

# A HISTORY OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN BRUNSWICK, MAINE

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*In the 1976 print edition, all illustrations appeared on unnumbered pages inserted between pages 40 and 41. In this electronic edition, the illustrations have been placed near relevant text. Illustrations marked with an asterisk did not appear in the 1976 edition.*

## Foreword

The chief sources for the history of the public library in Brunswick are the minutes of the Library Association and of the Directors' meetings, supplemented by a miscellaneous collection of letters, bills, programs and other such material. Newspapers of the period are invaluable, filling in many gaps and straightening out inconsistencies. From 1883 to 1902, the *Brunswick Telegraph*, and thereafter the *Brunswick Record*, superseded in 1967 by the *Times Record*, along with occasional longer articles in the *Lewiston Evening Journal*, add considerably to our knowledge and understanding of events and persons. The Brunswick Town Reports help to clarify some points and often carry librarians' reports as well as financial statements. Material on William John Curtis is filed in the Special Collections of the Bowdoin College Library, where also there is a rather rare book, *The Memoirs of William John Curtis* (The Mosher Press: Portland, 1928) which contains a fine account of the author's father, Captain John. A few other secondary sources are cited in the text.

Many individuals have been most kind in responding to inquiries but special thanks should go to Mrs. Elizabeth Boswell Smith, Mrs. Marguerite Lunt, Mrs. Claire Taylor, and both Prof. Philip M. Brown and his wife, Mrs. Agnes N. Brown, who not only provided much information, but also read the manuscript, as did my husband, Prof. Ernst C. Helmreich, and the present librarian, Mrs. Suse Weissman, who cooperated warmly in the project. Appreciation and thanks are due from the author to all those who have helped her and to those who have made this publication possible. To one who has over the years become deeply interested in the history of Brunswick, this has been a pleasant and rewarding task.

Brunswick, 1976      Louise R. Helmreich

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## Chapter One

### **BEGINNINGS**

The Brunswick Public Library started very humbly in 1883, with even its most ardent supporters unsure of its future. In the 1880's Brunswick was experiencing a transformation from a rural to an urban community, if not actually a city. It had been a predominantly agricultural center, dignified by the presence of Bowdoin College and given distinction by the cultural activities of professors and students. But it was rapidly becoming a business and manufacturing town, with the Dennison Company, employing over 400 people, and the Cabot cotton mill, which employed some 700 hands. Many of the latter were French Canadian immigrants whose mother tongue was French, and whose background and religious practices were alien to the New England tradition. It was, then, a time of change and uncertainty, in which the library was a first tentative gesture towards public responsibility for cultural development beyond the ABCs.

Perhaps the most extraordinary thing about the founding of the Brunswick Public Library is that it was started at all at this time, well before Carnegie had entered upon his career of casting libraries upon the waters. The founders had no one to rely upon but themselves; it is true that they very early received some aid from the town, but this came only after the fact. The enterprise was entirely an effort of volunteers, whose enthusiasm far outdid their resources. Yet it is also true that there was a rather small nucleus of devoted friends, especially among the "Young Ladies," who had an urge for dramatics and made the library the beneficiary of many benefit performances. The Shakespeare, Mummy, and Crescent Clubs were a mainstay of the organization.

The first evidence we have of a campaign to establish a public library is a letter published in the weekly newspaper, *The Telegraph*, on January 5, 1883. It is signed only "A Subscriber," and

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argues the need for a library. Very few persons are able to own all the books they wish to read. Mechanics and industrial workers wish to learn more of their crafts to better their positions. The schooling we can get is not enough for an education. . . . What better help . . . than access to a well-furnished library? The writer does not omit professional men or the ladies who will find as much enjoyment if not as much compensation in a good public library. He urges the formation of a library association. Under the heading Local Affairs the January 19th issue of the *Telegraph* carried another letter, signed by J.H.L., which continued the argument. It stressed again the fact that the library supplements the education of the schools; it furnishes to many who do not enjoy the advantages of school facilities, and to many who are compelled to cut short their school days, the means of continued study, and of mental and moral improvement. It is detrimental to the reputation of a community the size of Brunswick to be without a public library. The excellent and extensive library of Bowdoin College cannot for wise and judicious reasons, be opened to the public....The two small circulating libraries, owned by private individuals, are not sufficient provision for public needs. The writer then addresses himself to the question: how can these needs be supplied? A town appropriation would be proper, but the town has not made any move in that direction. Some towns have been so fortunate as to have a library provided for by individual generosity, but so far no private donor has come forth. The only available method is then the one already suggested by A Subscriber,- i.e. a Library Association. Speaking very practically he argues that a library and reading room supplied with the leading magazines and newspapers could be sustained by a membership fee of \$1 a year or 2 ¢ a week. This would be much cheaper than the present circulating libraries afford, and the membership of one person in a family would practically include the family. . . . Other subscriptions and donations of books would furnish and replenish the library." He endorses the appeal of A Subscriber and says a call for a meeting of those interested should be issued at once.

In this same number there appeared a small item indicating where the sympathies of the remarkable editor of the *Brunswick Telegraph*, Mr. A. G. Tenney, lay. It reads: A paragraph from *The Bee* {Richmond, Maine} shows what our neighbors are doing

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in the way of supporting a public library. 'Nearly 150 books have been added to the Richmond Library this week. A list of the new books will be published in our next issue.'" *The Telegraph* had for some time been publishing the titles of articles, with some description of their contents, that appeared in the leading periodicals. On October 8, 1882, for instance, the paper covered the *Edinburgh Review* for July, *Blackwood's* and the *Musical Herald* for September, and *Harper's*, the *Atlantic*, the *Century* and *St. Nicholas* for October. This sort of summary continued frequently,

clear evidence of popular interest. The *Telegraph* was to publish lists of new acquisitions when the Brunswick Library began to function.

There existed in Brunswick, besides the two circulating libraries mentioned in these letters, various Sunday School libraries, and two Young Ladies' Book Clubs. The Young Ladies were from the beginning ardent supporters of the library idea. The meeting called for by J.H.L.'s letter was to take place on the evening of April 13, 1883. On the afternoon preceding that meeting "all the ladies who are now or have been members of either of the Ladies' Book Clubs" were invited to attend a meeting in a room at the Tontine Hotel. "There it was voted to donate all the books which were their property to the projected Public Library."

The meeting of all interested in forming a library association which was held in Skating Rink Hall (corner of Maine and Elm Streets) on the evening of that same Friday, the thirteenth, seems to have escaped any sinister effects of the date. Mr. Tenney reported a "stirring" speech by the presiding officer, the Reverend Mr. Nichols, and the library records report "stirring speeches" in the plural. The gift of the "valuable collections" of the Ladies' Book Clubs was announced and must have set the tone of the meeting. Other speakers included J.H.L., who turned out to be the Reverend J. H. Little, Professors Carmichael and Lee of Bowdoin College, and local historians, John Furbish and Henry Wheeler. All favored the project and declared it feasible. An organization was formed with a provisional board of officers, headed by Professor Franklin C. Robinson of Bowdoin, with Professor Lee as chairman of the Book Committee, and with a special committee to find a suitable reading room. A committee was formed of these officers to take the necessary steps towards forming a legal corporation and to prepare

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bylaws. At a meeting of these directors on April 19, 1883, at the home of Professor Robinson, the bylaws were drawn up, and a committee of three appointed to improve the phraseology for presentation at the next general meeting.

The warrant for the first meeting of the Library Association as such was dated April 18, 1883, and called for a meeting on May 4th in Skating Rink Hall. It indicated the purpose of the proposed meeting: "The undersigned, desiring to be incorporated as proprietors of a Public Library, to be established in the Town of Brunswick "..... The warrant was in the form used by the town for a Town Meeting and was signed by the following:

F. C. Robinson	Leslie A. Lee
H. W. Wheeler	J. W. Crawford
D. D. Gilman	John Furbish
R. A. Dunning	Henry D. Stetson
C. A. Townsend	Barrett Potter

The bylaws accepted at the meeting of May 4th were revised and enacted at a meeting of May 24, 1883. To become a member of the Library Association there was a fee of \$3.00 and membership (unless there was removal of residence, written resignation, or revocation of approval by unanimous vote of the directors) was to continue until death. Any member might take books out of the library by payment of an annual fee of \$1.00 in advance. Those eligible for membership in the association, but who did not join were to pay an annual fee of \$2.00 for this privilege. Any person resident in the area might use books or periodicals on the premises of the Association without charge during such hours and under such regulations as the directors should prescribe.

Handbills had been distributed prior to the first public meeting and it was also well advertised in the newspapers. The handbill attempted to outline plans and declared among other items that such a library should "contain very nearly if not quite 1000 volumes." Since the books donated by the Ladies' Book Clubs numbered about 400 this goal should not prove too difficult to attain. It was estimated, however, that \$1,000 must be raised at once, before a reading room could be opened. Subscriptions were hoped for and the remainder would have to be raised by fees from members

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of the association. The hope was expressed that these fees might soon be reduced.

Following the formal establishment of the association, it was the task of elected officers and enrolled members of the association to achieve these necessary preliminaries before the actual opening of library rooms. It was decided to devote the summer of 1883 to raising money. By November of 1883, the *Brunswick Telegraph* reported that upwards of \$800 had already been subscribed. As an inducement a special life membership in the association was written up in the *Brunswick Telegraph*. This life membership (\$25.00) entitled not only the member but his whole household to take books from the library free --- that is without annual fee. This offer "ought to secure many subscriptions as life-members. Good books are the best companions, indispensable in the formation of youthful characters." As a postscript Mr. Tenney added that "since the above was put in type we learn that Alfred H. Merryman and Dr. N. T. Palmer have each paid the necessary sum to constitute them life members." He reported that the library committee "are at work cataloguing books donated and arranging lists of books to be purchased." By December of 1883 Professor Robinson reported that \$1,200 had been raised with no single gift of over \$100. Both the Bowdoin Paper Manufacturing Company and the Dennison Company donated \$50.00 apiece. The treasurer of the association, Mr. Lyman E. Smith, was then chosen librarian, at a salary of \$4.00 a week. He was given \$700 to buy books, and a room was hired in the Storer Block. There are repeated references in the *Telegraph* to the cataloguing and buying of books that was going on. For instance on December 21, 1883: "The Library Committee is now engaged in making a catalogue of the books which have been given by the book clubs and others. It is desirable that members of the clubs should return all books in their possession to Mrs. Prof. Smith and Miss Ellen Whitmore. The Committee is also making a selection of new books for immediate purchase." Finally on January 25, 1884, under the heading Public Library Room, the following happy forecast appeared. "The books contributed by the ladies' clubs and quite a lot of new books purchased by the Library Committee are in place on the shelves in the new room, Storer Block, and the Library will doubtless be opened in a day or two." The library did actually open on Monday, February 4, 1884. The number of books

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was about 1,300, and donations came in rapidly. Again, Mr. Tenney of the *Telegraph* was an ardent supporter, devoting the right-hand column of his first page on February 29 to listing recent donations of books received by the Brunswick Library Association, all the way from an eleven volume encyclopaedia to odd numbers of *Harper's Magazine*.

The new Town Building was being completed at this time. This had also been a project very dear to Editor Tenney's heart, and the *Camden Herald* even made the comment that Tenney "can now depart in peace, having seen the consummation of the project of a Town Hall." A room in the Town Building, originally designed as a city council chamber but not used as such since the city charter was voted down, was now proposed as a better location for the public library. Again Mr. Tenney

helped the cause with a timely explanation in the February 8, 1884, issue of the *Telegraph*:

Some misconceptions being afloat, let us state what the public library and reading room really provide for. The reading room is open to all persons who desire to visit it, for the purpose of examining and reading the books upon the library shelves, or the pamphlets or newspapers spread over the table. Upon this ground the library corporation asks for the use of the room in the new town building free of rent.

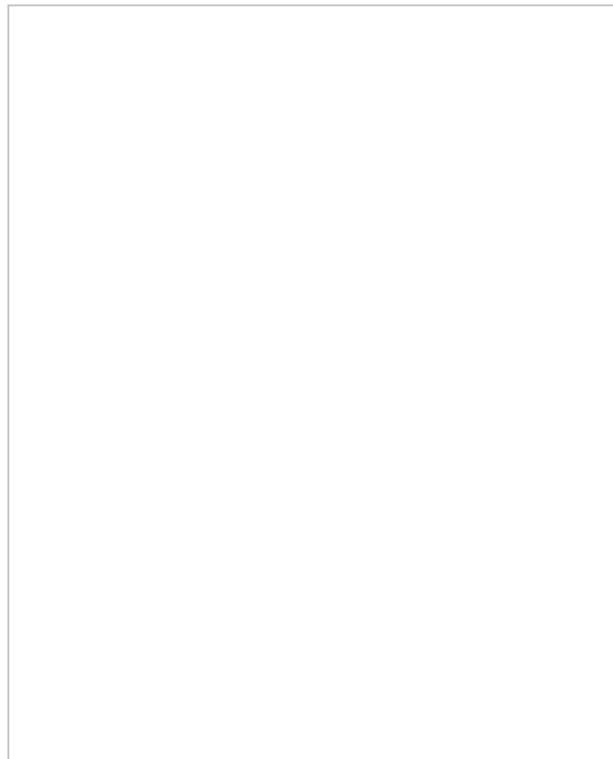
For some time such use of the room had seemed a foregone conclusion, and at Town Meeting in March, 1884, it was voted to give the Public Library Association the use of this room for the library, plus heating and lighting, and also to appropriate money to furnish it. In spite of this vote of confidence on the part of the town, there was still considerable uncertainty as to the future of the library; it was still a question whether the library could survive. It must have been encouraging to read Editor Tenney's frequent comments on the "gratifying sight" of "so many young people earnestly reading the books or pamphlets on the shelves or, the tables."

That the library room in the Town Hall had a fine marble mantel set by Joseph Stetson we know, but it is rather difficult to imagine just what was the effect of the color scheme on the walls.

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The *Telegraph* on April 11, 1884, quoted the words of the Boston decorators as follows: "The Library ceiling and walls are a light pearl green with a frieze on the top of the wall of light almond color, decorated with bands of a pleasing and cheerful combination of color." It was, however, approved by all. As the newspaper put it:

"That the work has been done well no one with a cultivated taste can doubt." Cheerful is a word frequently applied to this room. At first the room was arranged so that there was easy access to the shelves and tables, and the effect was evidently warm and friendly.



## Lyman Smith, the first librarian

The librarian, Mr. Lyman E. Smith, was a man who kept strict guard over the finances of many local organizations, including the Sagadahoc Agricultural and Horticultural Society. He had the New Englander's ability to stretch each dollar and kept careful and clear accounts. He was Collector of Taxes for fifteen years and also served at various times as town agent and as Overseer of the Poor with his office conveniently located in the same building as the library. When some years later he resigned the post of librarian, it is perhaps noteworthy that the thanks of the directors were extended equally to both Mr. and Mrs. Smith. It seems likely that she frequently substituted for him, in those days when women were often called help-mates. During Mr. Smith's time the library hours were weekday afternoons from 2-5, and evenings from 7-9. Only later were the hours extended to meet the demand. The library's needs were many, but money to buy books was of prime importance. One financial principle was regularly maintained-to keep sufficient funds always in reserve to carry the library for one year.

The Library Association started off bravely in a campaign to raise more funds by engaging the new town hall for the first evening it was to be open to the public. The Fanny Kellogg Operatic Company was secured for this occasion with the intention of providing a "strictly first-class entertainment." At 75¢ and 50¢ for seats on the floor, 50¢ for the first two rows in the gallery, and the rest as Unreserved seats at 35¢, it was hoped the receipts would be sufficient to pay all expenses and leave a fair sum for the benefit of the library. It may be that the dedicatory exercises which took place in the afternoon depleted the evening audience, for Mr. Tenney reported that "There was a good attendance -- not so large as we hoped to see." He added with his usual exuberance, "No more delightful

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entertainment ever took place in Brunswick. . . . The performers declare the hall of the Town Building easy to sing in." Again in October plans were laid for a concert by Camilla Urso and the Lotus Club for the benefit of the library. But in spite of the gallant support of the *Telegraph*, it was reported that "the concert was very satisfactory, but the attendance was not very liberal and instead of a surplus there was a deficit of \$23.30." The *Telegraph* commented: "A first class concert does not pay even in the new and tasteful hall. . . . Feed the people, gentlemen - give them a supper and perhaps they will eat and patronize you." Mr. Lyman Smith reported an income of \$125.00 so far, while the cost of maintaining the room would surely be over \$200.00 a year. "With no more patronage than is now bestowed, the life of the Brunswick Public Library will soon terminate." But the tide soon changed direction as the Young Ladies took over. The *Telegraph* jocosely commented on "the Reading Clubs which are running the town this winter." On January 23, 1885, they put on an entertainment called "Shakespeare's Water Cure" which according to Mr. Tenney, who never relaxed his efforts, "is doubtless a most laughable burlesque." The proceeds from this entertainment were \$160.00, and on January 30, 1885, Mr. Lyman Smith could report to the newspaper that he had also received three life memberships (\$75) since January 1, two donations of \$10 each and about \$25 from other memberships, annual dues, etc. Thus the total income that month came to a magnificent \$280.00. By February 6, 1885, it was possible for the *Telegraph* to speak proudly of a year's growth. "The Library opened one year ago Monday with 1135 volumes, and it now has in its possession over 2600 volumes, a large corps of readers afternoon and evening, with a weekly increasing revenue to keep on the work of furnishing good reading...." A reminder adds, "Now is the time to pay annual dues."

Meanwhile the directors had decided to petition the legislature to grant the Town of Brunswick the power to aid the association by a direct subsidy. In 1885 the 62nd Legislature did pass "An Act to extend the powers of the Town of Brunswick." It reads:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in Legislature assembled as follows: -Sect. 1. The Town of Brunswick shall have the

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same power to raise and appropriate money, and provide accommodation, for the Library of the Brunswick Public Library Association which towns now have for the preservation, support and increase of libraries established by themselves.

Sect. 2. Nothing in this act and nothing done by the Town under its authority shall give the town any right to control the library of such association.

The act, however, was not certified in time for Town Meeting that year and it was the Town Meeting of March, 1886, therefore, which first considered a regular grant to the library. Article 23 of the Warrant read: "To see what aid, if any, the town will grant or extend to the Public Library Association, agreeable to the petition of Wm G. Barrows and others." The records of the annual library meeting on May 7, 1888, read as follows:

In view of the fact that the Library was a free reading room for all, it was thought best to ask the town at its annual meeting in March to extend financial aid to it, and give a lease of the present room for a long term of years at a merely nominal rent - both these requests were willingly granted, \$200 being appropriated, and the Selectmen instructed to give a lease for 25 years at \$1.00 per year - such lease has been prepared and awaits your action this evening.

From this date on, as we shall see, the Town of Brunswick has continued and has over the years liberally increased its aid to the public library until it became the main financial support of that institution. Very important was the second section of this act of the legislature, for this has meant that the library management has never been influenced by politics.

Efforts to improve the library collections did not relax during the eighties. There were newspaper pleas and even circulars sent out asking for articles of historic interest "to preserve material illustrating the history of the town, which would otherwise be lost or destroyed." Lists of missing back numbers of periodicals were published frequently, and the results were gratifying. Periodicals were,

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indeed important in the eyes of the public - one gentleman even advertising that he had one "especially good" number of *Harper's* for sale. It was decided to subscribe for more than one number of particularly popular magazines, such as *Scribner's* or *Harper's*, so that one copy would be available for home use as soon as it appeared.

The Book Committee was extremely important in building up the collections. It was their task not only to select books for purchase, but to supervise the daily running of the library. On the other hand the Board of Directors, that is, the officers of the association, were responsible for general policy; they met monthly and had particular regard for finances in general. In these first years the librarian, Mr. Lyman Smith, who was also treasurer, was a key member of both groups. His business acumen and systematic reports were essential to the orderly growth of the library. There was a considerable amount spent on reference materials, but of course the most popular section was fiction. It is interesting to note that even a rather formidable critic of the Brunswick of those years, Professor Edward C. Kirkland, states in his *Brunswick's Golden Age* that the "list of fiction purchased by the Book Committee headed by Professor Lee of Bowdoin was a credit to the taste of the era." On January 30, 1885, the *Telegraph* printed titles of the "more interesting of



the new books" which goes far to substantiate this statement. Among those cited were: Francis Marion Crawford, *An American Politician*; E. W. Howe, *The Story of a Country Town*; Helen Hunt Jackson, *Ramona*; Louisa May Alcott, *Spinning Wheel Stories*; Frank R. Stockton, *The Story of Viteau*; George Cable, *Creoles of Louisiana*; *The Works of John Burroughs*; O. W. Holmes, *Life of Emerson*, and for the children *Heidi* and *Suwanee River Tales*.

Moral uplift was always considered important. That "good reading" would instill good principles and build character was one of the assumptions on which the library was based. Professor Lee said proudly at one point: "It is believed that few libraries of its size contain as much that is useful, pure and wholesome as that of the Brunswick Public Library Association." And the report of another meeting states confidently that "no bad books are allowed on our shelves." While opinions may differ on what constitutes a bad book, there can be no doubt that there was a concerted effort to

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acquire good books and useful ones as well. Professor Robinson saw the library as providing for the needs of the ordinary man and declared: "It is as much its (a library's) duty to provide a book which will solace the weak and tired mind of the humblest person as to offer the best one to the investigator of some special topic."

Attendance at the library in these early years was astonishing. In 1886 the librarians report stated that the number of visitors varied from 30 to 160 daily. "An account taken from a period which it is thought is a fair average of the attendance was for 28 afternoons, 1043—an average of 37, and for 38 evenings, 1439, an average of 38, or an average of 75 visitors daily, though the attendance is somewhat less since the fine weather began." indeed on winter evenings the room was often very crowded. This was a year when Brunswick suffered greatly from epidemics of diphtheria, scarlet fever, and even typhoid. "The State Board of Health" Professor Kirkland notes "commented that Brunswick's record for illness probably will not be equalled in New England." Yet the library thrived. The young ladies' clubs raised over \$300 with two entertainments and the library was also the beneficiary of a masked ball run by a committee of gentlemen. The library received several hundred volumes from the estate of Professor Alpheus Packard, and in 1888 some 300 volumes from Mrs. William G. Barrows. With \$200 annually from the town and the lease of the room in the Town Hall for 25 years at \$1 a year, light and heat included, the report at the annual meeting in May of 1886 included the confident statement: "it is no longer a question of how long it (the Library) will live, but how fast it will grow."

By January of 1888 the number of books in the small library space had become a problem. There was, of course, an effort from the first to keep a list of books by categories, but it became clear that some more flexible system was needed. The librarian asked to "change the location of the book shelves so as to prevent too indiscriminate access to them by irresponsible persons." This could refer to books being misplaced on the shelves, but probably also indicated some losses, for later Mr. Smith noted that "the loss of books has been considerable." At the annual meeting that year, the president, Mr. Robinson, speaking for the directors explained: "While we cannot exclude people from the shelves until a

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catalogue is prepared, it is better that some, while at the shelves, be also quite near the Librarian." He went on to urge the Library Committee (a title used interchangeably with Book Committee) to arrange to have a catalogue of some kind made as soon as possible. In February, 1889, \$100 was appropriated to provide a card catalogue, a system which "can be arranged to accommodate itself year by year to the growth of the Library, no matter how great the additions. Miss Charlotte

Lane, characterized as an expert cataloguer, was engaged to "perform the work" of cataloguing some 4321 books.

It was only five years later that a new operational system was initiated. At the beginning of 1894 the library was closed for some weeks for renovation, and to prepare a new method of lending books. Access to the shelves was denied to visitors and "a card system of letting out books was adopted, which ensures accuracy and safety." The librarian reported in 1895 that patronage had greatly increased, yet from May 26, 1894 to May 10, 1895, only one book was lost - a woman left town taking it with her. Printed lists of books were to be published from time to time, and these doubtless did encourage patronage, as lists of new books do today. But the chief incentive to greater use of the library came from a different source.

The public library movement had been growing rapidly throughout the state. On March 19, 1891, the Maine Library Association was formed at the State Library with the active participation of the State Librarian, Leonard D. Carver, and Professor George T. Little, Librarian of Bowdoin College. In 1893 a new public library law was passed by the legislature granting to free public libraries a state stipend equal to ten per cent of the money appropriated in the municipality each year. At first this state subsidy was limited to the amount of money appropriated for the purchase of books but was changed the following year to the amount appropriated for any library use. The law was intended to encourage the development of free public libraries and was most successful. As this subsidy would be available to any public library that did away with fees, it aroused immediate interest in Brunswick. In 1894 the Town of Brunswick offered to appropriate \$500 for the library if it would remit all fees for residents of Brunswick. The directors had already reduced fees as far as was financially possible, only to find that this had not

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substantially increased the number of members or users. Desirable as it was, no further reduction could have been considered without aid from the town. The offer of the town was thus readily accepted by the directors. It meant, of course, that in addition to the town grant of \$500 there would be a stipend of \$50 (10 per cent) from the state. This seemed like wealth, but after a year with no fees the directors found it necessary to declare that the town would have to double its appropriations if the library was to remain free. This was partly because of increased wear and tear on books due to a dramatic rise in the number of readers that came with the inauguration of the free system. It is evidence of how important the library had become that a doubled appropriation (\$1,000) was approved without difficulty at Town Meeting.

Before this added municipal income had been dreamed of, the directors and more especially Professor Robinson, the president, had been struggling with the problem of cramped quarters. As early as 1889 a start had been made on a Permanent Fund, as it was called, in the hopes of some day having a building of their own. A bequest in 1890 of \$250 from the estate of Fanny E. Given and donated by her brother George E. Given in accordance with her wishes was the first payment to this fund. In 1891, the directors "suggested the expediency" of raising money for a building fund. Complaints of lack of space are frequent in the records of the '90s, and it was very much in character for Miss Annette Merryman, a member of the Book Committee and a much loved teacher in the public schools, to set to work to do something about it. With her encouragement the Grammar School put on an entertainment which earned \$50 for the fund. The various groups which had been giving benefits for the library continued to do so, and gradually the fund grew. A bequest of \$1,000 from the estate of Samuel R. Jackson, President of the First National Bank, was the largest gift to the fund in this period. A few lectures, such as one by the popular John Boyle O'Reilly, brought in small sums from the sale of

tickets. Some free lectures, mostly by Bowdoin professors, were also provided in the hope of rousing public interest in a library building.

The process of raising money for the public library was not always grim, and the townspeople had rather a lot of fun. One of the many benefits put on by volunteers was "Brunswick's Dreamland"

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which was described in the *Brunswick Telegraph* of March 2, 1894, as a "Marvellous Dream Walk from the Pages of Mother Goose Melodies." Another subheading announced that "Grave Professors and Sedate Business Men disport themselves in grotesque attire for Library Fund." The entertainment consisted of many skits based on Mother Goose rhymes, and almost continuous music from a most extraordinary orchestra. But the description must be left to Mr. Tenney:

It was hard to believe that the deft wand or baton of the directress, Mistress Hutchins, could produce such sweet strains from common every day combs. Many believed them enchanted or that Professor Chapman had a French Horn and Professor Woodruff an Aeolian Harp surreptitiously tucked up their coat sleeves. No, all genuine and real. Mr. Bliss led off with the piano and the performers followed with the accuracy of Sousa's Marine Band.

When the little hand of the red peak capped leader indicated crescendo every man, woman and child crescendoed for dear life, and when it meant diminuendo, the sounds died away to the gentle sighing of the western wind among the fragrant magnolia trees. Attack, and the strains rose like a western cyclone to softly die away or quicken in short staccato or full round rhythm. And this combination as Mother Goose termed them, made melody all evening, being both orchestra and chorus.

The chairman of the book committee, Professor Leslie A. Lee, was King Cole. That Professor Lee was an intrepid adventurer his biography will attest. He was a scientist whose interest ranged far and wide. He traveled by ship from Washington, D.C. to San Francisco via Patagonia, Terra del Fuego, the Straits of Magellan, etc. making collections for the Smithsonian. He led the first of many Bowdoin northern expeditions to Labrador, where he discovered the remains of an ancient Eskimo village. He was chairman of the State's Topographical Commission and yet he had time to be

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King Cole for a library benefit, and to chair the really overburdened library book committee for many a year. Truly Brunswick can look back with pride to these unsung heroes of her past.

In May of 1895 it became necessary for Mr. Lyman Smith to give up the position of librarian. It was with real regret that the directors accepted his resignation, but they were fortunate to have at hand a most competent woman, Miss Mary G. Gilman, who, they said, "has made library work a study for the past year, and promises to fill the place acceptably." This turned out to be an understatement indeed, for Miss Gilman had many new ideas and proceeded almost at once to make a number of valuable innovations. One handwritten report exists in the library files, which in its forthright language and foursquare handwriting makes exciting reading. She had indeed made a study of what libraries were doing. For forty-five years she was to conduct the library admirably if with growing authority as the years rolled on.

One of her first efforts was to increase the use of the library by the schools and school teachers. Her first report tells of a very active year, with the greatest increase in use of books by juveniles. This ties in with her comment: "It is encouraging to see how necessary the library is becoming to the scholars of the public schools and

to see that they realize that the one is part of the other." Her report at the annual meeting in 1897 states that "a department for teachers has just been planned and a few books placed on shelves accessible to them. A magazine 'The School Review' is taken for their benefit." Teachers were permitted to take out books for school use and a card system for books so taken was introduced.

Miss Gilman and Professor Robinson were both thoroughly persuaded not only of the educative value of a library, but of its moral influence. Mr. Robinson stated: "The aim of its (library's) management ought to be not simply to deal out books to all who come, but to guide those who are forming habits of reading in their selection of books." Miss Gilman placed books of history, travel, and essays on the librarian's table and reported that they had been quickly borrowed. Another innovation was the experiment of sending books out in lots of 50 to the more outlying districts, such as Mere Point and Bungernock (as it was then spelled) where volunteers took charge of their distribution and return. In days of horse-drawn

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vehicles and unpaved roads it was often difficult for these people to return books at the proper time and farmers could rarely take the time to drive to town. In 1897 another decision was made -- to keep the library open on Saturday forenoons especially for the convenience of those who lived far from the village. With the increasing number of books, 509 added in 1897, not to mention a very lively circulation, nearly 24,000 that same year, cataloguing new books in the restricted space became a problem. Miss Gilman's starting salary had been \$6 a week; it now went up to \$7.50 and she even was given the help of one assistant who was to work twelve hours a week at a salary of \$1.50. In May, 1902, comes the first mention of books in French, 28 of the 380 new books being in the French language. And in the Town Report the following February, Miss Gilman notes, "The library contains a growing collection of French literature, which is enjoyed by our French residents."

The crying need was for better housing for the library. Professor Robinson had foreseen this early, and was probably accused of harping on the matter, but he had good reason for it. Imagine a one-room library where in the reading room are shelved 8,000 volumes, and "there is not even a closet for hanging the wraps of the librarian and attendants." There was no place for consultation and discussion with readers; books to be catalogued, repaired and bound were all crowded in with the others. There was also a complaint of darkness-that electric light was not available "until a long time after it was needed," and a lamp had to be provided for the librarian's table. Miss Gilman had introduced the practice of making some books directly available to readers, who must have been discouraged by the poor lighting. Yet the numbers using the library increased rapidly. In the librarian's report for the year 1900 it was stated that "since the Library became free in May, 1894, 4,035 people have borrowed books, 1,934 people have applied for cards during the past year, 51 teachers have made use of the special school cards since they were introduced two years ago." "Cyclopedias belonging to the Library have been placed in three schoolhouses," and the practice continued of sending 50 books at a time to Mere Point and Bunganuc. At first only three to four families in each place made use of these books, now twenty did so. The townspeople outside the village were in general appreciative of Saturday opening and came much more frequently to the library.

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Professor Robinson also made a good case against the location of the library. In this room on the ground floor of the Town Building, all the traveling companies that put on performances in the Town Hall, and the many local entertainments disturb the patrons most seriously. It must indeed have been noisy both in the corridors and overhead on such evenings. Robinson also noted, "The location also invites making

the room a loafing place, to the annoyance of readers." The Professor was an extremely energetic man, full of enthusiasm and enterprise. He taught chemistry at Bowdoin, and had an inventive turn of mind; he was able to take out patents for a disinfecting apparatus, using formaldehyde, which at the time revolutionized sanitation practices. He, with Professor Hutchins who taught Physics, created the first practical X-ray tube, a type used generally for years. Incidentally Professor Hutchins' wife it was who led that comb-band in "Brunswick's Dreamland." Professor Robinson was confident that someone would yet step forward to finance a library building, but the years went by without any sign of a donor. What made this lack especially painful was that in many surrounding communities where no local effort had ever been made, individuals had donated funds for buildings, while Brunswick's enterprise in the field had not been rewarded. As we read Professor Robinson's words at the annual meeting in 1900 calling on his fellow citizens to work together and somehow find the needed funds themselves, "since no one else will do so," we must be grateful that his hopes were about to be fulfilled.

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## **Chapter Two**

### **The Captain John Curtis Memorial Library**

Around the turn of the century Andrew Carnegie was very much in the headlines because of his widely-heralded offer to donate a library building to any community that satisfied his conditions. The community must itself provide a location, and must be willing to appropriate annually from community funds at least ten per cent of the original gift to maintain the library. Professor Robinson, despairing of any local donor, finally decided to make application to Carnegie. At first his hopes were dashed, for the application did not meet with approval. The town already had an established library, and did not need assistance to get one started. Robinson felt this was indeed an injustice, for the need for space was overwhelming, and the efforts of the town were being used to disqualify it, rather than being rewarded as they deserved. With his usual energy and persuasive eloquence, he was actually able to have this decision reversed. In 1903 Carnegie did approve a gift of \$12,000 for a building on condition that the town would provide a site and \$1,200 a year for maintenance.

In Town Meeting there was some discussion of these terms. Was, for instance, \$12,000 enough for a suitable library, and would \$1,200 be sufficient to maintain it? Professor Robinson answered that Brunswick did not "want to make any splurge or spread." It did not need an "architectural" building, nor a truly big library. "The College Library is available to any man who desires to conduct any research, so the public library should be a live library, made up of the books that are actively used and needed." The Permanent Fund, now about \$3,300, could be used to supplement if necessary. As to maintenance, he had "no doubt" that \$1,200 would be sufficient. He had set the total figure at \$12,000 for he felt that ten per cent of this sum would put the town to no greater annual expense than at present since "the room now used would

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be available for rental purposes and should easily bring in \$200 a year." He reiterated his arguments on the need for a new building and the unsuitability of the present location. Then he added: "Mr. Carnegie will not always be giving away libraries, and it is a good plan to take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves." Somewhat grudgingly the town agreed, and the search for a site began. Various lots were investigated, some of which proved unavailable, but an offer did

come in from Samuel G. Davis (who later donated the Davis Fund to the town) to give the lot on School Street where the Nathaniel Davis homestead stood for a library building site.

The announcement of Carnegie's gift in the New York papers brought an unexpected response. Suddenly the long-hoped-for donor appeared in the shape of a former son of Brunswick who had made his fortune in the great world outside. William J. Curtis, a member of the law firm of Sullivan and Cromwell in New York City, was born in Brunswick, the son of a Brunswick sea captain, Capt. John Curtis. On reading of the Carnegie gift, he immediately wrote to Carnegie declaring that he had "for years cherished the idea of presenting to his native town a library building as a tribute to his father's memory," and asking Mr. Carnegie to withdraw his offer so that he could carry out his plans. The answer which Mr. Curtis received from Mr. Carnegie deserves to be quoted in full.

40 Wall Street  
New York City  
January 20, 1903

Dear Mr. Curtis:

I get many letters, but do not remember one which has given me more pleasure to receive than yours this morning. Of course I withdraw; I would not rob you of that chief blessing for the world. Will you please tell the authorities this.

Make your announcement and become a happy man all your days. I am so happy for your letter, and shake you by the hand. Always

Very truly yours,

Andrew Carnegie

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Carnegie's biographer states that Carnegie had always hoped that his example would be followed by others, and had been in general disappointed in this expectation. It seems that his pleasure and congratulations to Curtis were as genuine as they sound. Later Professor Robinson was to speak admiringly of Curtis' gift as coming from a comparatively young man, at least a man in his prime, not as a bequest. No doubt it was Carnegie who gave the nudge that brought the gift at this time. In any case it was a generous one, and was followed by continued interest in the library.

The conditions of the Curtis gift were that the land and the money should be used for a library, and that the town should agree to raise \$1,200 annually for its support. This news was received with much favor in Brunswick and the *Brunswick Record* wrote: "While there had been a disposition in some circles to regard with disfavor the proposition made by the steel magnate, the coldness and hesitation disappeared at once when it was known that a native of Brunswick would make the gift." There was surely something more personal and intimate about this gift, for it was a tribute to a generation of Brunswick men, some of them still living, whose way of life was part of the background of the whole community. Mr. Curtis himself wrote:

In doing this I not only honor my father's memory, but I also honor the noble men of whom he was but a type - the seafaring men of Maine - men who by their energy, courage and great natural ability, have contributed so much to the up-building of New England; and who have left the impress of their character upon many worthy descendants who have gone out to other portions of the country.

At the special Town Meeting on February 2, 1903, called for in a warrant drawn up by the library directors, the Curtis offer was joyfully accepted. It was, to be sure, more generous than that of Carnegie, since it not only provided \$3,000 more in cash but also gave a very well-located lot, with a house on it. But the uniting factor seems to have been the home-town boy who had made good and remembered his origins. Mr. John Furbish, a man deeply interested in Brunswick's past and future, was moderator of the

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meeting. At the close of the meeting the local paper reported that Mr. Furbish asked to say a few words "in reference to Capt. John Curtis who, he said, was one of the most magnificent specimens of man- hood weighing over 300 pounds, and having a tall athletic figure and soldierly bearing. He was a man of noble impulses, of public spirit, and a proud representative of New England sailors."

At this same Town Meeting the town appointed the directors of the Library Association plus Mr. Thomas H. Riley, as a Library Committee to secure plans and provide for the construction of the building. Mr. Riley was not only a leading business man of Brunswick but also the brother-in-law of William J. Curtis, and thus in many ways a valuable addition to the committee. The directors were: Franklin C. Robinson, R. W. Eaton, Ira P. Booker, Capt. Lemuel H. Stover, and Lyman E. Smith. It was a capable and hard- working group.

In the directors' report at the Library Association annual meeting of May 8, 1903, one important item read as follows: "It is, of course, understood that the new library building will belong to the town, as the present library room does, so that practically the same arrangement will need to be continued as at present. We would suggest that by the time the new building is furnished the whole matter of the relationship of the Association to the town be carefully considered, and, if found unsatisfactory in any aspect, the deficit be remedied." Professor Robinson, as usual, spoke convincingly. "We are sure that experience here as well as in other places, proves that a library managed for a town by an association formed for the purpose is much more satisfactorily managed than when the town takes all the responsibility itself."

When the building was finished and occupied, this matter came up at Town Meeting in March, 1905. It was reported in the *Brunswick Record*:

On the question of giving the care and custody of the Capt. John Curtis Memorial Library building to the directors of the Brunswick Public Library Association Professor F. C. Robinson moved the acceptance of the article. Judge F. E. Roberts said he would like to know if the Association is

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incorporated and how it is composed. Professor Robinson replied that the Association was incorporated at the time the library was started, that it was formed for the purpose of supporting the library, and that through the efforts of the Association the lot of land and building was given to the town. He thought that many more of the citizens should become members of the Association. He argued in support of the article that it would be better to have a continuous management of the library.

Judge Roberts said that he was not opposed to the present management, but thought it peculiar to give up the management of a building owned by the town to an association. The newspaper gives no further account of the discussion, stating merely that the article was accepted. Under Article 32 of the warrant the town "voted to amend Article I, Section 7 of the Town By-Laws so as to give the care, custody, and management of the Captain John Curtis Memorial Library Buildings

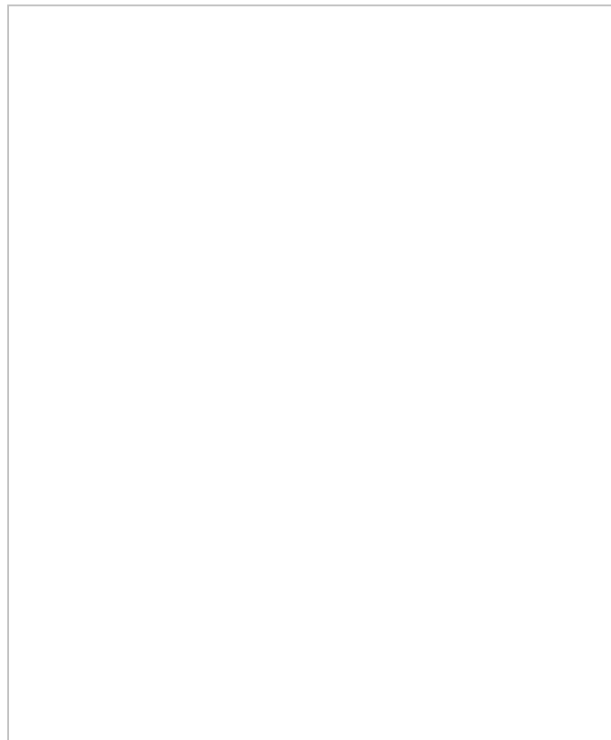
and Grounds to the directors of the Brunswick Public Library Association." It may well have been in deference to Judge Roberts' views that in May of 1905 the Library Association amended its bylaws making the first selectman *ex officio* a member of the Board of Directors, a privilege seldom if ever used.

The committee for the library building appointed A. W. Longfellow of Boston as architect, and on July 31st the contract for construction of the building was awarded to C. E. Hacker of Brunswick. Ground was broken a few days later, but there was no formal ceremony. John Furbish put in the heating and Ridley and Eaton were responsible for the plumbing. In the Town Report of 1905, the library committee's report states that "it is gratifying that the building was thus given and constructed wholly by Brunswick men." This statement had one important omission: it left out the plans of the architect, which were highly satisfactory, although made by a Bostonian. Through the gift of bookcases formerly used in the Bowdoin College Library (a new college library building, Hubbard Hall, was built at this time) the total cost was kept down to \$16,360.70. The gift from Curtis with interest totaled \$15,373.20 and the excess cost was paid by the Library Association from

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"accumulated funds." The Library Association also paid for repairing and moving the Curtis house, to make way for the library building. This charming old Cape Cod house, now No. 12 Middle Street, stands as a fitting reminder of old-time Brunswick. It became the source of a steady, if small, income from rental, and was for some years the home of a loyal library friend, Miss Margaret Swift. There were other extra costs such as the granite work on the front of the building, due to changes made by the architect after the contract was signed. These changes amounting to some \$197 were paid by the Library Association as were the expenses of furnishings. It is evident that the Permanent Fund had been of great service, and was now considerably depleted.



The donor of the library building, William J. Curtis, was born in Brunswick in 1854 and graduated from Bowdoin College in 1875. As his father, to whose memory the



library is dedicated, died in 1870, he had to earn his way through college by various ingenious means. He was a "coal salesman," taking orders in Brunswick for a Capt. Drummond in Bath. He also taught school one winter term in South Durham. One summer he made a profit out of the competition between two separately owned railroads between Portland and Boston, by buying low-priced tickets to Boston at way stations of the Maine Central running into Portland, and selling them to ticket agents in that city. His eye to the main chance seems to have been developed early, but he also seems to have had an open and direct personality which caused men to trust him implicitly, and they were not disappointed. After graduation he was editor briefly of a Bangor paper owned by a cousin, but his more liberal political views made this arrangement distasteful to both sides of the relationship. He then read law in the firm of Wilson and Woodward in Bangor, who found him helpful and promising. Eventually a friend advanced the money for a year at Columbia Law School where he covered two years in one, due to his experience in the law firm in Bangor. He worked for a time in the law office of Sullivan and Cromwell, and after a period in a firm of his own, returned as a partner to Sullivan and Cromwell. In this capacity he dealt with the many legal problems of the building of the Panama Canal and the organization of the Canal Zone, and had dealings with many prominent men of the day. He had much to do with the organization of the U. S. Steel Company and acted temporarily as its first president.

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In his later years, having retired because of deafness, he was most active in the interests of his Alma Mater, Bowdoin College, and gave large sums there, always in the name of his class, 1875, never in his own. He was a truly modest man, who seems to have inspired trust and admiration in all his dealings. At the time of his death the minute of the Bowdoin Faculty said of him "...a man of force and gentleness, tolerant of persons without softness of principle; a man of virtue, and a man of the world; beneficent at home and abroad, aiding the college even more by his talents than by his generous gifts of money, he had won the admiration of all in Bowdoin who knew him for his high qualities of mind and character." His interest in the Brunswick Library was also not limited to the original gift, and from time to time he quietly stepped in to make some item or program possible.

In November of 1904 the library building was finally ready for occupation. In October the directors had asked the treasurer to have the coal bin in the new building filled, and requested Professor Robinson to arrange for the removal of books to the new building "as soon as it was in proper condition to receive them." The President was also requested to communicate with Mr. Curtis "touching the dedication." This meeting also voted thanks to the Misses Palmer for a century plant for the lawn, and to Capt. Samuel Skolfield for "the generous and timely gift of a full-rigged miniature ship, 'the work of his own hands' to be permanently installed in the Curtis building." The latter still stands today in a glass-enclosed cabinet over the fireplace. The Library was closed from November 12th to December 12th for the process of moving. The dedication, however, was held on December 8, 1904.

On that occasion Mr. Curtis personally presented the new library to the town. His speech, quoted from the *Brunswick Record* of December 9, 1904, included the following words:

Years ago many of your sons, influenced in part by a spirit of adventure, also by a love of the ocean which washes your shores, sought their livelihood in a sailor's life. The commerce of the world was then controlled by American ships, many of them officered by the sons of Maine.

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This employment gave them courage, self-reliance, independence, and in a sense broad culture that can only come from large contact with the world. They largely contributed to our country's preeminence as a world power and made our flag known in every port where the commerce of the world sought its markets. It is fitting, therefore, that this memorial should be dedicated to one who was a worthy representative of that class and that it should be erected in a town so many of whose sons were seafaring men.

In receiving the gift Capt. Lemuel H. Stover spoke as follows:

Having formerly been a shipmaster and a contemporary of Capt. John Curtis, I should hardly feel the exercises were complete without some expression of thanks from the shipmasters and sailors of this town and vicinity to his son for his public recognition of their importance.

The conditions sixty years ago when Capt. John Curtis entered upon his career as a shipmaster were very different from what they are at the present time. The whole coast of Maine at that time was thickly dotted with shipyards and the chief business of the seaboard towns was connected with maritime affairs. To my personal knowledge at that time there were more than a dozen shipyards located on Harpswell Neck and at the head of the bay in Brunswick, Freeport and Yarmouth, where some of the largest ships then afloat were being built, and the sound of the fastener's maul echoed and re-echoed throughout Casco Bay. Even Topsham had one or more yards above where the M.C.R.R. bridge crosses the Androscoggin.

A shipmaster [he went on to say] must be educated along the lines of his profession and have a fair knowledge of trigonometry and astronomy, in a sense he must be a merchant and a gentleman.

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Merchant enough to make contracts, write charter parties, fill out bills of lading, enter and clear a ship at the custom house, collect his freight and make remittances. Lawyer enough to do the business of and govern his floating kingdom agreeable to maritime law and the customs of the port which have become law. He must have the instincts of a gentleman, not necessarily a gentleman of the academic kind, but a natural-born homemade one that walks uprightly and deals justly, one who has due regard for the rights and feelings of others and can conform to the usages of the different people with which he comes in contact.

It was the ambition of many small boys of seaboard towns to go to sea and work their way up. He defended the common seaman, about whom so many unfair tales are told. He claimed that every good captain had learned his trade by sailing before the mast. He added:

I know of no calling that offers so many and good opportunities for meditation as that of the sailor. And under the peculiar circumstances that surround him on the restless ocean, it is quite impossible that they have not improved those opportunities in deep and serious thought of the mysteries of life and death.

One statement was truly a cry from the heart of the old seaman: "An occasion like this seems like an oasis in a desert world."

It is not strange that the expression of such thoughts and memories on this occasion seems to have lodged deeply in the heart and mind of Mr. Curtis. Some years later, in May, 1914, he wrote suggesting collecting and preserving in the library building "all available material relating to the sea-faring men of Brunswick and neighboring towns, whether relics, pictures, log-books, models, etc., and records of their experiences." This was "heartily approved by the directors and the librarian was so instructed." And on August 7, 1914, in spite of the war news of that frightful week

the *Brunswick Record* carried on its first page a list of "interesting and valuable articles" which had been presented to the

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Curtis Memorial Library in response to a request for gifts for the maritime collection. This emphasis on maritime matters has continued to the present day.

The building which aroused so much enthusiasm is now part of a larger complex but has retained its individuality, helped by the contours of the land and architectural skill. It is somewhat altered in external appearance by a ramp in place of what for over some seventy years was the main entrance, and is very much rearranged internally, but it is still rather handsome. It was built of dark red brick with granite trim and in detail and proportions was well-designed and constructed. The *Brunswick Record* of December 9, 1904, gave this description of the internal plan.

The Library is entered through a vestibule 8 by 8 feet, which opens directly into the delivery hall, 29 by 18. A feature of the delivery hall is the large fireplace at the south side of the room.

In the southwest corner of the building at the right of the delivery hall is the stack room 23 by 24 feet, and adjoining it is the children's reading room 15 by 20. On the other side of the hall is the large reading room, 24 by 20 feet, and the directors' room, 24 by 17½.

To the left of the vestibule is the coat room, and at the right is the stairway leading to the basement. The basement is finished in light wood and contains the boiler room, with a coal bin capable of holding 25 tons of coal, the unpacking room, and a large stack room of the same size of the one upstairs.

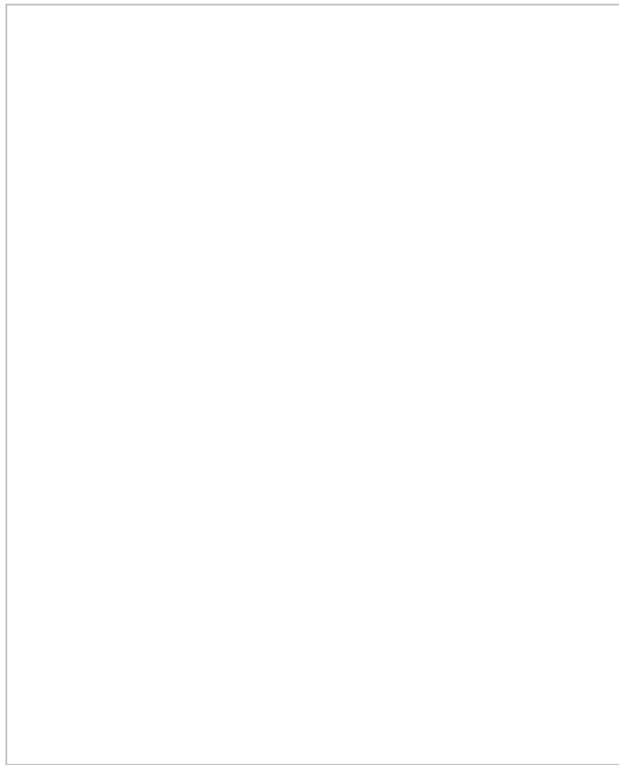
The children's room was the most popular innovation, and was very much the creation of Miss Mary Gilman. A fine fireplace and a beautiful arch over the entrance to the reading room were outstanding features of the interior. These have been preserved in the recent changes. The man to whom the building was dedicated is described by his son in the *Memoirs of William John Curtis*:

Among all these captains my father was conspicuous for his size and noted for his intelligence

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and good fellowship. Many are the stories that have been told to me to illustrate his strength and prowess. He was six feet two inches in height and weighed 325 pounds, and was nevertheless wonderfully agile. His frame was large, but although his weight was as stated, he did not have a superfluous pound of flesh on his body. It was said that in his youth when the captains used to have their dancing parties at the Tontine, he was the lightest dancer on the floor, and many are the stories that have been told to me of wonderful exhibitions of strength and agility which made him famous among sea-faring men.



Elijah Kellogg used Captain John as a type in writing *Lion Ben of Orr's Island*. His physical strength and size "stood him in good stead as a sea captain in days when sailor's fights at sea were not uncommon." His son recounted in his memoirs how as a small child he stood with his mother in the doorway of their ship's cabin and saw the mate flee before a sailor armed with a knife. At that moment his father, who had been ashore collecting the ship's papers, stepped aboard and at once all was serene. He recounts other tales of his father's calm and bravery in the face of danger, as at Valencia, Spain, when Capt. John faced the Spanish customs officers who had just shot and killed an American officer on board a nearby ship. On another occasion when his vessel, the *Windsor Forest*, burned at sea Captain John got the crew off in several boats, guided them to the main ship lane, and held them together for several days until all were rescued. Capt. John Curtis was all these things and more, for he was a great reader, and kept a "commonplace book" in which he inscribed quotations from his favorite writers. His was indeed a worthy name to stand above a library door.

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### **Chapter 3**

#### **A Part of the Town**

Professor Robinson, who had been so optimistic, soon had occasion to admit that the sum allotted for the support of the library was inadequate. At the first annual meeting following the opening, in May of 1905, he stated that "this is no exception to the general rule that increased privilege and opportunities carry with them increased responsibilities." It appeared that running a library building entailed many more expenses than those of a single room provided with free light, heat, and general janitor service. The need for a janitor was evident at once and Samuel Seal, whose house abutted the library land, was engaged as a part-time janitor at the rate

of \$3 a week. In May this was made more specific; the \$3 a week was for "firing" during the season for firing, and one dollar a month was to be added for washing floors and cleaning. The next year a wire to the janitor's home was proposed so that he might be called when needed. It is unlikely that this was done as Seal was also a janitor at the college and not always available on call. Insurance in 1887 was only \$24 a year to cover \$6,000 worth of books - now not only did it have to cover a much larger collection of books, but the building as well. Lighting and heat were not negligible matters. Although the original purpose of the Permanent Fund had been met, there was urgent need to continue and increase it. Lyman Smith, as treasurer of the association, stated in his report to the town: "The cost of the maintenance of the new library so much exceeds that of the old one, that much more money than the town is required to raise for this purpose will in time be needed to provide for its proper growth and usefulness."

As town finances had been in some confusion the preceding year, no increased appropriation could be requested for the present, but the next year the town did raise its appropriation to \$1,400. Professor Robinson urged a greatly enlarged membership in the

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association, but there was no pronounced response to this appeal. Mr. Curtis in 1906 donated a clock and offered to pay for an assistant. There was great concern at the shrinking of funds available for books, and at the 1906 meeting the possibility of help from benefit entertainments, as in the past, was discussed. The year 1907 saw a very successful "Dickens Carnival" which raised a total of \$400, only half of which was "to be expended during the current year." The two manufacturing companies made specific gifts to this effort as did also Mrs. Mary Young, and, to be sure, W. J. Curtis via Professor Robinson. Miss Annette Merryman again saw to it that her young charges took some responsibility. Her Grammar School gave an entertainment which raised \$82 for "Juvenile Literature" suitable for ages ranging from 12 to 18 years. A special "slip" was provided for books presented by the Grammar School. Like Miss Gilman, she was eager to cement the tie between the young pupils and the public library.

Each year Miss Gilman's reports had shown her special interest in children. In 1902 her report had reflected her belief in the building of character through reading. "There is much written on the importance of interesting children in the library, that the future of our people is to be influenced in a great degree by the contact of children with enobling books. If this is the case then the little people of Brunswick are appreciating their opportunity for they visit the Library in very large numbers." Again in 1903 she wrote:

Interesting children in reading, and in books worth reading is an important and hopeful feature in library work, and its importance cannot be overestimated. Many of the children's books are instructive, having much on nature and animal life woven into story forms.

The boy or girl who cannot have a college education need not feel that this opportunity for study is over while he has a free library at his disposal. Few people realize the mission work a library performs in helping to keep boys and girls at home evenings interested and amused in good entertaining books, instead of lingering on the streets, learning much that is harmful.

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In 1905 when the new "dignified" library had been opened only briefly she comments:

The children's room is thoroughly appreciated. It would be worth while for anyone who is interested in children to visit the library some Saturday afternoon or evening and see the room filled with happy boys and girls eagerly reading, in looking at pictures, or perhaps there for the sociability of it.

This was in a year when patronage of the library had been cut by a month's closing for the transfer to the new building and by severe storms and cold. The *Brunswick Record* of January 6, 1905, described one such storm which lasted thirty hours. "After the storm ceased and the sun was setting the day grew cold and a biting chill crept into the street. The air was sharp and frosty Wednesday night and the snow groaned under foot." On Thursday morning the thermometer stood at 20 degrees below zero.


By the spring of 1906 Miss Gilman wrote with real authority:

A separate room for children has proved a great success. They flock to the library in large numbers, and appreciate thoroughly their pleasant room, with its goodly supply of books, magazines and pictures. Certainly the library is an important element in the making of good citizenship. The teachers and pupils of the public schools find the library a very necessary aid in their work. It would be well if there were still a closer union between the school and the library.

Again the following year she speaks of increasing numbers at the library "especially the children, who come to it for all sorts of information." She would like the library to be more useful, but money for books is not sufficient, and she needs assistance. Nevertheless, "people whose education has been necessarily limited may still go to school here."

Gradually the library acquired a more stable footing. The town already in 1906 had raised its library appropriation from \$1,200 to 1,400 a year, which meant a corresponding increase in

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the state subsidy. When a new paved sidewalk was built on Pleasant Street between Maine and Union Streets a crosswalk opposite the public library was included. There continued to be lectures and benefit performances - the Saturday Club was especially recognized as a benefactor - and there were individual gifts and bequests. The death of Professor Lee in 1908 was a great loss; he had headed the original book committee and it was his taste and judgment that laid a solid foundation for the book collection. Now a gift of some 325 volumes from his library added a fine collection, both scientific and general, to the resources of the library.

Another severe loss came with the death in 1910 of Professor Robinson whose initiative, energy, and enthusiasm had almost single-handedly made the library possible. He was, to be sure, supported by a generous and able group of interested men and women, and for the twenty-seven years that he acted as president of the association, he never failed to inspire others with his own zeal. Professor Robinson had been very active in other town affairs, particularly in the schools, where, during his time in Brunswick, for all but one term of three years, he was either a member of the School Board or Superintendent of Schools. These two of his many interests were brought together in a fund, which was first established by some teachers and Professor Robinson himself, to buy books of reference for teachers to use. This now became a Memorial Fund - The Franklin C. Robinson Teacher's Library - managed by the library and contributed to by his many friends. Already in 1911 some thirty-five volumes were purchased with income from this fund.

Professor Robinson's son, Clement Robinson, in a biographical memoir of his father, *The Professor*, speaks of the library as a community project sustained in some part by volunteer efforts. In the annual benefit entertainments, Professor Robinson always had a part. He was responsible for the entire arrangement of the

Dickens Carnival. His son recalls: "He prepared a complete analysis of all Dickens' novels with the sketches for the various scenes. My mother as Mrs. Corney had the scene with Mr. Bumble, the Beadle, where she asked if he liked his tea 'sweet' and nearly everyone else in town was present either as performer or spectator. But I had measles and couldn't go!". It should be remembered in this connection that Professor Robinson was a distinguished scientist and

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inventor -- evidence indeed of the well-rounded man that the liberal arts education of those days was thought to, and did on occasion, produce.

Another example of the loyalty of library friends was the May Day Pops in 1911, an affair heralded in the March 17th *Brunswick Record* with almost, though not quite, the eloquence of Mr. Tenney.

The committee in charge of the "Pop" concert to be given in the Town Hall on the evening of May 1, for the benefit of the Public Library, is holding weekly meetings and will soon be ready to make definite announcements. Suffice it to say now that excellent music will be rendered during the evening by an orchestra of accomplished musicians; and refreshments will be served at small tables. Bevies of Brunswick beauties will be on hand to attend to all patrons; the music will be gay and popular, and everyone is planning to have the merriest sort of time. You had best put in your order for a table early with Professor Files. Remember the date - May Day; and remember the cause - The Public Library. The Saturday Club hopes to add a very goodly sum to the library funds. The committee is working hard to make the evening memorable. The Library can't afford to miss your support, and you can't afford to miss the show.

Again on March 24 the *Record* urged all to aid the public library by attending the May Day Pop Concert and to make it a real "old home" evening; the whole town should be there. "Show your appreciation for Mr. Curtis' generosity." On April 14th the paper reported a donation of a ten gallon thermos of coffee from the Oriental Tea Company of Boston. Tables were to be \$2, but bids would be taken for the better locations with the list closing on April 19th. The program would be "spirited and unique" and the refreshments "splendid". There would be chicken salad, rolls, ham, olive and pimiento sandwiches, ice cream, crackers and cheese, and coffee. The audience was to join in singing popular airs. With a final flourish of humor the paper declared "tainted money will

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absolutely not be refunded." On April 28th the paper was able to report that all tables and reserved seats had been sold. It published long lists of names indicating just what task each Brunswick Beauty was to perform and there were indeed bevies of them.


The sum raised at the Pops was considerable for those days - \$446.75 - as reported in a letter from Professor Files who managed the affair for the Saturday Club. The impact on the town can perhaps be measured by the fact that the following December the Saturday Club put on a vaudeville show, one act of which was a burlesque on the Pop Concert.

In 1913 Mr. Curtis gave \$100 for "suitably equipping the southeastern room in the basement." This was a room sometimes rented for lectures, but regularly used at this time by two girls' clubs and one boys' club for meetings. That fall a story hour for small children held every Saturday afternoon was inaugurated by Miss Chadwick and Mrs. Buell. The attendance averaged about twenty. Beginning that same year, the library was open Sunday afternoons from November to May for readers only.

There was a fairly steady average of twenty to twenty-five readers for Sunday afternoons in the following years, but in 1921 this was discontinued as by that time the attendance averaged only thirteen a Sunday, much to the disappointment of the librarian.

During the years 1911-1915 the library had, again through the generosity of Mr. Curtis, embarked upon a new project. The library grounds had been graded but there had been no attempt at landscaping until Mr. Curtis took a hand. In the spring of 1910 he sent a check for \$2,000 to the town as a trust fund in memory of his mother who loved gardens. The income of this fund was to be used for the "ornamentation, improvement, and care of the grounds and premises of the Capt. John Curtis Memorial Library." The town in its discretion was permitted to "delegate to the present Library Association or its successors . . . the expenditure of such income . . . for the purpose indicated." Shortly after, the treasurer of the Library Association received a letter from Mr. Curtis enclosing \$150, since the trust fund would not be available until the next Town Meeting could act upon it. He was anxious to have the work begin at once, and the directors did arrange immediately for some shrubs and plants for the grounds. But the real task of landscaping

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began a year later after the town had notified the directors that the selectmen wished the income of the Curtis Fund for the Library Grounds to be given into the care and custody of the Directors of the Library Association. The plans as they slowly developed were ambitious. In the end a design was carried out by Carl Rust Parker of Portland, which included a pond, a teahouse, and garden plantings. The architect, A. W. Longfellow, had assumed "for some unexplained reason" that the land in the rear of the Episcopal Parish House belonged to the Library Association. He felt that the trees there were needed to hide unattractive buildings to the southwest corner. In view of this, the directors decided to buy the land from the Episcopalian authorities, taking \$600 from the Permanent Fund in order to do so. The church had planned to use the area for tennis courts, and it was decided to carry out this idea with small fees for the upkeep, and a special committee was put in charge. The Curtis Library Tennis Club was formed in June 1915 with Dean K. C. M. Sills (soon to be President of Bowdoin College), Dr. W. F. Browne, and Samuel Forsaith the committee in charge. The rules provided for a \$1.00 annual fee for adults, and 50¢ for those between 12 and 18 years of age. There were daily fees for visitors and all citizens of Brunswick might avail themselves of the privilege of playing under the rules set up by the committee. Registering and fees were attended to by the library assistants. These tennis courts were kept up by the fees and were used up to the start of World War II. In 1945 the Episcopal Church asked to repurchase the lot back of Codman House at the same price paid for it (\$600) which was done.

In 1915 Mr. Curtis added \$1,000 to his original fund for the grounds, and in the summer of 1915 the garden was completed. It was maintained by the income of the fund and also by much volunteer aid. Flower beds were planted, often with gifts of bulbs or plants from ladies' clubs or private gardens and volunteers helped with the upkeep. The Iris and Peony Clubs were, for instance, deeply interested in the grounds of the library.

In 1917 Mr. Curtis decided upon a bird bath rather than a sun dial for the garden as a memorial to his sister, Miss L. Augusta Curtis. Miss Curtis had died in 1916, leaving a bequest of some \$8,721 for the benefit of the Capt. John Curtis Memorial Library.

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A memorial in a garden dedicated to her mother seemed most fitting. The sculptor, Mahonri Young, designed a basin supported by three storks, while on the bronze rim




are depicted selected birds common to Maine. This bird bath was installed in June, 1917, and has had a rather checkered career. At one time it was removed from the grounds because of vandalism, and apparently lay forgotten for some years. With considerable chagrin it was refurbished and replaced after it was found missing by a Curtis relative. After replacement it was again moved to make room for the new wing to the library, and it now stands within view of the side windows to the south.

The Library Association created a Grounds Committee and for many years this was headed by Capt. George L. Skolfield. The reports indicate that he was a hardworking and conscientious supervisor. At times the grounds were loaned to St. John's or St. Paul's, and even the First Parish for church lawn parties, and the beauty of the grounds was the pride of the town. The *Brunswick Record* of October 15, 1915, contains a picture showing the pond and teahouse, and other later pictures show the fine iris in full flower.

Miss Curtis' legacy gave the library directors the confidence to start on another program to improve the surroundings of the library. It was voted to "free grounds in the immediate vicinity of the library of other buildings." As a first step they decided to buy the Harmon house (\$3,000) at the corner of Pleasant and Middle Streets. They would hold it for the present as an income-bearing investment, and in fact it was rented for many years. Only in 1957 when needed repairs on the house seemed unduly expensive it was at last torn down, giving the library a clear frontage on Pleasant Street. The Seal property on Middle Street was naturally eyed with longing, but it did not come on the market until 1971, and even then caused some legal delays before it could be acquired to make possible the expansion of the library. In 1919 there was some correspondence with Mr. Wheelwright, a landscape gardener of New York City. He was a friend of W. J. Curtis and made various suggestions as to changes in the grounds. With the greatest courtesy, the directors received suggestions but with New England firmness decided that such changes would not be "feasible at the present time."

The library had thus become in many ways a social center which

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it could never have been so long as it was confined to a single room in the Town Building. It would be difficult to say at what point the title of this chapter "A Part of the Town" could first apply to the Curtis Library; surely it was something that had for a long time been coming true. By 1915, however, it had become an established fact. And one particular event in that year seems to have been the occasion for general recognition of what had for some time been building. Perhaps it takes a disaster to learn what resources a town has. It was the fire that destroyed the Brunswick High School in January of 1915 that brought the library into full focus. With almost no delay at all the high school students were moved into the library building, making use of all the rooms upstairs and down in the morning, when the library was not open, and the basement rooms sometimes in the afternoons. It was cramped quarters, but the high school classes of that day were not large-the whole school numbered around 135-and it was probable that the librarians found that restricted use of the basement and hard use of the main floor were as difficult problems for them as those confronted by the teachers. In any case, it is to the credit of teachers, librarians, and students that from January through June, the high school was able to function successfully, and the library kept up its own services to the town. The Library Association was compensated rather meagerly by the town for "wear and tear" on the rooms - one wonders about wear and tear on the librarians!

A few of the high school classes were held in Memorial Hall while gym classes were in the old heating plant at Bowdoin College, and so the college too rose to the occasion. Students from that time recall that the walk from the library to campus, often sustained by an apple turnover from Snow's Bakery conveniently located across the street from the library, was a happy interlude in the school day.

The library had early become a meeting place for clubs, and in the years after the outbreak of war in Europe, it became even more active in hosting such groups. In 1914-1915 and again the following year a club of 25 boys led by a Mr. John Churchill of Bowdoin College met at the library, and two clubs of Camp Fire Girls were frequent visitors. The executive committee of the Brunswick Dramatic Club kept its play collection at the library and held its meetings there. This club had produced *The Little Minister* by

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Barrie as a library benefit in the winter of 1912-1913. In February of 1916 the librarian reported that in addition there had been six lectures on current events held at the library that winter, and that the Red Cross held its regular meetings in the library. By February of 1917, Miss Gilman in her report to the town on the preceding year not only told of a ladies' club (Studium) and a boys' club (The Rovers), but of added activities of the Red Cross in which the library took an important part.

In the summer of 1916 the Red Cross Committee of Military Relief was functioning and had its headquarters in the library. "A box of reading material was packed by this committee to send to the Maine soldiers at the Border (Mexico) to which the library contributed books and magazines." With the American entry into World War 1, the library became deeply involved in war work. Miss Gilman reported: "Books and magazines contributed by our citizens and the library were given in the summer to the Milliken Regiment. They have since been sent to some other camps. A much larger collection was sent recently to the Boston Public Library for distribution among camps.... A box of reading material will be sent soon to soldiers at Popham. Gifts for this good cause will be gratefully received." The ever thoughtful Mr. Curtis sent not only 100 booklets "Our Flag" to be distributed to Brunswick school children, but also 200 pamphlets on canning and drying fruits and vegetables. Thrift Stamps were on sale at the library, and posters were displayed for Liberty Bonds, Red Cross Membership, and other patriotic causes.

In 1918 the coal situation became serious. Already in January of that year the library was closed three to four days a week, and it was completely shut down from February 11th to April 4th. The *Brunswick Record* of February 22, 1918, contained a notice signed by the librarian: "All books and magazines belonging to the Library are to be returned to the Court Room, Town Building, Saturday, February 23rd, from 3 to 8 p.m." Again in October of 1918 the library was forced to close, this time due to the influenza epidemic. The *Brunswick Record* reported on November 1, 1918, that "450 books were borrowed the first three days that the library was open after being closed for three weeks." As Miss Gilman said, "The only redeeming feature in connection with this great loss to our

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community was the fact that it brought home to our citizens, when it was withdrawn from them, the value of the Library."


Nevertheless the library did manage to continue its usual program in spite of extra duties and a shortened year. The Boy Scouts, numbering 32, made use of the basement room for meetings, and eventually a Boy Scout pamphlet collection was built up. In April and May of 1918 there was even a story-telling hour conducted by Miss Marion Harvey. The librarian's report in 1920 covering the preceding year shows continued use of the basement room for town needs. It served as an office for the Home Service Department of the Red Cross, and for meetings of its executive Committee. It had become the headquarters of the district nurse in June of 1919, and a few years later (1925) Miss Gilman listed public school nursing among the other "good causes represented in the library building." Boy Scout meetings and

story-telling continued, the latter with Mrs. G. Roy Elliott as narrator. Upstairs Miss Helen Varney and her class in the Grammar School set up an exhibit on the wall of the children's room showing plans for building and furnishing a house. The librarian added that "any school exhibits may be placed here."

The book collection was augmented by various gifts, large and small. The Cobb Collection in memory of Ralph E. Cobb, a former Brunswick boy, had been sent by his wife in 1914, and amounted to nearly a thousand volumes. The Robinson Teachers Collection grew steadily: Mrs. Robinson added \$500 to the Fund in 1920. Mrs. Adelaide Hutchinson left \$1,000, the income to be used for books, in memory of her son Harold. Such gifts and many more gave the library assurance and encouragement and made possible a fairly steady acquisition of new books. Miss Gilman did, however, complain in her report of the increasing cost of books, which cut down on the number that could be purchased. The library subscribed to 45 magazines and 5 daily newspapers, but figures on book stock are only approximate; the total was apparently somewhere between 16,000 and 16,500 volumes in the years 1918-1919. Library hours were: every afternoon from 2-5:30, an extension of a half-hour made in 1917, and 7-9 weekday evenings, plus Saturday mornings from 10-12 noon. On Sunday afternoons the room was open to readers only, and this would soon be discontinued.


There were constantly smaller gifts of books, of historical

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material, and of both money and services, all forming a bond between library and town. A service flag, beautifully made by hand and used to welcome the returning soldiers, was presented to the library in memory of the Brunswick and Topsham men who had died in the war. Also a framed poster made by W. W. Gilchrist, Jr. came to the library as a memorial of the patriotism of the people of Brunswick during the war. An unusual gift was a glass cabinet on a stand, containing an artistic display of familiar birds, which was a bequest to the library in 1921 from Dr. Lombard, in whose dentist's office on Maine Street it had long helped to divert unhappy patients, young and old. Dr. Lombard's son-in-law, Melvin J. Thomas, later director of the Woodman Institute in Dover, N. H., had done the taxidermy, and arranged the display to illustrate the old story "Who Killed Cock Robin?" This display has been familiar to several generations of Brunswickians, and seems to have the secret of eternal life, after restoration in 1975.


An early example of what the library could mean to the town was a letter from the Vincent Mountford Post No. 22, Department of Maine, G.A.R., written March 6, 1898. It notified the Library Association of a vote that "when we cease to exist as a Post our library and Relics be turned over to the Brunswick Library Association. It is the wish of the Post to dedicate this collection of "Literature of the War of the Rebellion" to the Town to be kept undivided." This gift was later complemented by a ten volume *Photographic History of the Civil War*, donated by Russell W. Eaton, who also served for a time as President of the Association.

 [ Mary Gilman with the Wild Flower Club ]

### Mary Gilman with the Wild Flower Club

A different example taken from the 1920's would be the gifts of the Wild Flower Club. This was a group of eight girls who wished to give books for use in the children's room. In 1925 they had already given 21 volumes - many were "new and attractive editions of old-time favorites." In this period there were great changes in the format of children's books, and such gifts must have been greatly appreciated. These girls made candy, cookies, and fancy work to sell and kept up the good work for a number of years. W. J. Curtis took an interest in them, had a special bookplate made for their gifts and usually made a contribution to supplement their earnings. These girls were also responsible for adding a French language magazine, *Lectures pour Tous*, to the library's small supply for French-speaking citizens.

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In May of 1919 the Maine State Library Association held its 27th annual meeting at Bowdoin College. Mr. Gerald Wilder, then librarian at Bowdoin, was president of the organization. During the morning sessions Miss Gilman gave a report on *Maine Illustrative Material*, and after lunch at the Hotel Eagle the group of some sixty Maine librarians was given a reception at the Curtis Memorial Library, where, according to the *Record*, cakes and ices were served. The afternoon sessions at Bowdoin included a talk by the supervisor of children's work at the Boston Public Library, and there were some high school library exhibits, a "juvenile exhibit," and an exhibit of traveling libraries, the latter from the Maine Library Commission. These were subjects that were of great interest to Miss Gilman and her assistants. Traveling libraries were a project which she would have liked to implement; her substitute for it - sending batches of books to be distributed in more distant areas of Brunswick by faithful volunteer helpers - had been remarkably successful. The Brunswick Library, supplementing its facilities with Codman House, itself played host to the Maine Library Association in 1933. Borrowing from the state library was

resorted to in the following years for books dealing with business methods, trades, and vocations.

There were many local events at the library in the twenties. The Saturday Club held a number of lecture courses; those in 1924 may well be cited as a sample of the intellectual life of Brunswick. Miss Carrie Potter conducted a course in Current Events once a week and Miss Helen McKeen one in French History. A fortnightly class in Modern Literature included talks by Professor Wilmot B. Mitchell on Masfield, Professor Herbert Ross Brown on Willa Cather, and Mrs. Marguerite (Noel) Little on Christopher Morley. Later in the year Mrs. Betsy (John) Winchell gave a course on Interior Decoration. It was noted that books connected with those topics were in great demand.


 [ Teahouse and garden in the twenties ]



Teahouse and garden of the library in the twenties

Pictures and all sorts of material relating to the maritime life of Brunswick people came in a steady stream to the library as the families of former sea captains died out or moved elsewhere. The maritime collection became so significant that in 1927 Mr. Curtis' suggestion of a special maritime exhibit was carried out to his and everyone's satisfaction. Incidentally, Mr. Curtis backed up his suggestion with a \$200 gift to defray the expenses of the exhibit.


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His death that same year brought the library a bequest of \$10,000, but his constant interest and unceasing response to the needs of the library were sadly missed.

The Pejepscot Historical Society had always seemed to be a natural ally of the library, as many of its members and officers were also active in the Library Association. In the early days, when the society was first formed, there were a series of meetings of the two groups in the hope that they could join "in an effort to secure the necessary sum for the erection of a building for the accommodation of the two societies." A joint meeting in October 2, 1889, was adjourned for a week, since so many were absent; then again it was necessary to postpone until December 3rd, and two more meetings made no progress. Finally on January 7, 1890, the group adjourned *sine die*. There is no record of discussion or votes, but obviously nothing practical had been proposed, as no mention of the proceedings appears in the annual library report of May, 1890. Again in 1915, Russell W. Eaton, as president of the Library Association, voiced the hope of a revival of the Pejepscot Society, "which last is somewhat quiescent." He mentioned as a tentative suggestion "that a fire-proof building would be preferable for the exhibits of the Historical Society, and it might be possible that at some time it might be desirable for the historical association to sell its present building and possibly purchase the land contiguous to the library grounds at the corner of Pleasant and Middle Streets and be connected with the Library Building." Nothing came of this suggestion either. In March of 1925 and in January of 1926, however, two meetings of the Pejepscot Historical Society were held in the library with Miss Gilman as the speaker. Miss Gilman, whose interest in local history made her well acquainted with much source material in the library's collections, read from unpublished journals of sea voyages to the West Indies in 1794 and 1795. This was a happy augury of later cooperation between the two associations. And indeed in succeeding years there were other Pejepscot Society lectures on the invitation of the library, as their own quarters were unheated and thus only available for summer meetings. In 1939, for example, the two societies put on an exhibit in the library of pictures of local interest selected from the holdings of both societies. A most important bit of cooperation was the typed transcription of the fast becoming illegible John McKeen manuscript lectures in the

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possession of the Pejepscot Historical Society. Mrs. Elizabeth Boswell Smith, an assistant in the library, made two copies of this basic local historical material, one for the library and one for the Historical Society. The Wheeler History of Brunswick, Topsham and Harpswell, Maine had relied in large part for the early period on these remarkable lectures, which were the work of a son of Bowdoin's first president.

When the Brunswick Library became a "free" public library in 1894 at the request and with the support of the town, it was necessary to continue to demand fees from anyone not a citizen of Brunswick. Topsham and Harpswell people did, some of them, pay small fees for the use of the library, but it was only in 1909 that Topsham began to pay a fixed sum, at first \$50, then \$75, and later \$100 a year, for the use of the Brunswick Library by pupils and teachers in the Topsham schools. At first this meant only about 100 persons, but it did extend the influence of the library very considerably. The arrangement continued through the year 1932, when the Topsham Library was able to take over at least the lower grades. At that time the Brunswick Library donated some 26 volumes to the struggling little neighboring library. Topsham high school students attended Brunswick High School for many years, with tuition being paid by the town of Topsham, and were consequently accorded the use of the Brunswick Library without fees. This was later extended to Brunswick tax payers from other towns.

The close connection of the library with the public schools was continued and emphasized in the twenties and thirties. For example, in September of 1925 the librarian's report states that "the senior and junior classes of the High School and one-third of the sophomore class, 130 in all, were instructed during a forenoon in the use of the catalogue, magazine index, and reference books. Courses in reading

worth-while books are a regular part of the High School curriculum and pupils are required to write reviews of them." The teachers send pupils "to look for material on every possible subject, sometimes difficult to find, thus enlisting the aid of the librarians, often during two hours a day. This is an interesting - and absorbing part of our work." This comment was characteristic of Miss Gilman. In 1929 some 40 reference books were given to the Superintendent of Schools to place in several schoolhouses; "they were not recent

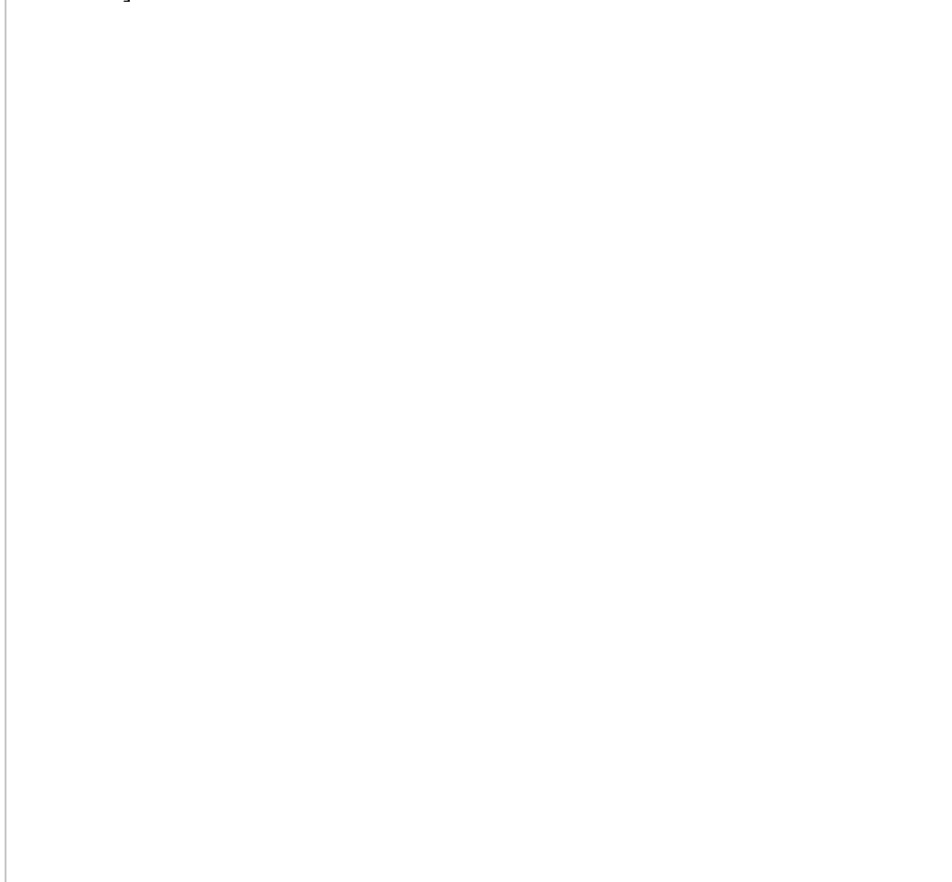
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books, but they may be helpful where there is lack of such material." In 1931 a special collection was arranged for the Parent-Teachers Association which included material on the training and education of children, on story-telling, and on the best children's books.

It was not only school teachers and children that were made welcome at the library. It was the stated policy of the library, continued to the present day, to keep a waiting list, "to reserve books if requested" so the "people may receive sooner those they particularly desire." Lists of newly acquired books were frequently published in the *Brunswick Record*. Miss Gilman continuously stressed her conviction that the library was a "pleasant place to spend an afternoon or evening."

 [ View of the library from Pleasant Street. There are large trees arching over the sidewalk. ]




View of the 1904 library building from Pleasant Street.

The depression years seem to have been weathered rather successfully. By the thirties the library had accumulated a fairly sizeable endowment, some of which was designed for book purchases, and the annual town subsidy came close to \$3,000, although this was somewhat reduced at times. In 1929 an oil heater was

installed, not only making for greater comfort, but also for less dust and reduced janitor service. Increased circulation did make more library assistance necessary, but Miss Gilman made many economies, such as having books repaired whenever possible by the library assistants to avoid high binding costs. The library also benefited from a federal program through which for several years it had the help of two Bowdoin students at no expense to the library. This depression measure was welcomed by Miss Gilman with gratitude, for these boys were helpful not only with cataloguing, but also with shelving and other heavy work often needed around a library. The library was also the recipient of a financial windfall on the death of its long-time friend and benefactor, Miss Annette Merryman. In 1933 Wilmot B. Mitchell stated, in a "Minute in Grateful Appreciation," that her bequest of house, books, furniture and substantial funds to the library would total in value more than \$20,000. There was some legal difficulty over the house that was settled in court in favor of the library, and in the end, with the sale of house, furniture and other personal effects, the sum came to over \$23,000. Miss Merryman taught in Brunswick schools all her life, and was a staunch supporter of many good causes, especially the library and the historical Society. Miss Gilman wrote that she had been "intimately associated

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with the Library from its beginning in 1883. She was a member of its book committee always, and she had a teacher's interest in its work that she retained to the end." It was at this time of what seemed then to be sudden affluence that the decision was made to have the treasurer bonded, and to permit the opening of the safe deposit box only by two directors in company. The library was obviously not only a going concern, but a prosperous one.

In September of 1936 when Mrs. Elizabeth Boswell Smith became an assistant at the Brunswick Library, Miss Gilman was able to start a program of renumbering the library's books according to the Dewey Decimal System. This was a cherished plan of Miss Gilman's and she was gratified to know that a good beginning had been made before she became too ill to see its completion.

Miss Gilman was librarian for forty-five years, 1895-1940, probably the most important years in the development of the library. Her training had been a sort of apprenticeship, for she worked in the Bowdoin College Library, then housed in rooms of the Bowdoin Chapel, under Professor George T. Little. Professor Little had a distinguished career as librarian of Bowdoin College, was active in the establishment of a State Library, and was always guide, counselor and friend to the town librarian. Under him Miss Gilman became familiar with the system of cataloguing then used at Bowdoin. She had developed already an avid interest in Maine and Brunswick history. She managed to secure for the town library a number of local genealogies and journals. Her interest in local history was deep, and generously shared with others. One item in the Town Report of 1931 indicates how her interest in history was combined with her sense of obligation to guide the reading of young people. "Subjects and material for graduation themes relating to early Brunswick were furnished at the Library for the class of 1930, Brunswick High School, including much that was not contained in the *History of Brunswick* (Wheeler), that had been collected during years by the librarian." Her feeling for history did not go so far as to condone historical novels containing material she thought unsuitable for teenagers. A member of her household recalls Miss Gilman's astonishment that the High School reading list contained *Gone With the Wind*. It was removed from the list after a "very definite conversation with the Principal."

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Miss Gilman's personality was individual, at once both warm and dignified. She had, someone said, "the ability to turn on a smile, and as abruptly to turn it off - like a water faucet." She had a deep sense of order, but an even deeper dedication to creating a love of reading, especially in the young. She had a sense of humor which sometimes saved a difficult situation. One day on arriving at the library she found an ungrammatical note appended to the front door, "This library is keep by two old witches," a message over which we are told she chuckled for days. Some of the more unruly youngsters were occasionally ejected for noisy behavior, but Miss Gilman understood that some youngsters really did not want to read and would let out a war whoop once safely outside. There can be detected some dismay but also pleasure when she speaks of the task of "restoring order to the bookshelves and magazine table after a vigorous attack upon them by lively little people." She loved flowers and rejoiced in the beautiful garden and grounds, but it added to her concerns. "During the summer months the Librarians endeavor to preserve order in the Library garden. It is a resort for many children, as it should be, but they must be taught to enjoy it, without injuring it." No wonder she objected to the suggestion that part of the garden be turned over to a children's playground. It would be noisy, would mean constant coming and going of mothers and children, not to mention mud! But her efforts for the young people were unflagging. The Boy Scouts had their own collection at the library. She reported proudly that one evening twenty-five pupils from the parochial school came with their teacher. That her efforts to engage the interest of teachers and pupils were successful can be read in the constantly increasing numbers using the library.

When the time came that a High School Library was proposed by the Parent-Teachers Association in 1935, Miss Gilman aided the project in every way she could. She arranged for donations of books to the High School Library, as she had in earlier years sent out "cyclopedias" to the outlying schools. "Books are being collected in the library towards a High School Library, under the auspices of the P.T.A. Already 289 volumes have been turned over to the High School - poetry; drama, essays, travel, history, the best of fiction are desired, any books that are really usable by the teachers and pupils. The Public Library is interested to serve all the schools, but a library at hand in the High School will be of inestimable value to

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it." The High School Library grew only slowly, however, in these depression years of the thirties, and the pressure on the resources of the public library did not decline appreciably for some years. In the report for the year ending January, 1939, she stated:

Books are reserved for High School pupils. Special lists are provided by teachers for their use that are posted in a conspicuous place. There are 522 pupils in the Senior High School. Nearly all of them have this required reading. The teachers of the Junior High School are also active in sending pupils to the Library for books and reference work. Fifteen teachers of the lower grades and rural schools borrowed books for their pupils for school and home use. These books go into many households and are read by members of families.

There can be no doubt that the young people of Brunswick were well acquainted with the public library in their school years.

At the time of Miss Gilman's resignation, shortly before her death in 1940, what seems to be a rather restrained tribute was paid to her by the directors of the library. It read:

Miss Mary Gilman has served this Association as Librarian since its earlier years of limited room and small resources. She has not only satisfactorily performed the duties of her office but has always had the interest of the Association at heart and

has rejoiced at its growth and increased usefulness. This long service, her genial greeting to all and her ready assistance to young and old in need of help have made her seem a vital part of the library. We feel that all patrons of the Library will share with us the regret that present circumstances make necessary the acceptance of her resignation.

Many individuals through the years have helped to make the Brunswick Library a part of the community. None have contributed more to this end than Miss Mary Gilman. She was not only herself a vital part of the library, but she made the library a vital part of the town.

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## **Chapter Four**

### **The Middle Years, 1940-1966**

Miss Gilman was succeeded by her former assistant, Mrs. Mildred Strout. It had been a long apprenticeship for Mrs. Strout, for she had worked as an occasional assistant to the librarian as far back as 1919, and had held the title of Assistant Librarian since 1922. She was the other "old witch" in the school-boys' eyes, but actually in appearance was a pink-cheeked, round-faced, gray-haired matronly lady. However, she did seem to carry out some of Miss Gilman's moral certainties with less insight and more rigor than even Miss Gilman. She was said to hide books of which she disapproved under her desk even though the would-be readers were adults. Her reports are merely a list of statistics and one begins to feel some lack of inspiration despite a very conscientious and dutiful management of the library. It did please her when the children's room was in constant use, and her devotion to the library cannot be doubted. Circulation increased slightly, but not markedly and the library seemed in a sense to be marking time in comparison to the rapid growth of the earlier years. It must be remembered that her first years as head librarian were under the shadow of World War II, and saw many other developments in the town that competed with the library for attention.

The addition to Longfellow School, completed in 1943 with the aid of federal funds, was a great boon to the community with its overcrowded schools. This was followed by the addition to the Union Street School, a less ambitious project, also aided by federal funds. The establishment of the naval air station, not only added considerably to the population but brought to the town a new orientation of social life as well as responsibilities. The Radar School at Bowdoin and the Meteorology units of soldiers there added to the social activities of the community. 'Women's war work covered the field from cookies and knitting or surgical dressings to heavy jobs

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at the Bath Iron Works. At the latter the greatly expanded labor force added also to Brunswick's population. The library no longer was the center of the stage, but it continued to be very useful to the town and to many local organizations, notably the Red Cross.

The war years were indeed hard years for the librarian. The fuel shortage made it necessary to close the library evenings except on Saturdays, from 1943-1947. Janitor service was non-existent, and Mrs. Strout herself apparently did the most of this work with the aid of temporary hired assistance when it was both necessary and available. In 1943 the board appropriated \$300 for "Cleaning," and the work done was very complete, including the book shelves, under the direction of Mrs. Strout. Finding workers for such a job was extremely difficult in the busy economy of

wartime. Mrs. Strout was more or less in charge of the grounds, but there was little interest in them. Social customs had changed; there were no requests to hold lawn parties there, and the teahouse fell into disuse. The tennis courts were discontinued and the Episcopalians bought back that piece of land in 1945, when they were about to build a rectory contiguous to Codman House. The pond had filled with weeds, its upkeep had become difficult, and it was abandoned. Only the basement rooms continued to be used by many town organizations.


The collection of books was constantly added to, using income from funds designated for this purpose. There seems to have been some friction between the book committee and Mrs. Strout, with differences of opinion on some books recommended. Already in 1932 pressure on stack space had caused the association to rule that the librarian, with the approval of the book committee, might dispose of any books "that are, in their opinion, of no further use to the library." This was normal procedure, but there seems to have been under Mrs. Strout either some laxness on the part of the book committee or some rather authoritarian methods employed by the librarian, doubtless a combination of both. As to the purchase of new books, the book committee system was unwieldy and rather inefficient where such large numbers of books were concerned. In Miss Gilman's last year at the library the question had been reviewed at the annual meeting, where it was the "consensus of opinion that it was to the best interest of the library that the Librarian should continue to purchase books on her own responsibility within reasonable

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limits and on condition that she keep the Book Committee fully informed as to her purchases." The following year at a directors' meeting it was held that there was urgent need for the librarian to be permitted to order books with the "consent of at least one of the Committee." The matter came up again in 1944. "The procedure of selecting books was discussed, and it was decided that in the event of any question as to the desirability of any book, the book should be reconsidered by the whole book committee, and decided by majority vote." Tales abound about Mrs. Strout's rather puritanical attitude. Times were changing as they always do, and usually to the surprise and sometimes the consternation of the elder generation.

It may seem that the directors no longer had the interests of the library so much at heart as did the founding fathers. This was far from the case, and on reading reports of directors' meetings one cannot fail to be impressed with the careful "housekeeping" on their part. This goes back to that early meeting when Mr. Lyman Smith was authorized to buy a feather duster, and went on constantly, dealing with fences, lawn mowers, painting, lighting, renewed floors or floor coverings, pointing up brick, mending the roof, adding chairs, shelves, tables, the fine-wrought iron hand-rails for the outside steps, all involving a great deal of detailed work, not noticeable but sadly missing if not attended to. Nor should it be overlooked that many bequests and gifts helped to make the library solvent during the depression and the war years.

In February, 1942, John W. Riley resigned as President of the Association and was followed by Norman Smith whose unexpected death made a new election necessary and in February, 1943, in a rather dramatic shift to younger leadership, Thomas Prince Riley took over the office formerly held by his father John W. Riley (1937-42) and his grandfather, Thomas H. Riley (1922-37). The financial affairs of the library were also in capable hands. A finance committee and a board of auditors are first mentioned in the records of the early forties. In 1945 Professor Philip M. Brown, who taught accounting at Bowdoin College, became treasurer, a post he has continued to hold to the present day (1976). His systematic bookkeeping and well-planned budgets have been invaluable in the years of growth and expansion. His efforts for the library were


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recognized in 1971 in a generous gift from the Burton Taylors, named "The Philip M. Brown Book Fund," the income of which is used for the purchase of books.

After World War II, for a period of about twenty years the town appropriation for the library rose regularly in amounts varying from \$300 to \$1,000. The interest of the townspeople did not diminish, and surely the commitment of directors and librarians had much to do with this. On the other hand it was pretty much a dedicated few who kept tip the work.

Mrs. Mary Donahue was chosen to fill the vacancy as Assistant Librarian in 1946, and became Acting Librarian in 1952 on Mrs. Strout's retirement. She was a very different sort of person, more attuned to modern ideas of a library than Mrs. Strout. She even encouraged low-voiced conversations and gave a warm and friendly welcome to any inquiries or suggestions. She had a horror of rigid formality, yet was efficient and capable, although not a "trained" librarian. Her desire was to bring people and books together, and so one of her first innovations was to get rid of the "gate" to the stacks and the sort of wooden grill at the delivery desk. From 1954 to 1965 she was the head librarian, assisted by Mrs. Marguerite (Everett) Lunt. Later (1958) Miss Hazel McKee joined the staff and was a most valuable addition. She was constantly asked to recommend "a good book" and was a perceptive counselor, fitting book to reader with great skill. Her resignation in 1968 was a real loss to the library. In this period the circulation of books rose by leaps and bounds. For instance, in 1953 there was a circulation of 62,570, a gain of 8,313 over the previous year. This was due in part to the rapid growth of the town. The large naval air station, closed at the end of the war, had been reactivated in 1951 and certainly brought much added patronage, but another cause was perhaps the fact that the library was such a pleasant place. Especially on a winter's day, with the fire burning briskly in the fireplace, though it often smoked, with the well-worn but comfortable chairs and the quiet friendliness of helpful librarians, the library gave visitors a hospitable welcome.


In 1953 the library received a gift of 85 French novels from Dr. Maurice Dionne, one of many such generous donations on his part. This was the first year of the Great Books Course held at the

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library, which continued over many years under devoted leadership. The discussions of this first group were led by Robert Hart and John Smith (teachers at the High School) and John McKenna at that time Assistant Librarian at Bowdoin College. Other names associated with this group in its long history are Dr. Donald Macomber and Robert Dudley.


A story-telling hour for young children was carried on at intervals. In 1954 it was run by the Girl Scouts, and some 174 children attended the Saturday morning sessions. That year Mrs. Donahue reported that 822 new cards had been issued, 1,175 new books had been chosen by the book committee and 109 donated. There could be no doubt that the library was a busy and useful place. In 1955 it even became necessary to make over the Directors' Room into an adult reading room to provide sufficient seating for readers. Of that same year Mrs. Donahue wrote as follows: "Work with young readers is one of the most important functions of the library. It is gratifying to note that TV has not seriously affected the reading habits of the young people. They are reading more books than ever before as is shown by the number of juvenile books loaned this year." There was actually a circulation of 71,217 that year, of which 30,031 were from the juvenile collection. On the other hand the acquisition of new books was not stressed, and although the collection grew it did not keep pace with the circulation.

During this period the library benefited from considerable support from other groups. It is true that in a town like Brunswick the same people tended to be leaders in whatever group they found themselves. Thus the initiative in each group often came from someone with a real interest in the library. This in the long run brought persons of varied interests to the support of the library and gave it wider impact upon the town. The Village Improvement Association was a well established voluntary organization even before the Library Association was formed. It was made up of an equally dedicated group of persons interested in the welfare and especially the general appearance of the town. Their members were very often users of the library, and they began to take a direct interest in the affairs of the library. The thrust of their interest was primarily directed towards maintenance of the grounds. The old teahouse had not only begun to disintegrate, but had become the

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target of vandalism. The directors arranged that one of the tenants in the Harmon house owned by the library might have any wood he wished from it if he would take it down and dispose of the remainder. This was done, but not long afterward the decision was reached to tear down the Harmon house itself. The Library Association had owned this house for forty years, and the cost of repairs threatened to be greater than the income from it warranted. In 1957 the house was razed and the lawn extended to the corner of Middle and Pleasant Streets, as had long been envisioned. The Village Improvement Association helped substantially in landscaping this area under the direction of Mrs. Dorothy Abbott, a trained landscape gardener, who voluntarily supervised and advised on the selection and planting of shrubs. This association in 1959 donated three yew trees for this area. Mrs. Abbott also organized pruning sessions at the library. She gave preliminary talks, following which the group would go outside for practical experience in pruning. This not only improved the appearance of the library, but several of those who attended these sessions used their training to improve both their home shrubbery and the surroundings of other buildings as well, among them the First Parish Church. In January of 1960, at the annual meeting of the Library Association, a committee was formed for the "improvement of the grounds." Mrs. Abbott, Mrs. Claire Taylor, and Mrs. Shirley Irish were the original members of that committee. They reported in 1961 that two pruning sessions had been held that summer and additional yew trees planted. The library collections were also enhanced by gifts on gardening and related matters from individual members of the Improvement Association. Other books of literary and artistic value continued to come to the library, sometimes as gifts, such as books on flower arranging from Mrs. Mathilde Nixon-Marchand, sometimes in the form of bequests, such as those from the libraries of Miss Lucy Melcher and Miss Helen Varney.


The Girl Scouts were another organization which took a renewed interest in the library. As we have seen, the girls at one time conducted a very successful story hour. In 1958 Professor Samuel Kamerling, as president of the Girl Scout Council asked permission to use the basement room formerly used by the Red Cross, not for meetings, but for the storage and the dispensing of supplies. This permission was granted and a Girl Scout Office was set up in the

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library basement. In 1960 the expense of a new black top walk to the basement entrance was largely borne by the Girl Scout Council. This was a real improvement as in the period of neglect of the grounds the area in the rear of the library had been allowed to grow up into weeds. For some time the Girl Scout Council also made a substantial gift to the library annually. This contribution ceased when the Girl Scout administration was changed in 1964, merging the Bath-Brunswick Council into the larger Kennebec Council.

Partly through the influence of a more active Maine State Library Association, there were new developments in the library year in Brunswick. A National Book Week was sponsored from 1958 on, and the Curtis Library regularly made special arrangements for this. Here again, other organizations played a part. For a few years the Brunswick-Bath branch of the American Association of University Women held a tea in the library building to inaugurate the week, and able speakers were found for these occasions. Exhibits of recent books, and sometimes displays of local historical interest drew many visitors and made these affairs a success. In 1960 a display of paintings by Maine artists (a Ford Motor Company exhibit) was an outstanding attraction. During National Book Week in 1963 the Pejepscot Historical Society continued its long association with the library through a lecture by Mrs. Susie Sylvester, who used slides of old Brunswick from the Pejepscot collection. In the spring of that year an exhibit of photographs from the Portland Press Herald on "Living in Maine" proved most popular. A Children's Book Committee was added to the number of library association committees in 1965 with Mrs. Alison (William) Shipman as the first chairman, succeeded somewhat later by Mrs. Jytte (Arthur) Monke. Improvements were made in the children's room, and Children's Book Week came to be held regularly in November. Exhibits of children's books and lists of new ones in that field were another popular addition.


The *Brunswick Record* in 1960 ceased to bind current yearly issues in favor of microfilm copies. In December of that year the board decided to go along with a proposition to share the cost of microfilming all back issues of that paper with the Bowdoin College Library and the *Record*. A microfilming reserve account was

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set up for this purpose and the beginning of a microfilm collection was thus established, although as yet the library did not have a microfilm reader.

In 1963 a change in library hours took place. In the past years the library had been open weekdays from 1-5:30 and from 7-9 P.M., Monday through Friday, and 10 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. on Saturday. The new hours showed no change on Saturdays, but on weekdays were to be from 12 noon until 8 P.M., Monday through Friday. Mrs. Donahue reported: "The service provided during the lunch and dinner hours has proved most convenient to our patrons." The extra hour at noon had already been tried out temporarily in 1960 as a service to high school students since at that time the school was holding two sessions a day. The tradition of service to the schools was never forgotten or neglected by the Brunswick Library. Summer hours were to be Monday through Thursday, 10 A.M. to 6 P.M.; Friday 10 A.M. to 8 P.M. and the library was to be closed on Saturdays. A depository for books was provided so that borrowers could return books at hours when the library was closed. Later on, changes in this depository were required, since when full, it was possible for unscrupulous readers to take books out without signing for them. A better planned depository has nevertheless proved to be a most useful adjunct to the library.

In the Town Report of 1963 it was stated: "It is interesting to note from the survey made by the Maine State Library in 1962, that the circulation of books in the Brunswick Library as compared with cities and towns of comparable size, was approximately 60 per cent higher." The circulation of books continued to rise through 1963. The report continues, "In spite of the fact that the individual schools in the community are maintaining their own libraries and adding yearly to their book collections, the books loaned to them showed a slight increase over last year." That year the circulation reached 101,732, but the following year the librarian reported that the enlarged school libraries had at last begun to affect the public library and had caused a decrease in circulation to 97,839. Yet in 1964 the library provided a new service - processing of requests for books from the State Library in Augusta. And in 1965 a significant new development in the history of the library appeared, the formation of a group called "The Friends of the Library." This group

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already in 1966 undertook many of the services sporadically carried on by other organizations, and developed new projects of their own that were of the greatest importance in the following years.


Such an organization was at first only an idea in the minds of Mrs. Claire (Burton) Taylor and Mrs. Agnes (Philip) Brown. Mrs. Taylor likes to remember that they first put their thoughts together on the matter in the summer of 1965, when both were at their summer cottages, rather far apart by road at Cundy's Harbor. Mrs. Brown therefore rowed across an inlet to talk things over at Mrs. Taylor's home. How beautifully in line with the simple beginnings of the Brunswick Library - and even especially suitable for a library so dedicated to seafarers! The first letter which emerged from these conferences read as follows:

Brunswick, Maine  
October 22, 1965  
Dear Reader:

Its roots are deep and strong. Are you interested in helping it grow and flourish even more effectively? The "it" referred to is the Brunswick Public Library, which has served the Town of Brunswick so well since 1883, and which became the Curtis Memorial Library in 1903.

A succession of dedicated people, librarians and directors has guided the growth of this institution since its founding. Its property and invested funds are ably cared for and the Town has increased its annual support as the need has arisen. Its friends are many but elusive. Many communities have found that by discovering these friends, many things can be accomplished which give added vigor to the library.

With the hope of forming a Friends of the Library group, representatives of the Directors and their wives are attempting to find those who might be interested in such an organization. It is our hope that together we can make our good library even better. Plans for recognition of Library

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Week, special exhibits, book-mobile service for shut-ins, a story-telling hour for children are but a few of the services such a group could render to the library. It is proposed that the annual dues be nominal - \$1.00 per family.

A meeting of those interested will be held at the Library on November 2nd, at 2:30 P.M. Please come and please return the enclosed card to the Library in order that we may have a record of your interest.


Sincerely yours,

Agnes N. Brown  
Ann Riley  
Claire Taylor  
Rosalie Treworgy


Thirteen hundred copies of this letter were mailed and by January of 1966 the Friends had acquired a membership of 250 families. The following officers were elected: Mrs. Agnes Brown, President; Mrs. Janet (Russell) Douglas, Vice President; Mrs. Billie (Sewall) Webster, Treasurer; Mrs. Marjorie Ingalls, Secretary; and three board members, Norman Marriner, John Richardson, and Edward Parsons.

The *Portland Sunday Telegram* of March 20, 1966, carried a picture of the officers, and the Woman's editor of the *Brunswick Record*, Eleanor Sterling, on March 17, 1966, wrote with an enthusiasm worthy of Mr. Tenney of earlier days: "I thought it seemed like one of the most efficient, energetic, and imaginative associations I had seen in a long time. The meetings were brief, well-attended, and no-nonsense; it seemed too good to be true. But now the Friends are proving themselves!"

From the start this group took over the story hour, and aimed at mobile service for nursing homes and shut-ins. Although book-mobile service did not prove feasible, they did undertake to supply book service to shut-ins, the Stevens Home, and Brunswick Manor. Story hours had, it is true, been carried on at various times, but the Friends began a much more systematic plan, and as time went on

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the various age groups from the picture-book age to grade three were provided for, along with some other special programs for older children. The burden of this, as well as for observance of National Library Week, was taken over by the Friends. In April of 1966 they sponsored a fifth grade poster contest in the schools. Fifth graders at Longfellow, Coffin, and St. John's schools made posters advertising National Library Week, which were displayed at the library and in store windows. A committee of judges was to award - a prize - a book - for the best poster from each school. Another "static" display in Senter's window gave publicity to the Saturday story-hour program. A special exhibit at the library was the work of pupils in Mrs. Susan Nason's fifth grade literature class at Hawthorne School. These children painted illustrations for books they had read. The *Brunswick Record* reported: "Included is a fine panel display to illustrate Robert Frost's poems, as well as mural-size paintings of action from story-books." There were also exhibits of books on gardening, wild flowers, shrubs, trees, etc. No wonder Mrs. Sterling found these people energetic and imaginative!


 [ Children at a film showing in basement 'Scout Room' of the old building ]

Children at a film showing in basement "Scout Room" of the old building.

The work of the Friends in the field of children's reading was supplemented by the Library Association through the recently formed Children's Book Committee with a tentative budget of \$1,200 a year. The two groups worked together most effectively. An article in the *Brunswick Record*, April 14, 1966, describing the Saturday morning story hour goes on to say:

If the books the volunteer chooses to read are not owned by the library and there is sufficient interest from the children in taking the books home, then another library group, the Children's Book Committee lists it for purchase. The Children's Book Committee also has drawn up some informal booklists, which parents may pick up at the library to be used for home reading or acquisition guides and is concentrating now on purchases to support proposed Story Hours.

The year 1966 was, indeed, a year of both sorrow and hope. The tragic death in July of the generous and warm-hearted librarian, Mrs. Mary Donahue, was a heavy blow. Yet a bright future for the


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library was already on the way through the good auspices of these true "Friends of the Library."




The directors had long been aware of the qualifications of the Assistant Librarian, Mrs. Marguerite Lunt, who, a few years earlier (1961), had carried a heavy load of responsibility when the library was shorthanded during the illnesses of Mrs. Donahue and Miss McKee. On the unexpected death of Mrs. Donahue they turned to Mrs. Lunt to take over the position of head librarian. To their surprise and dismay, she was unwilling to do so since she was approaching retirement age, but agreed to be acting head until a new librarian could be found. A professional librarian of wide experience, she did more than just "hold the fort." She maintained a friendly and welcoming atmosphere and was always helpful to visitors, and in addition completed some needed extra tasks, such as cataloguing picture-books in the children's collection, and also the increasingly popular collection of mysteries.

Her annual report for the year ending December, 1966 paid warm tribute to Mrs. Donahue. She also noted the generous bequest of Miss Isabel Forsaith of \$500 plus her library of some 1,200 books. In Miss Forsaith's memory Professor and Mrs. Charles H. Livingston had presented the library with a set of the Harvard *Classics*. The Franklin C. Robinson Fund had received \$1,000 from the Clement Robinson estate and there had been many individual gifts of money for book purchases. A new acquisition that year was a microfilm reader needed especially for back issues of local papers which had been acquired by the library. It was also needed to make use of microfilms available for borrowing at the State Library and from other sources. Eleven groups of school children (325 in all) had "visited the library and been instructed in the use of reference books and card catalogues." She made grateful recognition of the work of the Friends of the Library, their service to shut-ins, in the observance of National Library Week, in carrying on the story-hours for children, and in helping with Children's Book Week. Mrs. Phyllis (Alfred) Fuchs and Mrs. Jeanne D'Arc (Dana) Mayo as cochairmen of the Friend's Story Hour Committee had conducted five story hours for pre-school children in the spring and again in the fall. Five other such hours were held for 6 to 8 year old children during the summer. The latter series concluded with a puppet show

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attended by over 100 children. During Children's Book Week the children's book committee invited 4th graders to hear Mary Jane, a Maine writer of children's mystery stories. Some 75 children attended this afternoon meeting at the library. Another year of the Great Books Discussion Group was noted, and in general the library continued to go forward under difficult conditions. How difficult these conditions were became abundantly clear before long.

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## **Chapter Five**

### **The New Addition**

The Board of Directors, disappointed that Mrs. Lunt would not accept a permanent appointment, now found themselves forced to make a serious decision. Should they again look for some local person with little training, relying on goodwill, personality and dedication or was it time to insist on finding someone professionally equipped to raise the standards of the library to meet the needs of the growing town. Obviously a "trained" librarian brought in from outside would expect more salary than the board was accustomed to pay. Arthur Monke, Bowdoin librarian, who as a director was continuing the tradition of Bowdoin service to the library, warned the other members of the board at a meeting in September, 1966 that it would not be possible to find and "import" such a librarian without a substantial increase in salary. The directors did, however, face up to the challenge, making the decision to search for a librarian with a high degree of training and experience.

In the spring of 1967, having examined the qualifications of a number of persons, the board placed the name of Mrs. Suse (Aaron) Weissman of New York City at the head of their list. Mrs. Weissman was a graduate of Hunter College in 1949. For some years she held occasional part-time clerical jobs, and did free-lance magazine writing. She then entered the Columbia School of Library Services, where she graduated with honors, receiving an M.S. in 1964. Since then she had been with the New York Public Library, at first in two regional libraries with large collections. In one of these she had served as assistant to the Children's Librarian. She was now with a small neighborhood library of the New York Public Library system where, since December of 1966, she had been acting Children's Librarian, along with sharing in the work of the adult department. She was highly recommended by those who knew her work, and the board was especially pleased with her experience in work with children. On a visit to Brunswick on the weekend of

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April 29, 1967, she met and was interviewed by all the directors of the library and it was their unanimous decision to make her an offer, with the stipulation that Mrs. Lunt was to have the title of Associate Librarian.

On May 2, 1967, the position of head librarian of the Capt. John Curtis Memorial Library was offered to Mrs. Weissman. Even with a considerable increase in the salary offered, it was probably a fortunate coincidence that Mrs. Weissman's husband was negotiating for a position with the Bowdoin College Library at the same time. In any case, after some hesitation, Mrs. Weissman agreed to accept the duties of head librarian as of August 1, 1967. It was a great change for a New York City librarian to come into a library that was so dependent on volunteers, and was administered by a Board of Directors whose experience, with the notable exception of Mr. Monke, was in other fields than library management. Nevertheless the combination of New York City training and traditional local experience, rather awkward at first, soon smoothed out with goodwill and adaptability on both sides, and within a few years worked a transformation in library facilities without losing the charm and graciousness of the small town library.

On August 9, 1967, the Library Association held an Open House as a reception for Mrs. Weissman. Although open to all the town only some 90 devoted friends took time from their summer activities to attend, but perhaps for this very reason the atmosphere of the reception was warmly welcoming to the new librarian. Librarians from the surrounding area were present, and librarians from Portland and the State Library at Augusta also attended.

From the start Mrs. Weissman took a very active part in the work with children, where her experience stood her and the Friends in good stead. She was keenly aware of the lack of space and welcomed efforts to use the small building more efficiently. Among these were plans for special bookshelves in the Directors' Room to take care of oversize books, a vertical file purchased for pamphlets and clippings, and a dictionary stand ordered for 1968, which would free another table for readers.

During 1967 the Friends continued their efforts on behalf of the library with a twin exhibit of old chinaware and crafts or

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hobbies, a tea in National Library Week, a display of new books, posters and bookmarks during Children's Week, and the first story hour for older children on Halloween. The Bowdoin Museum of Art loaned an exhibit on "The History of the Print" during December of that year, and the Friends used imagination and taste in decorating the library for Christmas. A tree next to the fireplace decorated with miniature imitation books was much admired. The year ended with a Christmas

party sponsored by the Children's Book Committee for 5th and 6th graders and their parents. Some 60 attended, and it could be considered a great success, even if "largely a feminine affair." The expense of new book plates, designed and printed by Sheldon Christian, was divided between the Friends and the Library Association. An ambitious project begun this year was a program of restoring the many ship pictures that had been donated to the library over the years, in line with Mr. Curtis' desire for maritime collections. Of these perhaps the most intimately connected with the Curtis name was the *Portlaw*, the last ship commanded by Capt. John Curtis.

That first year Mrs. Weissman could also report an unusually large number of book acquisitions. This was partly because of the memorial book fund for Mary Donahue. In addition \$1,000 from Federal Government sources was made available by the Library Services Construction Act for the purchase of reference books. With this sum two new encyclopedias were acquired and a number of other reference works. A sale of discarded books also added funds for book purchases. In spite of these acquisitions the librarian was obliged to report no real increase in book stock, since many books had to be discarded and total figures remained about the same.

The comments of the librarian in this her first report, while they indicated the shortcomings of the library, were obviously aimed at improving the collections. She recommended enlargement of the small record collection, and a small paperback section for teenagers. She added: "Despite the large number of books added this year the collection is still way below the minimum standard proposed by the state. The Library has a loyal nucleus of readers, yet it is failing to attract the many people who need information about improving their skills, at home or on the job, or people who need new skills to improve their economic status. Needless to say, we have little of this kind of information at present."

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At the annual meeting on January 17, 1968, Thomas P. Riley, who had served as President of the Brunswick Library Association since 1943, submitted his resignation. He had assumed the task during the difficult war years, had guided the library successfully through the transition from rigidity to friendly informality under Mary Donahue, had seen the circulation rise phenomenally in the late 1950's and early '60's, and the development of a healthy relationship with the state library. He presided over the great change from a local semi-professional library with considerable support from private gifts, to an expanded modern one, professionally run and largely town supported. After more than twenty-five years of loyal service his retirement called forth grateful recognition on the part of the directors and townspeople alike. The Library Association was fortunate that Arthur Monke was willing to accept the position and carry on the work. Mr. Monke was at this time Assistant Librarian at Bowdoin, but would shortly become Head Librarian there.

The next years reflected the influence of the new Brunswick librarian in many ways. Naturally this influence tended toward expansion and experimentation along new lines. It has already been noted that the State Library was part of the story of the local library from the time the Brunswick Public Library became a "free" library as a consequence of an act sponsored in the legislature by the State Library Association. Now it was the state-wide teletype-telephone network which proved so valuable in procuring advice, information, and books on various subjects, that in order to avail themselves of it, the directors agreed to comply with the state minimum as to hours for a library in a town of Brunswick's size. The library was therefore to open as of January 9, 1969, at 10 A.M., Monday through Saturday. The teletype-telephone service Mrs. Weissman reported 'enabled us to get information on diverse subjects such as welding handicrafts, education of the deaf and dumb, and a book on the process of making leather, which came all the way from the Boston Public Library."

The experimental programs initiated with the aid of federal funds distributed by the State Library were most successful. Large print books, all of the popular type, were purchased for the use of persons not rated as blind but having difficulty in reading


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average-size print, a boon to many elderly folk. Another experiment was to try magazines never before subscribed to by the library. *Sports Illustrated* was an "instant success" according to the librarian. In 1968 also the local paper carried an account of what it labelled the new talking book machine on display at the library. In 1931 a federal program of the United States Library of Congress had been initiated to distribute talking book machines and non-musical recordings free of charge through state agencies to the legally blind. In 1961 the program was expanded to include all persons unable to read or use conventional printed material. The library was prepared to explain and give out information on the machine although the program was administered from Augusta.

Still another service was a small collection for young adults, set up near the high school shelf. This proved very popular and could well be considerably expanded, but for this both space and funds were needed. On many topics high school students sought material. They wanted to know more about drugs, blacks, poverty, and all the other social issues of the day. This demand could be partially satisfied through the state telephone network, which was also helpful in providing material for high school term papers. As for younger children the librarian noted that "by simply moving fairy tales to a lower shelf within reach of 3rd and 4th graders, discarding worn books and buying more attractive new ones, we've discovered that Brunswick children, like most children everywhere, are enthusiastic about fairy tales."

The librarian had also initiated a program of visits to the schools, to show films borrowed from the State Library, and to give book talks to classes. In September, 1967, at her suggestion the Brunswick Library joined the American Library Association.

During 1968 while the Board was already debating placing a project for a large addition before the town, those resourceful people, the Friends, set to work to make the former Scout Room in the basement a useful meeting room, story hour room, and a quiet workroom for the librarian. Aided by expert advice from Betty Tyler, Claire Taylor and her cohorts redecorated this room and thus added much needed space. Another change in 1968, at the suggestion of the directors, was to create a work-area for Marguerite Lunt in the Directors' Room, a change which not only gave

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her elbowroom for her many tasks, but removed one desk from the crowded stack area.


There had been over a period of several years a trend downward in circulation, despite many new registrations and the growth of the town. The efforts of the Friends and the Children's Book Committee did begin to show in the increased juvenile circulation in 1967, but the total circulation had still continued to decline. The figures for the year 1968, however, took an upward turn. This gradual trend upward was an encouraging result of the efforts of librarians, directors, and Friends, but shortage of funds and lack of space continued to be almost insurmountable problems.

As far back as the directors' meeting in January of 1967, a request from the town manager, Mr. John Bibber, had been read asking for a five-year plan for improvement projects. The decision at that time was that, while such plans were

badly needed, they should wait until there was a new librarian. This request for long-term plans, along with the search for a new librarian, can be considered the beginning of the movement for renewal and expansion that was to make changes in the Brunswick Library comparable to the effect of the Curtis gift so many years before.

In May, 1968 Arthur Monke gave a speech at the Rotary Club which was the signal that the library directors were seriously concerned. He spoke on the need for more books and more space. Of the 253 public libraries in Maine there were only two which entirely conformed to state standards. Brunswick's library was not one of these. In fact it fell very far below both as to book collection and as to space. He stressed the inadequacy of the book collection of some 21,000 volumes for a town of this size, quoting state standards which required 2.5 books for each citizen of the town, or approximately 45,000 volumes. He pointed out that the existing building "lacks sufficient reading area, a sufficient space for children's reading, a work room, adequate office space, and space for books added to the collection."


The board began in earnest during 1968 to discuss the future of the library. This involved consideration of the next twenty years and the probable growth of the town. First of all, however, came the question of current expenses. To pay for the additional help

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required by the decision to meet state standards as to hours, and to increase the number of books purchased, even if still not at the rate recommended by the Maine Library Association, and to provide for minor alterations in the present building in the interest of efficiency, would require a major increase in the sum currently budgeted for the library by the town. When in November the board submitted a considered proposal to the Selectmen, the first of its two requests for assistance concerned the annual budget. An analysis of the budget stated that the total library budget came to \$26,050, or \$1.14 per capita (population figure 18,000). Of this \$20,000 came from town taxes at \$1.11 per capita. Generally accepted library standards would require a budget of \$54,000 to \$72,000 based on a \$3-\$4 per capita tax. "The American Library Association," the library board noted, "cites a national average of \$4 per capita spent for libraries. In 1966 seventeen communities in Maine reported spending that much; thirty spent upwards of \$3, and the state average was \$2.38. Brunswick spent in that year \$1.19, or exactly half the state average." One more statement by the board should be quoted here: "...by current Maine standards, Brunswick's library has half, or less than half the space, the books, the staff and the support that is now considered reasonable for a town of 18,000. Brunswick's probable growth between 1970 and 1990-the period we should be planning for now-makes the situation still more critical."

The second request was even more bold; it asked for funds "to hire a library building consultant and an architect to plan a major addition to the library." This request was justified by the limitations which lack of space placed on any efforts to improve the library. To quote the letter again: "Beyond a certain point we cannot buy the books we need because there will be no place to put them; we cannot add staff because the present staff has no place to work; we cannot encourage new users if there is no room for them to browse."

The library was built for a town of 6,800 people; in 1968 the town was estimated to have a population of 18,000. In another twenty years the projection promised something like 24,000 inhabitants. The changing character and developing interests of the citizens have added also to the variety and quality of the demands upon the library. With improved schools, and extension services from

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schools and the University of Maine in Portland, library collections are stretched to cover wider areas. The library should not lag behind the schools. "Too many libraries, Curtis among them, have been stereotyped as merely purveyors of light reading to children and housewives with leisure. Potentially, the public library is part of a community's educational system, the one part with no restrictions as to age, prior training or formal schedule." These words have a familiar ring. In modern phrases this ideal for the library comes very close to the aims of Professor Robinson and Miss Gilman at an earlier period. In modern times, however, as the report emphasized, demands on such a library have been considerably expanded. For example new kinds of materials, including recordings, films, art works, are part of good library service, as well as cooperation with other libraries in borrowing and lending.

In discussing books and materials, the statement went on to point out that the library was particularly weak in material for young children and young adults. One-third of the total collection is considered by general library standards to be a proper proportion of children's books. By that standard, Brunswick should have 15,000 in the children's collection; in fact there were in 1968 somewhat more than 3,000- although half the 1967 book budget was used for children's books. In this connection it was pointed out that good school libraries and good schools "stimulate the use of the library-they create readers and nurture independent research." As an example the strong mathematics program in the Brunswick Junior High School was cited which sent students to the public library who looked sometimes in vain for books to help in their school mathematics projects. True, the Bowdoin College Library can occasionally be of help, but it can hardly replace a public library as an immediate resource for students in the schools. Nor can it supply many types of reading needed in the community, "the recreational reading, the vocational or how-to-do-it- books, the vast range of materials that are of general public interest." Another argument is often heard, that Maine libraries can hardly expect to keep up with the standards of the American Library Association, because of the financial conditions in Maine. Realizing that there was some truth in this claim, the board used wherever possible the minimum standards of the Maine Library Association.

discussing the need for space the board gave the following

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figures: as of the present (1968) the library had 5,400 square feet, while for the present size of the town 10,800 square feet was the minimum recommended. For 1990, 14,400 square feet would be needed. Many more seats are needed, a minimum of 55 as compared to the present 25 for adults, and 8 for children. Space was also needed for the special programs and for meetings of various kinds.

All in all this document of some seven typewritten pages was well-thought out, and the arguments for building a large addition to the library were cogently presented. Its proposals were duly discussed and publicized. Perhaps the greatest service the Friends ever rendered was publicity on this score. They sent out a mailing to 1,400 persons toward the end of 1968 explaining in detail the reasons for the proposals and their urgency. In addition to this they had for several months been sending in to the *Times Record* articles under a heading "At the Library," which were intended to, and did, attract readers. There was a series of well-written reviews of books in the library on specific topics, starting with an excellent review of books on pottery and chinaware, written by Mrs. Pauline (William C.) Root, which appeared May 1, 1968. Other topics which were treated at intervals throughout the year included Needlework Books, Cookbooks (a collection of pamphlets on fish cookery published by the Department of the Interior), Light Vacation Reading, Christmas Ideas from Books (decorations, Christmas cooking, etc.) and one, entitled "Books Open Door to the Sea," dealing with new books in the suddenly popular field of oceanography. Another article discussed types and contents of the magazines now on the library list, and asked for suggestions in the periodic revision of the list. In

January of 1969 an article noted that the Brunswick Library caters to home planners with useful and informative books in this field. In this connection a Persian proverb was quoted: "Measure your cloth ten times-you can only cut it once." It seems that this proverb was constantly in the minds of the library planners in the critical years ahead.

In reporting on the proposal of the board made to the Selectmen under date of November 21, 1968, the librarian included the following statement at the annual meeting in January, 1969: "We compared the Curtis Library to libraries in towns of similar size to

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ours. What we came up with could be summarized by the fact that since 1910 book stock has increased by 50 per cent, but the population has multiplied by 260 per cent. Thus, even though the Library budget has gone up steadily year after year, it has not kept pace with the population explosion, nor with some of the newer concepts of library services."

The March Town Meeting of 1969 rose nobly to the occasion, increasing the annual subsidy to \$28,000 and passing an article to appropriate the funds needed to hire a library consultant and an architect to draw up plans for an addition to the library. The consultant selected was Mr. Francis E. Keough, Director of the Springfield, Massachusetts, Public Library. His report was received in November of that year. Entitled, Survey and Public Library Building Program, Brunswick, Maine, this report fully substantiated the contention of the board, declaring that the present building was wholly inadequate to meet the public library needs of Brunswick in 1969 or in the future. The space now available should be more than tripled to accommodate staff facilities, to allow for adequate work area, and to house the library collection for the next twenty years. This space should include a public meeting room large enough for 150 persons, where works of local artists and craftsmen could also be exhibited. A new entrance on Middle Street was suggested as an easier approach and bookmobile service at some time in the future was strongly recommended.

The Town Meeting of March 3, 1969, that had voted to appropriate the money for a library consultant and for an architect to draw up plans for a library building was the last town meeting held in Brunswick. That year a town charter was adopted and a Council with the Town Manager took over the duties of town government. Brunswick had had a Town Manager since 1949, but the first Council-made up of representatives from seven districts and two members at large-began its duties in January of 1970.

A library building committee had been formed with Mr. Robert Morrell as chairman and the following members: for the library, Mrs. Alison Shipman, Mrs. Claire Taylor, Professor Philip M. Brown, and the librarian, Mrs. Suse Weissman; for the Town Council, Mrs. Anne (Louis) Bachrach and Mr. Hollis Driscoll, and Mr. John Bibber, who as Town Manager was ex officio also a member of the

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Library Board. The bylaws of the Library Association had been amended in 1968, to make the town manager the ex officio town representative on the Board of Directors in place of the first selectman. It was a happy decision, for the selectmen over the years from 1904-1968 had not been active board members, while Mr. Bibber has been in regular attendance and carried his full share of the work of the building committee, representing both town and library.

The library directors and the building committee held several joint meetings in early January, 1970 with Mr. Keough, to discuss his report and consider preliminary architect's plans. Despite strong recommendations from Mr. Keough it was agreed that the plan for a bookmobile service involving a bookmobile garage and loading service, would have to be postponed for some time. It was also understood that the construction of the proposed addition to the library would depend largely upon the possibility of receiving federal funds.

The new Town Council had to deal with many matters of reorganization, including setting up a reconstituted Citizen's Advisory Committee, which would also have to consider the library proposal. Finally on January 27, 1970, the *Portland Press Herald* could report that "after a discussion with officers of the Brunswick Public Library Association, it was agreed (by the Council) that the Association should go ahead with its plans to hire an architect to design an addition to the library building. Council Chairman David H. Scarponi explained that he had put the item on the agenda "to see if the planning of the library expansion might be an expense which could be cut from the budget." In the end no vote was taken as the town had already authorized this expenditure in the Town Meeting of March 3, 1969. Nevertheless, this comment by Chairman Scarponi indicates clearly the problem faced by the Association and its friends. The newspaper article went on to say, "It was agreed that the plans should be prepared so the town will be ready to go ahead at an opportune time with no delay. With continually rising taxes and with the immediate need of a new school in prospect, however, it was felt that the expansion might have to be deferred for some time." This was indeed the crux of the matter. As one commentator put it, no one was against the new library as such, but many were against higher taxes.

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Under such discouraging circumstances the building committee continued to function, interviewing several architects and making various trips to Boston to see the work of the man they unanimously selected as architect, Anthony Tappé of the firm of Huygens and Tappé. In September of 1970 they gave a report to the library directors on the architect's plans. These preliminary plans and drawings were for a one-story addition providing nearly four times the existing floor space at a cost estimated at \$500,000. They were soon displayed on the walls of the library and created much public interest. How much these plans had to do with the tremendous leap in circulation - 25 per cent over the year before - and how much was due to the many services now provided by the library and the Friends, it is not possible to say.

The Friends, led by a dedicated president, Mrs. Ruth (Herschel) Webb, and an enterprising publicity director, Professor Eaton Leith, never slackened their efforts and continued to help bring the library into the public eye. And during this period of exciting plans and hopes, the library continued to perform well in spite of limited quarters, and to expand its services in imaginative and constructive ways.

Story hours continued, and in 1970 the first mention of a "Mother's Hour" to coincide with the story hours appears. Especially in the field of films great strides were made. Through the Friends the library was given a 16 mm. film projector, and the film program both at the library and in the various schools was being developed rapidly, including some programs for older children. Films were borrowed from the State Library and were loaned to groups in the community as well as to the schools. Moreover the library was trying to move into the field of senior citizen reading, and with more success was developing a program of cooperation with high school students. The latter had proposed a list of some 75-100 records which they would like the library to buy, and so a Rock and Roll collection was added to a number of more generally accepted recordings. As Mrs. Weissman once put it, the collection went "all the way from Bach to the Beatles, from Rod McKuen to Edna St. Vincent Millay." The library was also trying to increase its usefulness to these students in



other ways, such as specialized pamphlets, information on jobs, college catalogues, and paperbacks

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on current issues. For an environmental teach-in the high school students, with the cooperation of librarians and using library resources, worked on a book and poster exhibit for school and library. Mrs. Marie (Robert) Galen wrote a review of a number of books at the library in this field for the *Times Record*. The library had at various times employed high school girls on a part-time basis and there could be no doubt that the high school youngsters one and all felt at home in the library and made real use of its resources for special reports.

Looking forward, Mrs. Weissman felt sure that as the grade school libraries improved, the greatly expanded children's collection would be basically adequate, but that the adult collection was in great need of development. It should be noted that the rapid growth of the children's collection could to a great extent be attributed to a number of generous gifts from the Bowdoin College Campus Chest for this purpose.

In the spring of 1970 the directors and the librarian had discussed the objectives and policies and formulated a statement to be mimeographed for the public. It dealt with a number of topics, such as cooperation with other libraries, public relations, gifts, but the topics which bore on the question of the need for a larger and better equipped library were those which dealt directly with the services the library should render and the materials it needed. The statement was bolstered by material from a publication of the American Library Association entitled "Freedom to Read!" This well formulated statement of objectives was an important step towards bringing about public understanding of the aims of the library. In June the library was host to a regional meeting of representatives from Cundy's Harbor, Topsham, and South Harpswell.

In the fall of 1970 a question arose as to the incorporation of the Brunswick Library Association. Professor Philip M. Brown made an investigation of the matter and determined that the Library Association had been duly incorporated when originally formed, according to the regulations of that time. In order to avoid future questions on this score, however, he decided to have all the present regulations for incorporation fulfilled and the papers filed with the Maine Secretary of State.

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The schedule of activities during Children's Book Week in November of 1970 shows the widespread impact of the library on the elementary schools, the children, the teachers, and the parents. There was a talk by a Maine author for all 5th graders, story-telling for 3rd graders, and films for kindergarten groups and grades 3 to 5, as well as a puppet show by a well-known puppeteer. Along with this each school library featured displays of the speaker's books, and the Coffin School Library arranged a show of instructional materials, and an Open House for parents: Hawthorne School featured talks on new books for 4th and 5th graders, and in every school children worked at making bookmarks and posters. This was all planned through the cooperation of teachers and librarians and with the aid of the state library, from which the films were borrowed. The films and speakers had to be brought to the schools, since the library was so cramped for space, which at least doubled the problem of logistics. It was a good demonstration of the needs of the library.

There was a public hearing with the architect in January, 1971, attended by some forty persons. At this meeting many spoke in favor of the plans, emphasizing the varied services of the modern library, such as supplying tapes, records, films,

magazines, and the need for a larger meeting room. Pictures in the newspaper account of this meeting illustrated this need, showing children milling around while waiting for a Walt Disney film which had been scheduled for one showing, but had to have three. Mrs. Weissman was quoted as saying, "The films for children and young adults-plus books and other services-are not currently available through Bowdoin College's library." This comment agrees with statements by the Bowdoin College librarian himself to the effect that the Bowdoin College Library's task is to satisfy the academic needs of Bowdoin's faculty and students, and that "there are great areas in which the College Library would be inadequate to serve the general public."

On February 2, 1971, the Town Council voted for a bond issue for the purpose of building the library addition, subject to a referendum. Mrs. Antoinette Martin was only willing to vote for the bond issue under this condition and Mr. Richard A. Lord was opposed to the entire motion, on the ground that it would raise taxes. No date was voted at this time for a referendum or for a public hearing preceding it. The Citizen's Advisory Board turned in a

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mixed verdict, and the *Times Record* reported a "cool reception" by that Board. In fact the Board voted not to support the library proposal at this time - the vote being 8-7 - but three absent members later informed the chairman that they supported the library proposal. On the other hand, the Student Council at the high school supported it unanimously. At this point it was discovered by the town attorney, Mr. Orville Ranger, that word defects in the town charter would postpone action on the referendum. It would apparently be a very complicated matter to amend the town charter, taking many steps and involving changes in a bill then before the state legislature. It was acutely a matter of time, since the whole library proposal depended very much on the availability of federal funds, and the last date for application for such funds that year was the first of May. The program was fairly new, and in this year no other library in Maine was yet ready to apply for aid. This meant that the Brunswick application, if made in time, would bring practically the entire federal allotment for aid to Maine libraries to the support of the Brunswick program. Another year, it would surely be much less, being divided among a number of applicants. To apply for federal funds a town had to have committed itself already to the project. The steps necessary to get the charter amended would require almost superhuman efforts to be accomplished before the deadline for application. The town attorney next consulted the town's bond attorney, Charles W. Allen, and together they came up with an ingenious solution. Instead of amending the town charter at this time, it was decided to satisfy the two different wordings in different sections of the charter, by passing two "orders" to go with the "ordinance" already passed. It would also bring a quicker vote if the Council rescinded its call for a referendum, thus allowing citizens to petition for one. The Council finally on March 8th "rescinded it own call for a referendum"; in fact, it was not clear that the charter gave them the right to call for a referendum at all. Thereupon it "...passed two orders implementing a previously passed bond ordinance, and pledged to vote down the addition, if a petition was not forthcoming to force the issue to a vote of the town." The report of this meeting in the *Times Record* of March 9, 1971, states that "petitions to put the matter to a referendum are expected to begin circulation this week."


A public hearing at the Coffin School on April 5th again drew

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only about 40 persons. Earl L. Ormsby of the School Board and Richard A. Lord of the Council spoke against the proposal for a library addition, citing higher taxes as their main objection. All others spoke in favor, many quoting Professor Philip M.

Brown, who had made careful calculations to show that taxes would not increase more than a small amount (around \$1) per \$1,000 valuation, and, as more taxable property came with a growing population even this amount would actually become smaller. Norman R. Houde and the president of St. John's Guild, Anthony J. Licamelli, wrote to the local paper stressing the importance of the public library to St. John's School, which had no library of its own. St. John's School did send classes regularly to visit the library, something which had been a source of pride to the librarians for many years. The referendum brought a very light turnout of voters on April 12, 1971, but the new library was approved 639-598. It should be mentioned here that this was about average for a special referendum vote; in fact in recent years the total vote had often been less. The application for federal aid was promptly made, and in due time the board was informed that they would receive \$101,000 under the Library Construction Act. Another bit of good news was the outcome of some discussions that had been going on with the Pejepscot Historical Society. The Society would contribute \$5,000 from the bequest of Mrs. Edith (Samuel) Furbish towards the cost of a room in the library for their use. The papers and books belonging to the Society were to be kept in this one room of the library where they could be available for historical research. This was a long-postponed but much-desired aim of the two societies, and signalled the culmination of the joint efforts of both groups over many years. This year, too, a substantial gift (\$3,400) came from the Davis Fund, and there were memorial gifts in memory of Mrs. Isabelle (Clyde) Congdon, who, in writing her column "Ramblings" for the Brunswick paper, had often used library sources, and was a warm supporter of the library. Already mentioned was the fund established at this time by the Burton Taylors in honor of Professor Philip M. Brown's twenty-five years service as treasurer of the library.

With the bond issue for a library addition approved, the library building committee could now commission completed plans and drawings from the architect. While these were being worked out in detail and the building contracts negotiated, business at the library

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went on as usual but with a few noteworthy developments. One much regretted was the retirement in June, 1971 of Marguerite Lunt, who had served the library for nearly twenty years and through difficult times. The Friends of the Library held a farewell reception in her honor in the first week in July, where many came to express their thanks for her quiet help. In the librarian's report to the Library Board for the year 1971 Suse Weissman made warm recognition of her personal debt to Mrs. Lunt. Her retirement "was a special loss for the present 'Head Librarian' for it was Marguerite Lunt who taught her so much about the Town of Brunswick, its library, its patrons and their reading habits. We are grateful that we still see her often bringing books to friends and neighbors." A new member of the library staff was Carolyn Hesketh, a recent graduate of the University of Maine Library School. Her chief interest was films and she has worked in close cooperation in this field with schools, nursing homes, the Senior Citizens, and other organizations.

The activities of the library continued to expand. The librarian's report for 1971 stated:

Adult circulation rose by 5,000 and almost 1,000 new people registered. In December alone we processed over 600 books; our previous record was about 250. Altogether we added over 3,200 items (including records) and dropped 500. This comes close to the minimum rate acquisition suggested for Maine Libraries and makes us very hopeful for the future. Of course, the very small rate of growth of previous years still has to be overcome; our goal is 40,000 books by 1978.

In arguing the case for the addition before the Town Council in January, 1971, Robert Morrell, Chairman of the library building committee, had called attention to


the Maine State Library standards, which set 2.5 books per person as the minimum for any public library. He said that a number of Maine libraries do have this quota or more. For example he cited Auburn with 80,000 books for 24,000 persons. Lewiston with 90,000 books for 40,000 persons, and Bath with 31,000 for 10,000 persons. Brunswick had only 22,000 for a population variously counted as 16,000 to 18,000 persons. The aims of the library were, then, ambitious to be sure but in line with reasonable standards.

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Finally in May of 1972 the contract for the construction of the new library addition was awarded to Peachy Brothers of Augusta, Maine. Ground-breaking ceremonies were held on Memorial Day, May 30th. A large picture appeared in the *Times Record* of May 31st showing Robert Morrell, Chairman of the building committee, who broke ground, being aided with the first shovel by John Bibber, Town Manager, and by Mrs. Claire Taylor, President of the Brunswick Library Association.

It seems that the prospect of the new addition spurred interest in the library well before the new building was ready for use. Impressive evidence of the continued active support of other town groups was the annual spring plant sale organized by the Village Improvement Association, the proceeds of which for six years, starting in 1969, went into a fund for landscaping the new library addition. It turned out to be a most successful undertaking, to the astonishment of the doubting architect. Circulation rose in 1972 by 6,000 volumes and 985 new people took out library cards. In 1972 also 2,800 books and records were added to the collection, coming very close to the 3,000 recommended by state standards. There were, to be sure, delays and problems in the course of construction, and life, at least for the librarians, in the old library became increasingly difficult in part due to the construction going on around them. With the old heating system dismantled to make way for the new, the staff had to rely on the fireplace in chilly fall and winter weather. The many boxes of new books crowded the little space left unfilled by bookshelves. Yet services continued and more people were using the library than ever. There were many difficult decisions, but on the whole the new building progressed to the satisfaction of all. The library received a number of generous gifts for its book funds, and the town made large increases in its subsidies.

Building was somewhat behind schedule, but on November 12, 1973, the library began business in the new addition. Moving had been an enormous task enlisting the help of many community organizations such as the Junior Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis, Lions, Boy and Girl Scouts. Friends of the Library not only worked themselves, but also provided refreshments for the weary. A former staff assistant, Debbie Maroff, doing a project towards her degree from the University of Maine, worked out the placement of books

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on the shelves. One beneficent result of this moving crisis was that many of the women who helped at the time of moving stayed on as volunteer workers. They now help to staff the "return end of the desk," help with overdue books and to keep the shelves in order, process and mend books, deliver articles to schools, and work in the children's department, altogether a task force of no mean proportions. With only three days of being actually closed, the library opened in its new quarters.

 [ Exterior view of 1973 addition in relation to original building ]

Exterior view of library addition in relation to original building

It was not until February of 1974, however, that the Library Board and the Friends decided to issue a special invitation to all the townspeople to come to an Open House at the library from 2-8 P.M. on the 28th. By this time not only the new addition, but the changes in the old library could be on view. The wall between the old children's room and the stack room had been removed to create a large hall for meetings, and the beautiful wooden arch formerly over the entrance to the old reading room had been reset over the entrance of this hall. The old reading room was now the Archives Room for the Pejepscot Historical Society's papers, and for rare books belonging to the library. The ramp that was built to the former outside entrance was done in fulfillment of a state requirement for the benefit of the handicapped. In this first year of the new building, *Library Journal* included the new addition to the Capt. John Curtis Memorial Library in its annual list of notable buildings. It was also gratifying when the town of Harpswell made an arrangement to pay to allow its citizens, including their students at the new Mount Ararat School, to make use of the Brunswick Library free of charge.

The public in general was delighted with the sense of spaciousness and quiet of the new carpeted library, and the airy lightness from the domed skylight was welcomed by all. There was, of course, still some tendency to feel that the older part of the library might be neglected. This criticism began to disappear with the renovation of the old part of the library, and many town groups have rented those rooms for special occasions. The rooms have also proved useful for library and Friends' affairs.

The problems of the Brunswick Library now are no greater and no different from those of the average citizen in recent times. Inflation has made the cost of books a

real handicap in the effort to

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increase book stock, and all expenses are still on the rise, while the town struggles to keep taxes down. Yet it is a time when the library is perhaps of even greater service to the town than ever, and Brunswick must be both proud and grateful for all those citizens who have labored over the years to establish, maintain, and improve their public library.

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## APPENDIX

Following are lists of the Librarians, the Presidents and the Directors of the Association from 1883 to 1976. It has not been possible to list the many others who have rendered significant service to the Library. There have been many committees as well as the officers and members of the Friends of the Library and other individual volunteers over the years. To all those who have so served, and to the large number of generous donors, the debt of the Library and of the Town is gratefully acknowledged.

### Librarians

Mr. Lyman E. Smith	1883-1895
Miss Mary G. Gilman	1895-1940
Mrs. Mildred Strout	1919-1941 (Assistant) 1941-1952 (Head)
Mrs. Mary H. Donahue	1946-1952 (Assistant) 1952-1966 (Head)
Mrs. Marguerite S. Lunt	1953-1966 (Assistant) 1966-1967 (Acting Head) 1967-1971 (Associate)
Mrs. Suse Weissman	August 1967-
Miss Carolyn M. Hesketh	July 1971- (Assistant)

## Presidents of the Brunswick Public Library Association

Professor Franklin C. Robinson	1883-1910
Professor Henry L. Chapman	1911-1912
Russell W. Eaton	1913-1921
Thomas H. Riley	1922-1937
John W. Riley	1937-1941
Norman G. Smith	1942
Thomas P. Riley	1943-1967
Arthur Monke	1968-1971
Mrs. Claire M. Taylor	1972-1975
Robert L. Morrell	1976-

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## Elected Directors of the Brunswick Public Library Association

Ralph P. Bodwell	1933-1945
Ira P. Booker	1884-1913
Lawrence A. Brown	1945-1953
Prof. Philip M. Brown	1945-
E. A. Chandler	1883
Prof. Henry L. Chapman	1911-1912
J.W. Crawford	1883
Ellery C. Day	1928-1931
Russell W. Eaton	1896-1921
Mrs. Janet R. Galle	1976-
Walter D. Hatch	1920-1927
G. Allan Howe	1914-1932
Norman Houde	1971-
Geo. W. Leonard	1943-1962
Thomas M. Libby	1963-1965
Capt. Richard W. Leighton	1976-
Capt. P. C. Merryman	1890-1894
Robert L. Morrell	1968-
Arthur Monke	1966-1972
Prof. W. A. Moody	1931-1945
William W. Nearing	1938-1946
Mrs. Margaret Packard	1973-1975
Mrs. Ann Pierson	1974-
Miss Eva Racine	1971-1973
John W. Riley	1936-1941
Thomas H. Riley	1913-1937
Thomas P. Riley	1942-1967
Clement F. Robinson	1947-1963
Prof. F. C. Robinson	1883-1910

Wilbur F. Senter	1922-1935
Mrs. Alison Shipman	1968-1970
Geo. L. Skolfield	1911, 1913-1920
Lyman E. Smith	1883-1919
Norman G. Smith	1922-1942
Capt. Lemuel H. Stover	1895-1910
Mrs. Claire M. Taylor	1964-1975
Foster L. Treworgy	1954-1970
Weston Thompson	1884-1890
H. W. Wheeler	1883-1894