observations seem justified:
First, the lecture and lyceum movement in New Orleans seemed to be "city-centered." It probably had no far-reaching influence on the surrounding countryside. According to the newspapers the audiences were made up primarily of local residents. Second, the movement closely parallels that of New England in promoting public schools and adult education, establishing libraries, and encouraging an interest in scientific subjects. Third, the entire program seemed to be handicapped by the location of the city and the lack of funds. New Orleans was so far off the common routes of travel that the prominent speakers were difficult to obtain; only a small number came as far south as New Orleans during this twenty year period. Famous men such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, John B. Cough, Bayard Taylor, and James Russell Lowell never appeared. The trip was too long and arduous; the remuneration too small. Another factor in their refusal to come was the cold reception their reform ideas would receive in the deep South.
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