

## *Report of the Council*

OUTSIDE of the Director's enforced absence from the Library for six weeks, there is nothing especially new to report concerning the activities of the Society for the past summer. There have been some changes in the grounds and repairs in the Library building. The parking space, where the gravelled surface suffered much displacement during the winter, has been black-topped, including the driveway to Regent Street. The boiler-room has been completely repainted, including the boilers, and switches have been installed outside of the boiler-room controlling the operation of the burners as required by State law.

Bibliographical work has continued apace. Mr. Shipton's editorship of the microprint reproduction of Evans has progressed to 1790, as will be shown in detail in the Librarian's Report. Mrs. Spear's check-list of Directories to 1860 has been held up during the summer due to her increased duties in taking care of correspondence, but will be resumed shortly.

The only death in the membership during the past six months was that of Frederick Haven Pratt on July 12, elected to the Society in 1943.

It has been suggested several times that the Director of the American Antiquarian Society compile his reminiscences of the collecting of Americana for that Library since his installment as Librarian in 1908. Familiar with the growth of the collections inherited in 1908, and the motive force behind the establishing of new collections, especially in the period from 1908 to 1930, he has been active in the field of Americana for fifty years.

Therefore on the fiftieth anniversary of his assumption of the Librarianship he has compiled a narrative describing thirty-six of the Society's outstanding collections of Americana and also his reminiscences of the early meetings of the Society, its Publications, its Bindery, and the changes in its Building and Grounds. Sixteen of the collections, interesting in themselves, but of comparatively minor importance, have been grouped under the heading of "Minor Collections."

In 1908 the Library contained a total of about 99,000 volumes, acquired during the nearly one hundred years since its founding in 1812. It had important collections of early American newspapers and early imprints, also fair collections of schoolbooks, and of psalmody. But the great bulk of the Library was made up of miscellaneous books, many in foreign languages or pertaining to countries which had no connection with America. The only collections in the field of Americana which came to the Library during its first hundred years were the Isaiah Thomas library, the Bentley and Walcutt acquisitions, and the valuable material obtained from the Brinley and Joseph J. Cooke sales. No concerted effort was ever made to develop important collections or to establish new ones. The Society had small funds in its early days, and it was not until the Salisbury bequest came in 1908 that there was any sizable addition to its income. But most of the Salisbury gift was used for the erection of the new library building in 1909, and then new funds had to be raised. It was fortunate for the Society that an able and energetic President was elected in 1907, in the person of Waldo Lincoln, who served with great success for twenty years. Mr. Lincoln raised necessary funds, and supported all the efforts to expand the Library and to increase its prestige.

The first concern on the part of the officers was to enlarge the collection of newspapers. The Isaiah Thomas gifts

included half a dozen long eighteenth-century files and a very large number of single issues of newspapers representing the Atlantic States and the middle West. But there were few files of leading newspapers for the period through the Civil War, and only a scattering of papers published in the smaller towns after 1810. For twenty years every effort was made to obtain early American newspapers, and the number acquired ran into many thousands of volumes and issues. The subject is treated in detail in the chapter on Newspapers.

The next important expansion was in the collection of early American printing—from the seventeenth-century imprints to the year 1820. Purchases of large collections, constant bidding at auctions, and the perusal of thousands of bookdealers' catalogues within fifteen years increased the collection of imprints fivefold. This, too, is told in detail in the chapter on Imprints to 1820.

Other collections which received notable increases were Genealogy, Local History, Psalmody, early Schoolbooks, United States Documents and Almanacs. Probably the greatest amount of work and effort went into the establishing of new collections—American Literature, Maps, Book Catalogues, Song Books, Sheet Music, Lithography, Bookplates, Colonial Currency, Cook Books, Hawaiiiana, Music, Railroads, and Western Narratives. Most of these collections became the leading institutional collections in the country. In many minor fields new collections were established—Valentines, Stereoscopic Views, Lottery Tickets, Miniature Books, Rewards of Merit, Watch Papers, and Watermarked Paper. Few libraries are interested in such fields, except in a small local way. But the constant use of these collections of "ephemera," both through visits from researchers and through correspondence, has justified the effort expended.

During these two decades of the intensive expansion of the Library, the staff showed able cooperation, and the President and Council supported the program. In 1930 it was decided to create a new position of Director, and to engage the services of a Librarian. Mr. R. W. G. Vail, of the New York Public Library, accepted the office and for nine years notably aided the Director in further expanding the Library. In addition to routine duties, he was especially active in fields of bibliography, compiling many check-lists of the Society's important collections for the Librarian's report, and incidentally assuming the editorship of Sabin's *Dictionary* to finish that important work from the letter S to the end of the alphabet. After his resignation in 1939 to become Director of the New York State Library, Clifford K. Shipton was chosen Librarian, to serve with notable success, and is still the incumbent in the position. Mr. Shipton's greatest contribution to the prestige of the Library was in providing orderly arrangement for the greatly increased collections, which had grown to a total of 600,000 titles and half a million manuscripts, maps, broadsides, and prints. He designed an elaborate classification which allowed all of the books to be grouped by subject, replacing the old alcove and shelf arrangement. This has been one of the greatest advances in library science which the Library has ever experienced. He inaugurated a system of writing for currently published books by reading the reviews of books in scholarly journals. He weeded from the Library thousands of books not in its special field of Americana. In addition he found time to compile the thirteenth volume of Charles Evans' *American Bibliography* carrying that important work through the year 1800, and during the last five years has assumed the task of issuing the microprint edition of the titles in Evans from 1639 to 1800, one of the most important projects ever conceived for the detailed study of American printing.

The staff throughout the entire fifty years has been able and loyal. Several have retained their positions for a long period. Those on the present staff who have served the Library for twenty years or over are Dorothea E. Spear since 1923, Avis G. Clarke since 1927, Antonina Braithwaite since 1928, Ruth I. Merrill since 1934, Mary E. Brown since 1938, and Albert G. Waite since 1938. The present staff of fourteen has kept the Library at a high standard of efficiency.

The use of the Library comes chiefly from researchers and scholars who visit Worcester to consult collections which are either outstanding or more easily available than elsewhere. The Antiquarian Society is primarily a library for advanced researchers. High school and college students do not take up the time of the small staff, since they can satisfy their needs at the Public Library and the local college libraries. Thousands of queries are answered, and assistance given, through correspondence, which amounts to over ten thousand letters annually. Membership in the Society is solely honorary, without fees or dues, and restricted to two hundred members. The Library, due to the growth of the last fifty years, has become a national library of American history, and thus it should continue, honoring its founders and the city in which it is located. The following accounts of the several collections of Americana in the Library it is hoped will be of interest to librarians, bookdealers, and collectors.

This book, under the title of "Fifty Years of Collecting Americana for the Library of the American Antiquarian Society" will be issued from the press toward the end of the present month of October. It will be published in an edition of one thousand copies, and will be sent with the compliments of the author to all the members of the Society, to the libraries on our exchange list, to nearly a hundred

bookdealers who have assisted us so much for years in gathering our collections, and to scores of friends who have aided us in many ways. It will be a book of nearly two hundred pages and will be issued in bound form. An ample supply of volumes will be retained for future disposition. The entire expense of publication will be assumed by the Director and is his gift to the Society.

Respectfully submitted,

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*For the Council*

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