

Report of the Council

DURING the past winter the Library of the Society has functioned as usual, subject of course to the restrictions and discomforts made necessary by the rigors of war. Although there has been slightly less use of the Library because of the gasoline shortage, this has affected local visitors rather than the researchers who come from a long distance to consult our resources. Since many of the large national collections of Americana have been sequestered for the duration, and we have not removed our material in any way, this has brought many scholars to Worcester to stay for longer periods than usual. It is rather interesting to note that Government agencies have used this Library frequently, especially to consult newspapers and directories needed in their investigations.

The problem of heating has been serious, but now fortunately has been solved. The temperature of the building had to be kept to a point lower than desirable and we had to close the Library on occasional Saturdays. In February the larger of the two boilers was converted from oil to coal, and alone succeeded in heating the building for the remainder of the winter. Grates have already been obtained for the other boiler, and can be installed if necessary during the summer. Since we had no space for coal, a temporary bin was constructed at the rear entrance, with a chute to bring coal directly to the boiler room. Early in the winter storm-windows were installed over the three large windows in the dome, reducing the drafts and cold air in the large reading-room.

Accessions to the Library, especially in rare books and

early newspaper files, have been numerous and noteworthy. But a record of these should await the Librarian's report at the annual meeting. Such purchases have been made possible only through the continued generosity of members. Over \$3000 has been given to the Society by members during the winter, and these gifts have been translated entirely into the purchase of books. As has been said in recent reports, opportunities to secure rare material are unusual at the present time.

The gift of the notable library of the late John W. Farwell, from his heirs, has filled in many of our most important gaps in early Americana. Half of the library has been turned over to us, and the remainder is expected during the present year.

Five members have died since the last October meeting. Valentine Hollingsworth, of Boston, who owned a fine collection of rare New England books, elected in 1935, died December 10, 1942. William Vail Kellen, vice-president of the Society and a member of its Council for seventeen years, elected in 1908, died December 20, 1942. Franz Boas, noted anthropologist, elected in 1908, died December 21, 1942. Norman Morrison Isham, authority on early New England architecture, elected in 1933, died January 1, 1943. Abbott Lawrence Lowell, President Emeritus of Harvard University, elected in 1899, died January 6, 1943. Obituary sketches of these members will appear in the printed Proceedings of this meeting.

The Bibliography of American Newspapers, 1690-1820, upon which the Director, and former Librarian, of this Society has been working for thirty years, has at last survived its final revision and is now being typed preparatory for printing.

This Bibliography was really the outgrowth of a suggestion made by the late William MacDonald, at one time professor of history at Brown University and later editorial

writer in New York. In a paper on "Some Bibliographical Desiderata in American History," read before this Society in October, 1911, Professor MacDonald called attention to the urgent need of a bibliography of American newspapers. He said: "The importance of newspapers as historical sources has been, if not underestimated, at least scantily recognized, by historians; and with the exception of our associate, Professor McMaster, few writers of comprehensive histories have made either extended or systematic use of them. Yet I have come to believe that neither our political nor our social development can be truly set forth until the wealth of data hidden in newspapers and magazines has been opened up and made available. It is to the newspapers that we must go, for example, to complete our information about the growth of colonial commerce, manufactures, and agriculture; the influence of English politics on the political activities and public opinion of the colonies; the progress and character of the Revolutionary agitation of the eighteenth century; the reasons for the success of the Federal Constitution, one of the most interesting topics awaiting its finished treatment; and about the nature and growth of slavery. . . . A newspaper bibliography is pre-eminently our own task; since nowhere else is there a collection of such material comparable to our own. I do not underrate the magnitude of the work; it is, perhaps, the most considerable undertaking of a bibliographical sort that now needs to be done, although a well-organized co-operative plan would lighten the labor. Once definitely accomplished, however, and with the partial or complete files now extant located and listed, the historian would be in a position to begin the work, which we all realize has got to be done, of writing large sections of American history over again, as well as of taking up numerous important topics which as yet, for lack of such assistance, lie neglected."

It was early in 1913 that I began upon this monumental task, blithely believing that five years would finish it. But the work had to be done only on evenings and Sundays, and the amount of travel necessary was far underestimated. I spent part of the summer in 1913 journeying to New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, having already covered the larger New England libraries in order to examine their newspaper files. The first installment appeared in the *Proceedings* in October, 1913, covering the States from Alabama to Indiana.

The plan of publication was to write a brief historical account of each newspaper, with exact dates of changes of titles and names of publishers, followed by a checklist of all files located. The decision was made to limit the final date to the year 1820, partly because this was the date chosen by Evans for the final year of his great American Bibliography, also because it covered the beginnings of printing in the middle west, but chiefly because the bibliography had to stop somewhere and to extend it into later decades might cause the entire undertaking to fall under its own weight. Incidentally, it was the choosing of this final date which caused the editors of the Union List of Newspapers, published in 1937, to begin their massive checklist with the year 1821.

In the summer of 1914 my vacation period was spent in a long journey through the Southern States and back through Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, Indiana, and Illinois. Subsequent trips to Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania were made in following summers. New England was near at hand and its libraries were frequently visited. In the far-away States my usual process was to cover the large libraries in the leading city or State capitol and then to hire an automobile to visit the smaller towns. In this way in the course of the entire undertaking I explored about

four hundred cities and towns this side of the Mississippi River and travelled about ten thousand miles. At least four different trips were made to the South and West to reexamine files or to visit towns previously omitted. As material was gathered, gradually the installments were printed in the *Proceedings* of this Society, the last being installment No. XVIII in the *Proceedings* of April, 1927.

As I look back upon the preparation of this Bibliography, I realize the immense amount of aid that I have received from numerous scholars interested in the publication. The late Professor Charles H. Hull, of Cornell, spent the winters of 1914 and 1915 in the South making a study of printed and manuscript resources of the States from Virginia to Louisiana. Entirely without solicitation he examined hundreds of Southern newspaper files to find material which might assist me in the work of compilation. The actual physical work must have taken him hundreds of hours and aided me in an immeasurable degree. For thirty years Joseph Gavit, of Albany, now associate librarian of the New York State Library, has written me hundreds of letters listing newspapers and recording information regarding printers. Another constant source of help has been Douglas C. McMurtrie, whose work in early American printing has made him a leading authority in that field. When I come to make acknowledgments to those who have assisted me, the list will constitute practically a roster of the heads of libraries, great and small, throughout the country. Most of those who helped me in the early stages of the Bibliography have long since passed away.

The correspondence as at present filed comprises about ten thousand letters, all arranged by State and town. Since these letters contain many facts not included in the Bibliography, and much additional material on newspapers pub-

lished after 1820, they will be carefully preserved for future reference.

Since the final installment was printed in the *Proceedings* for 1927, revision has been constantly in progress. The re-examination of known files, the discovery of new files, and especially extended research into the history of the newspapers have combined to make the earlier portions of the Bibliography almost unrecognizable. Furthermore, the decision has been made to list all files more in detail. Where previously it was deemed sufficient to describe a file as scattering or incomplete, in the revision the files are listed in detail, recording all dates and all omissions. Although this procedure rendered the list of far more value, it resulted in a great amount of time and labor, requiring in many cases revisiting such libraries as possessed the files. Further correspondence was also necessary. Even today with the Bibliography finished and nearly all typed, there are about two hundred unanswered letters, most of them to individual owners of newspapers who will need additional prodding.

A study of the Bibliography, now that it is finished, shows interesting statistical results. In the period from 1690 to 1820, there were 2120 different newspapers published. Of this total the six New England States had 447 papers, the six Middle Atlantic States from New York to Maryland had 1023 papers, the ten Southern States from Virginia to Louisiana had 425 papers, and the seven Western States had 225 papers. The city which from the beginning to 1820 had the most newspapers was New York with 138, followed by Philadelphia with 107, and Boston with 73.

The six largest collections of newspapers before 1820 are in the American Antiquarian Society which has 1492 titles, the Library of Congress with 936 titles, Harvard with 732 titles, the New York Historical Society with 634 titles, the New York Public Library with 480 titles, and the Wisconsin

Historical Society with 415 titles. Since the exact record is of some interest and shows where the largest number of newspapers of each State can be found, it is here appended in tabular form. When the Bibliography is finally printed, some minor changes will undoubtedly be necessary because of additions to files in the various libraries.

| | AAS | LC | HARV | NYHS | NYPL | WHS | TOTAL TITLES | NONE FOUND |
|--------|------|-----|------|------|------|-----|-----------------|---------------|
| Ala. | 7 | 6 | ... | ... | ... | 3 | 15 | 5 |
| Ark. | 1 | 1 | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | ... |
| Conn. | 73 | 47 | 39 | 33 | 29 | 21 | 78 | ... |
| Del. | 16 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 20 | 2 |
| D. C. | 32 | 28 | 17 | 10 | 8 | 12 | 37 | 3 |
| Fla. | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 2 | 1 |
| Ga. | 33 | 16 | 14 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 50 | 7 |
| Ill. | 3 | 4 | ... | ... | ... | ... | 5 | ... |
| Ind. | 10 | 5 | 1 | ... | ... | 1 | 20 | 2 |
| Ky. | 39 | 29 | 20 | 4 | 3 | 14 | 88 | 25 |
| La. | 12 | 5 | 7 | 2 | ... | 10 | 25 | 1 |
| Me. | 37 | 20 | 25 | 15 | 7 | 8 | 40 | ... |
| Md. | 59 | 43 | 36 | 25 | 19 | 24 | 93 | 9 |
| Mass. | 170 | 125 | 110 | 101 | 80 | 78 | 175 | 1 |
| Mich. | 2 | 1 | ... | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | ... |
| Miss. | 10 | 10 | 5 | 3 | 3 | ... | 19 | 2 |
| Mo. | 2 | 5 | ... | ... | 1 | 2 | 8 | 1 |
| N. H. | 63 | 50 | 38 | 41 | 27 | 16 | 68 | 1 |
| N. J. | 39 | 23 | 24 | 18 | 21 | 9 | 71 | 2 |
| N. Y. | 332 | 164 | 136 | 192 | 151 | 75 | 434 | 28 |
| N. C. | 41 | 19 | 18 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 62 | 6 |
| Ohio | 63 | 23 | 17 | 10 | 4 | 16 | 99 | 13 |
| Pa. | 227 | 128 | 89 | 91 | 55 | 45 | 368 | 57 |
| R. I. | 26 | 20 | 15 | 20 | 13 | 9 | 32 | 1 |
| S. C. | 36 | 25 | 17 | 12 | 9 | 17 | 59 | 8 |
| Tenn. | 16 | 19 | 5 | 1 | ... | 3 | 42 | 7 |
| Texas | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 2 | 1 |
| Vt. | 50 | 28 | 34 | 13 | 9 | 10 | 54 | 1 |
| Va. | 86 | 75 | 54 | 23 | 34 | 27 | 127 | 7 |
| W. Va. | 7 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 24 | 3 |
| | 1492 | 936 | 732 | 634 | 480 | 268 | 2120 | 194 |

As is shown in the above list, there are 194 newspapers, out of the total of 2120, of which not a single copy can be

located, although they are known to have existed. Furthermore, 196 newspapers are represented in the six libraries by unique issues, found in no other library in the country. In this category the American Antiquarian Society has 118, the Library of Congress has 34, Harvard has 26, the New York Historical Society has 9, the Wisconsin Historical Society has 6, and the New York Public Library has 3.

The mortality in newspapers before 1821 was notable. Over half of the total of 2120 papers in this period, to be exact, 1118 papers, expired before they had reached two years of existence, 1002 papers lived from two to four years, 541 from five to nine years, 302 from ten to nineteen years, 106 from twenty to twenty-nine years, 34 from thirty to thirty-nine years, 15 from forty to forty-nine years, and 10 continued from fifty to eighty-seven years. Of course this takes into account only the history of the papers before 1821, as many continued on for a long period after that year.

The newspaper which sustained the longest continuous publication during the period to 1820 was the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, which was published from 1728 to 1815, a total of 87 years. It is true that for several weeks during the Revolution, when the British troops occupied Philadelphia, the paper was forced temporarily to suspend, but it soon resumed publication, and with continuous volume numbering. The next paper in the line of succession was the *Maryland Gazette*, published for 75 years from 1745 to 1820. The practically complete file of this paper in the Maryland State Library is one of the outstanding files owned by any American library. Then follows the *Boston News-Letter*, published for 72 years from 1704 to 1776, the *New Hampshire Gazette* published for 64 years from 1756 to 1820, the *Newport Mercury* published for 62 years from 1758 to 1820, the *Providence Gazette* published for 58 years from 1762 to 1820, the *Connecticut Gazette* published at New London for 57

years from 1763 to 1820, the *Connecticut Courant* published at Hartford for 56 years from 1764 to 1820, the *Connecticut Journal* published at New Haven for 53 years from 1767 to 1820, and the *Pennsylvania Journal* published for 51 years from 1742 to 1793. This honor list comprises all the papers published continuously for over fifty years. It should be considered that so far as this schedule is concerned, the final date is 1820. Many of the papers continued long after that year and some even are published today, with a record of nearly two hundred years of continuous publication.

To the bibliographer unique titles, single years and short files are interesting, but to the researcher it is the long files which have historical value. The following statistical record shows the comparative size of the collections in the six largest libraries, so far as long files are concerned. In this record a library is credited with a file if it is continuous and at least 90% complete. Most of the files recorded are virtually complete, but the omission of a few issues in a year does not cause the exclusion of the file.

| | TOTAL | AAS | LC | NYHS | NYPL | HARV | WHS |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 2 to 4 years | 1002 | 323 | 236 | 146 | 90 | 104 | 85 |
| 5 to 9 years | 541 | 112 | 69 | 50 | 37 | 26 | 23 |
| 10 to 19 years | 302 | 61 | 34 | 21 | 12 | 7 | 10 |
| 20 to 29 years | 106 | 25 | 14 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| 30 to 39 years | 34 | 14 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 40 to 49 years | 15 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 50 years and over | 10 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| | | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | | 542 | 363 | 228 | 147 | 140 | 122 |

The above record of long continuous files concerns the holdings of only the six largest newspaper libraries. In many cases the longest and best file of a paper is to be found in a State or local historical society which possesses only the papers of its own locality. Yet it is also true that a great many papers are to be located in the best, and often the only, files

in one of the large national collections. This is certainly true of the Antiquarian Society collection which has more titles and more long files for at least a dozen States than are to be found in any one library in those States.

There are many and varying reasons for the size of the six national collections. The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, under the active guidance of Lyman C. Draper and Reuben G. Thwaites, built up a large collection during the last half of the nineteenth century, and its *Catalogue of Newspapers* published in 1911 is still one of the standard reference books on the subject. The Harvard University collection is chiefly strong for the years 1795 to 1808 when Christoph D. Ebeling was acquiring newspapers for his history of America. The purchase of the Ebeling collection in 1818 gave Harvard the largest known representation of papers for those thirteen years gathered by anyone. Ebeling obtained them from the Reverend William Bentley of Salem, and I often contrast them with the value of the files of German periodicals which Bentley received in return and which upon his death he left to the American Antiquarian Society. The New York Public Library and the New York Historical Society have always collected early newspapers and even in recent years have added constantly to their holdings. The Library of Congress, with unquestionably the largest existing collection of American newspapers, if one takes into account the papers of the last seventy-five years, has been actively acquiring newspapers for half a century past, and next to the Antiquarian Society, is stronger than any other library even in the early period.

The American Antiquarian Society collection was established, as everyone who is interested knows, by Isaiah Thomas, patriot printer of the Revolution and founder of this Society. He retained most of the newspapers which came to him through exchange for a long period, certainly

until 1801, when he turned the printing business over to his son. Then again, when he was preparing his *History of Printing in America*, he caused to be inserted in newspapers generally throughout the country a notice of his forthcoming work, in which he asked all printers to send him copies of their newspapers. He bought long important files when they came to his notice. Most of them were purchased in 1810, before any historical societies, with one exception, had been established. Some of the files were the *Boston Evening Post*, 1735-1775, which cost Mr. Thomas \$60; the *American Weekly Mercury*, 1719-1746, which cost \$70; the *New York Weekly Journal*, 1733-1751, which cost \$30; and the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 1735-1775, which cost \$180. The prices are startling compared with present-day values.

After Isaiah Thomas' death, the Antiquarian Society continued to acquire newspaper files, although only casually. During the last thirty-five years, since the present director has been in office, the purchase and exchange of newspapers has been one of our most important activities. In 1880, according to the list in the United States 1880 Census, the Society's collection of pre-1820 newspapers numbered 911 volumes. Today it numbers nearly 3000 volumes and portfolios. The collection certainly has been trebled for the period previous to 1820, and increased fourfold from 1821 to 1865. Also, about thirty currently issued files have been received and bound, these covering the entire country. For the period previous to 1821, a conservative estimate would be that the Society owns nearly half a million issues of newspapers, available for the use of the investigator.

At last this Bibliography, the result of so many years of labor, has been completed, and it is now necessary to find a sponsor to assume the cost of its printing. When Professor MacDonald told me thirty-two years ago that such a Bibliography was urgently needed by the historian, I be-

lieved him. I have never lost my faith in the value of newspapers as tools of research, and the constant use made of our files for thirty years has proved the thesis. The usefulness of newspapers as sources of historical study is often overlooked by libraries. Since they are difficult to acquire and since they take up considerable shelf room, they are frequently rejected in favor of source material not nearly so useful in research. I doubt whether any contemporary expression of printed opinion and fact, both for national and local history, measures up to the newspaper. No history of a town or city can be written without recourse to its newspapers. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries even the advertisements have unique value in social and economic study. In the wider fields of history, whether state or national, the whole trend of events is reported at regular intervals, in the printing of documents and letters, in the arguments of partisan communications, and in editorial opinion. The newspaper is omnivorous. Not only political history, but religious, educational and social history, find place in its pages. Literature, especially essays and poetry, was constantly supplied to its readers. If all the printed sources of history for a certain century or decade had to be destroyed save one, that which could be chosen with the greatest value to posterity would be a file of an important newspaper.

Respectfully submitted,

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For the Council

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