

THE NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, 1904-1909

By LOUIS R. WILSON

The North Carolina Library Association came into being largely as a result of the vital influence of Mrs. Annie Smith Ross who became Librarian of the Carnegie Library of Charlotte in November, 1902. In order to fit herself for her work, Mrs. Ross went to Atlanta and worked for several months with Miss Anne Wallace, Librarian of the Carnegie Library. There she caught the missionary spirit of Miss Wallace and her library associates who had felt the stimulation of the Conference of Librarians held in Atlanta in 1895, of the establishment of the Georgia Library Association and the Georgia Library Commission in 1897, of the meeting of the A.L.A. there in 1899, and of the grant by Mr. Carnegie in 1899 of \$125,000 for the erection of the Carnegie Library building.

Mrs. Ross returned from Atlanta surcharged with library enthusiasm and during the winter of 1903-04, she began correspondence with a number of North Carolina librarians concerning the possibility of organizing a state library association. The Greensboro *Daily Record* of May 5, 1904, carried the following news story concerning the matter.

TO MEET HERE

State Library Association Movement Finds Ready Favor

There is a marked interest throughout the State in the general development of the library idea.

The following circular letter will be sent out to libraries in all of the North Carolina towns, in pursuance of a movement begun some months ago:

"To the Librarians of North Carolina:

"My communication to the libraries in January in regard to the organization of a State library association met with such favor, it has been decided to call a meeting at the State Normal College, Greensboro, N. C., at 2:30 p.m., on May 14th, for the purpose of organizing. You are cordially invited to attend this meeting.

"Please notify Miss Annie Petty, librarian of the State Normal College, if you will attend. If it is not possible for you to attend, please notify her of your willingness to join the association. I believe this is the beginning of a great interest in library work in North Carolina.

"MRS. ANNIE SMITH ROSS."

Mrs. Ross's overtures were well received and at 3:00 P.M. on May 14, 1904, Mrs. Ross, Mr. J. P. Breedlove, Librarian of the Trinity College Library, Miss Bettie D. Caldwell, Librarian of the Greensboro Public Library, Mr. R. D. Douglas, an attorney of Greensboro, Miss Annie F. Petty, Librarian, and Dr. Charles D. McIver, President of the State Normal and Industrial College in Greensboro, and I met in the College Library for the purpose of organizing an association. Mrs. Ross was elected temporary Chairman and I served as Secretary. Mrs. Ross stated the purpose of the meeting. This was followed by a general discussion concerning the status of libraries of North Carolina; how an association could aid in their development; who should become members; and what provisions should be included in the constitution.

At the end of the discussion, I moved the formation of an association, the passage of the motion being followed by the adoption of the constitution and the election of the following officers: President—Mrs. Annie Smith Ross; First Vice President—Dr. Charles D. McIver; Second Vice President—Mr. J. A. Bivens; Secretary-Treasurer—Louis R. Wilson. Miss Petty, Mr. Breedlove, and Mr. Douglas were added to the President and Secretary-Treasurer to constitute an Executive Committee. Correspondence followed with other librarians, members of women's clubs, and educators during the summer, and the first meeting was scheduled for November 11-12 at the Colonial Club at Charlotte.

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The first annual meeting at Charlotte was highly successful. Thirty-two individuals had indicated before the meeting in May their desire to become members if an association were formed. Consequently, they were considered charter members. Between May and November 17 others had indicated their desire to be included. The Association, therefore, began with 49 members and it enjoyed the full support of the Charlotte Woman's Club and was entertained by the Trustees of the Charlotte Carnegie Library and by the Colonial and Country Clubs at various luncheons and receptions. The Charlotte press and local correspondents gave the meeting full publicity and added distinctly to the success of its initial activities.

The first session was held in the afternoon of the 11th, at which a distinctly professional atmosphere was added by the addresses of Miss Anne Wallace, Librarian of the Carnegie Library of Atlanta, and Mr. A. H. Hopkins, Librarian of the Louisville Public Library, on "The Necessity of Library Cooperation Among the Libraries of the South" and "Organization of the Public Library," respectively.

The evening session was largely attended. Acting-Mayor S. S. McNinch extended the address of welcome and Mr. D. A. Tompkins, a leading manufacturer of Charlotte, spoke briefly on "Libraries." Dr. John C. Kilgo, President of Trinity College, made the principal address on "The Library as an Educational Factor."

Other speakers on the 12th included Dr. Eben Alexander, Professor of Greek and Chairman of the Library Committee of the University of North Carolina, who spoke on "The College Library"; Mrs. Hugh A. Murrill, of the Woman's Club of Charlotte, on "The Library and the Woman's Club"; Mr. J. A. Bivins, Principal of the Trinity Park High School, of Durham, on "The Relation of the Public Library to the Public School." President Charles D. McIver could not be present, and I presented a paper on "Rural Libraries of North Carolina" and offered a resolution in support of the work of rural school libraries being established by Dr. J. Y. Joyner, Superintendent of Public Instruction of North Carolina. Mrs. Ross and I were reelected and Miss Wallace and Mr. Hopkins were elected to honorary membership in the Association.

The second annual meeting was not held in 1905 due to the holding of a Southern regional library meeting in Atlanta that year. It was held at the Olivia Raney Library in Raleigh April 27 and 28, 1906. It was attended by 25 members and 13 representatives from Southern States. Papers were presented by Mrs. Lindsay Patterson, of Winston-Salem, on "The Library and the Literary Clubs"; Dr. Edwin Mims, Professor of English at Trinity College, on "Public Libraries of North Carolina"; Superintendent E. P. Moses, of the city Schools of Raleigh, on "The Library and the Public School"; Dr. J. Y. Joyner, Superintendent of Public Instruction of North Carolina, on "Rural Libraries"; and myself, on "The Growth of Libraries in Five Years."

The visitors from the South, all of whom were elected to honorary membership, included Miss Ida J. Dacus, Librarian of Winthrop College, who spoke on "The College Library"; Mr. John P. Kennedy, State Librarian of Virginia, on "A State Library Commission"; and Miss Julia Rankin, Director of the Southern Library School of the Carnegie Library of Atlanta, on "Library Organization." Miss Rankin was accompanied by the first class of ten members of the Library School, many of whose names have been prominent in Southern library circles for many years.

The Association showed its commitment to constructive library promotion by adopting three recommendations: (1) To assist the North Carolina State Literary and Historical Association in seeking a new fireproof State Library building from the Legislature; (2) To invite the American Library Association to hold its meeting in 1907 in Asheville; and (3) To work for the establishment of a library commission by the Legislature. It adopted a formal resolution calling on the Legislature to provide funds for an

adequate fireproof building for the State Library and appointed the following members on special committees: To extend invitations to the A.L.A., suggested by Miss Grace McHenry Jones of Asheville—The President and Secretary; To secure the establishment of a library commission—Messrs. J. F. Wilkes, E. P. Wharton, Hon. M. O. Sherrill, and Louis R. Wilson.

The officers of the Association elected for the next year were: President—Mrs. Annie Smith Ross; First Vice President—Dr. C. D. McIver; Second Vice President—Mrs. Sol Weil; Secretary-Treasurer—Louis R. Wilson.

The Committee to extend the invitation to the American Library Association outlined its plans immediately, quickly established a working relationship with Mr. W. F. Randolph, Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce of Asheville, and with Mr. R. L. Vernon, District Passenger Agent of the Southern Railway in Charlotte; and secured letters from prominent Southern educators and leaders urging the holding of the conference in Asheville, and sent copies of them to members of the Executive Board and members of the Council of the A.L.A. It also bombarded the Executive Board and Council with descriptive booklets, folders, and post cards concerning the attractions of Asheville, Waynesville, Lake Toxaway, and other Western North Carolina towns and resorts. All of this publicity emphasized the stimulation to libraries and education generally which the meeting would produce in the South.

At the meeting of the A.L.A. at Narragansett Pier two months later, Mrs. Ross, Mr. Randolph, two representatives of the Southern Railway, and I presented the invitation to the Executive Board. We were joined by Miss Anne Wallace who had helped us pin big celluloid buttons of Mount Pisgah on the lapels of every member of the A.L.A. we could corral during the conference. Richmond, Virginia, was our principal Southern competitor and we won handily and the Association came to Asheville in late May, 1907.

The Asheville meeting gave the newly established State Association and the library movement in the South a vitality that they might otherwise never have attained. It was attended by 500 librarians and educational leaders from all parts of the Nation, with a large representation from the South. The old Battery Park Hotel served as headquarters, the officers of the State Association joining the Asheville local committee as hosts. Lieutenant Governor F. D. Winston delivered the address of welcome for the State, I the address for the State Association, and Judge Jeeter C. Pritchard the address for the local library.

Miss Wallace read a splendid paper on "The History of the Free Library Movement in the South Since 1899," which was accompanied by papers by Mr. R. J. Tighe, Superintendent of Schools in Asheville; by Professor W. P. Trent, of Columbia University, formerly Professor of English at Sewanee; and by librarians from several Southern States on various phases of library development in the region, including a fine summary by Mrs. Ross of library development in North Carolina. The paper by Miss Wallace had been written by her when she was on her vacation at Sorrento, Italy, where she had no reference materials at hand, but it set the style of many papers that have dealt with Southern conditions and objectives in the years since.

The North Carolina Library Association held three short sessions at Asheville in which it was joined by librarians from South Carolina who discussed the organization of an association for that State. The constitution was amended to provide for the separation of the offices of Secretary and Treasurer and to authorize the President and Secretary to select three members, the five to constitute the Executive Committee. The officers elected for the year were: President—Mrs. Annie Smith Ross; First Vice President—Mrs. Sol Weil; Second Vice President—Miss Annie F. Petty; Secretary—Louis R. Wilson; Treasurer—J. F. Wilkes; Executive Committee—President, Secretary, Mrs. Weil, E. P. Wharton, and J. P. Breedlove.

In addition to the librarians from South Carolina, the Association welcomed Mr. A. H. Hopkins and Miss Lutie E. Stearns, of the Free Library Commission of Wisconsin, to its second session; and at its final session it offered a special resolution commending Dr. Stephen B. Weeks for his work on the Bibliography of North Carolina history.

For all of the 75 members of the State Association who were in attendance at Asheville, the meeting of the A.L.A. was extremely inspiring and exciting. The State Association was formally affiliated with the A.L.A.; its members became acquainted with many of the library leaders of the country; and the publicity of the meeting skillfully handled by Mr. Don Gillis, of Asheville, gave all the libraries in the State a new sense of educational importance. In addition, many visits were arranged to the Vanderbilt estate, Mountain Meadows Inn, Rattle Snake Lodge on Craggy, and other points of interest around Asheville. The whole Association went on a drive to Strawberry Hill in West Asheville, where it was entertained at tea by Mrs. A. C. Bartlett. The post-conference trip of the A.L.A. included a visit to Lake Toxaway, and in addition to all the social activities, the conference staged an exciting political fight which resulted in the election of a candidate for the presidency other than the one placed in nomination by the Council.

Greensboro was host to the third annual meeting November 11 and 12, 1908. The Greensboro *Telegram* celebrated the event by bringing out a special section devoted to libraries which included sketches of 41 libraries and articles on a number of special aspects of North Carolina librarianship. The membership of the Association had grown to 100, and the program included addresses by Mrs. Lucy H. Robertson, President of Greensboro Female College; Dr. Stephen B. Weeks, author of *Libraries and Literature in the Eighteenth Century*; and a five-year summary of library development in North Carolina by Mrs. Annie Smith Ross, but read in her absence by Miss Annie F. Petty, Second Vice President. Miss Petty presided, and the Association appointed J. F. Wilkes, A. M. Scales, E. P. Wharton, and myself as a committee to work for the establishment of a library commission. The officers elected for the next year were: President—Miss Annie F. Petty; First Vice President—Mrs. Lindsay Patterson; Second Vice President—Mr. Ernest Cruikshank; Secretary—Louis R. Wilson; and Treasurer—J. F. Wilkes.

Work for the establishment of the Library Commission proved less spectacular but equally exciting and illuminating. Members of the first committee appointed in Raleigh in 1906 consisting of J. F. Wilkes, E. P. Wharton, M. O. Sherrill, and myself, met in Greensboro in the winter of 1906-07 with Mr. A. M. Scales who had secured the passage in 1897 of the Public Library Act. The first task of the Committee was to draft a bill for a Legislature that knew a minimum about libraries. The bill had to be conservative as to appropriations and politically safe. Best library theory and practice of the day demanded that a commission should be a separate organization and that it be administered by professionals and freed from political influence. It likewise should not be a subdivision of the State Library or of the State Department of Education. However, in order to gain the support of legislators, it was necessary to begin with what they were familiar with and build upon that. They knew that the two offices mentioned were concerned with providing useful information to State officers and legislators in conducting their offices and in drafting laws. They also knew that the Department of Education was responsible for the promotion of public education. Therefore, they were asked to support a measure which would create a commission on which the State Librarian and the Superintendent of Public Instruction would serve as *ex officio* members. The Library Association would appoint two other members and the Governor of the State a fifth member.

After the bill had been prepared in Greensboro, Mr. Wilkes and I took it to Raleigh and began to interest our friends in the Legislature in it. We consulted with various members but found little enthusiasm for it. The whole procedure of legislation was new

to us, and although we made two or three visits to Raleigh during the session, no substantial progress was made in its enactment. Legislative procedures, however, were learned, the knowledge of which was utilized in 1909.

In 1909 the measure came up for consideration again. In the two-year interval the Association had given constant publicity to library activities in the State. The A.L.A. meeting had been held in Asheville in 1907, and the meeting of the State Association in Greensboro in 1908 had been widely publicized in the Greensboro *Telegram* and the State press generally. A new committee consisting of Messrs. Wilkes, Scales, Wharton, and myself, was placed in charge, and steps were taken to commit legislators to work for its passage before the Legislature met. In Greensboro, where the bill had the strong backing of Miss Petty, the President, and of Messrs. Scales, Douglas, and Wharton, and Miss Bettie D. Caldwell, it was arranged that the bill should be introduced by Dr. J. R. Gordon, of Jamestown, an experienced, widely informed Representative from Guilford, who was Chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations. Mr. H. S. Williams, of Concord, and Mr. John Hinsdale, of Raleigh, were on the House Committee on Libraries and were favorable to the measure. The support of several Representatives and the Senator from Mecklenburg had also been secured by Charlotte librarians. Other librarians and friends exerted such influence as they could and in due course, under the skilled, influential guidance of Dr. Gordon, the bill received favorable consideration by the Committees on the Library and the Appropriations Committees.

But at this stage a hitch occurred which occasioned Mr. Wilkes and myself considerable discomfiture. Near the end of February Dr. Gordon had to return to his home, and the bill was seemingly but not actually left without Dr. Gordon's personal direction. At this point, I happened to be in Goldsboro and conferred with Mr. and Mrs. Sol Weil concerning measures to insure final passage. After I left Goldsboro, Mr. Weil secured the services of Mr. D. P. Stern, a lawyer in Greensboro, who went to Raleigh, ascertained the situation in which Dr. Gordon had temporarily left the measure, and kept in touch with it until the bill was ratified on March 8, carrying an appropriation of \$1500 and providing for the appointment of a professional librarian to serve under the direction of five Commissioners.

On the day the bill was passed Dr. Gordon sent Miss Petty, President of the Association, a postal card notifying her of its passage. She passed his message on to me by telephone. The news greatly surprised as well as pleased me, for it had seemed to Mr. Wilkes and myself, since we had seen no notice of its passage in the papers, that the bill had failed of passage in the final hectic days of the Legislature. We did not know what steps Dr. Gordon had taken in its behalf during his absence and we had had no report from Mr. Weil or Mr. Stern. But the bill was passed, and the Commission was to be a reality!

Shortly after the adjournment of the Legislature, Mrs. Ross and I, who had been appointed as members of the Commission by the State Association, called on Governor W. W. Kitchin in Raleigh, who appointed Dr. Charles Lee Smith, former President of Mercer University and a member of the firm of Edwards and Broughton, of Raleigh, as the third appointed member. Dr. J. Y. Joyner, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Hon. Miles O. Sherrill, State Librarian, were members *ex officio*, completing the full membership of five.

The Commission met formally in Raleigh on April 8, 1909, and elected the following officers: Louis R. Wilson, Chairman; Mrs. Annie Smith Ross, Secretary; and Dr. Charles Lee Smith, Treasurer. On April 9, the Commission met again, adopted by-laws for its procedures, and passed the following recommendations:

1. That the Chairman immediately prepare for the papers a statement concerning the purposes of the Commission.

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2. That upon the selection of a Field Secretary, the Commission prepare a bulletin or circular letter setting forth fully its proposed activities, and that it indicate the ways in which the public can best avail itself of its services.

3. That the Commission collect as far as it can, complete statistics of all libraries and library activities in the State.

4. That the Commission respond to all requests made upon the educators and librarians of the State, and especially by its Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Librarian for any help it may be able to give them in their work.

On motion of Dr. Joyner, the Executive Committee (consisting of the three officers) was authorized to employ a Field Secretary at a salary not to exceed \$75.00 per month, and to prescribe the duties and direct the work of such secretary.

Miss Minnie W. Leatherman, of the Louisville Public Library, was chosen later for the position and an office was secured for the Commission in the State Library.

The establishment of the Commission was reported by me to the North Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs at its meeting in Henderson, May 4, 5, and 6, 1909, and to the North Carolina Library Association at its meeting in Goldsboro, December 2 and 3, 1909. At the meeting of the Federation of Women's Clubs the traveling libraries of that organization were turned over to the Commission for use, their number to be supplemented by the Clubs and by the State when additional funds could be secured from the Legislature.

At the fifth annual meeting of the Association held in Goldsboro on December 2 and 3, 1909, three major events in the first years of the life of the Association had been successfully completed. The Association had been organized and had grown from 7 members on May 14, 1904 to 100. Many of the leading men and women of the State had participated in its activities. The American Library Association had held an inspiring meeting in Asheville which kindled enthusiasm for libraries not only in North Carolina but throughout the whole South. It had likewise brought North Carolina librarians into close contact with the library leaders of the Nation. And the North Carolina Library Commission, established and supported by the Legislature, had been brought into being as the promoter of library development for all the people of the State. The fifth annual meeting at Goldsboro consequently celebrated these fine accomplishments. The address of Dr. W. C. Jackson, Professor of History at the State Normal and Industrial College at Greensboro, on "The Work of the Modern Library," and of Miss Leatherman on "The Library Commission," summarized these accomplishments and pointed up their significance to North Carolina in the enrichment of its expanding life. A brighter day for the intellectual and cultural life of the State had dawned!