

NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES

Volume IV, Number 1 — February 1945

LOCAL HISTORY AND THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

By **NELLIE ROWE JONES**

Greensboro Public Library

All librarians find satisfaction in reporting a large circulation, and so they should. Equally as important as the handing of books over the desk, the majority being fiction, is the ability of the librarian to satisfy those library patrons who come seeking information of all types. This, of course, chiefly concerns the reference department, of which the local history collection is an invaluable part.

Mr. James I. Wyer, in his book, *Reference Work*, published by the American Library Association, has this to say: "Few though its books may be, there is yet one important subject of which every small library should have, and may have, whether other libraries do or not, the largest existing collection: the history of its town and region. Unless there is a live historical society in the town, it would seem to be a public library obligation to maintain with all possible zeal a local history collection. It can be built up at slight expense; the material is already in the community. The chief task is to bring it together, to arrange it attractively, and to get and to keep interested in its growth those people, found in every town, who care greatly for such a project. A collection as complete as it can be made, well kept and vigilantly enlarged, is a solid satisfaction and a proper pride for both library and community."

All the local occurrences in any given community, large or small, are of continuing interest to its citizens. Time enhances the value of both community and personal happenings. Collections of local history give careful writers the material from which they weave their worth-while stories. The life of another day can be reconstructed only from day by day occurrences of those times. Recorded history of the community fifty and a hundred years ago is indeed a treasure to those historians who cannot find material in published books. One should always remember that the happenings of today constitute the history of the future.

It is necessary that the libraries of each community collect every item of local history available in order to complete its own part in the picture. Local books, pamphlets, pictures, photographs, church and school histories, programs, bulletins, reports of public officials, handbills, and banquet menus all grow in value as time goes on. Newspapers, local, county and state, should be carefully read and articles of value clipped, sources and dates noted, and mounted on stiff paper. State magazines often have articles of great value. A biographical file is probably the most important part of a local collection. All possible material on the lives of those men and women who have made from the beginning and are now making your community what it is, should be carefully collected and filed under their names. Probably you have an outstanding writer, artist, musician or

scientist in your city. In Greensboro a complete file on O. Henry is kept in a special niche in the library. Here men and women come from all parts of the country to make use of the material when writing about the famous short-story writer.

More and more interest is being shown in family history. For this reason it is most important to keep rosters of military companies, including the present war records, marriage and death records, city directories, tombstone records and all family Bible records that you can collect. Early newspapers are priceless sources of this material. Call upon the older people of your community for historical material of all kinds, while you still have the opportunity.

For handling local history material, other than books, we have found a vertical file most practical. The newspaper articles, small pamphlets, typed material, etc., are placed in manila folders on which have been written the proper subject headings in alphabetical order. Subject Headings for the Information File by the Newark, N. J. Public Library (Modern American Library Economy Series), 6th rev. ed., H. W. Wilson, 1943, has proven a valuable guide. In the Greensboro library there is one file for Greensboro and Guilford county and another for North Carolina. Four drawers contain biographical material and there is a drawer for North Carolina counties and there are two drawers for North Carolina towns.

When a librarian is able to find material for a newspaper man or woman for a feature article, together with pictures to illustrate the article, you have won a friend for the library. When you are able to furnish a city official the names and dates of office of your mayors from the town's beginning you have won another friend. When your postmaster sends you an inquiry for information about some long-ago resident your assistance in tracing that person will be much appreciated. Club women and students use the local history for preparing papers. Many strangers make inquiries at the library for information about historical places in and around the community, while numbers of service men from far-away states have used the genealogical material to trace their ancestors who were natives of North Carolina.

Just now a prominent citizen is writing a history of one of the leading churches of the city. He spends hours in the library using the newspaper articles, pamphlets, early church rosters and manuscripts which have been carefully preserved through the years. Another talented writer is preparing a history of Greensboro College, and he, too, has spent much time using our local history collection in the preparation of his book. These instances are given as examples to show the value of collecting the historical material for your city, county and state. Start now before any more of the priceless records are lost forever.

PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE

Reviewed by ROSEANNE HUDSON

Woman's College Library, U.N.C.

Fortunately, the title of this column is sufficiently elastic to permit mention of a lively little volume entitled *Books, Children and Men*, by Paul Hazard (Horn Book, 1944, \$3). It is not, strictly

speaking, a history of children's literature though the facts are there. Rather, it is a sort of blow-by-blow description of the battle between children, trying to assert their individuality, and adults, seeking to force the youngsters to become small replicas of their elders. There is no doubt that in Mr. Hazard the children have a formidable and vocal champion. Although only a small portion of the book treats of children's literature in the United States, it is obvious that Mr. Hazard looks upon this country as a veritable child's paradise. Speaking of American libraries for children, he says, "They are better than a drawing room or a club. They are a home." While one may not always agree with Mr. Hazard's estimate of a particular book, one can't help being captivated by his sincerity, warmth, and vigor.

Catalogers will welcome the new (fifth) edition of Minnie Sears' *List of Subject Headings for Small Libraries* (Wilson, 1944, \$2.75). The introduction reveals that two hundred new subjects, many of them related to the war, have been added. Some old headings have been modified to conform with changes made by the Library of Congress. Brief explanatory notes define and illustrate the usage of various headings where there is a possible problem of interpretation. As in the fourth edition, Dewey classification numbers are included. The generous use of cross references makes it relatively simple to find a desired heading. The preliminary section entitled "Practical Suggestions for the Beginner in Subject Heading Work" is useful but would appear to be rather hard going for the novice unless it were explained by a librarian familiar with the assigning of subject headings. The list seems adequate, though undoubtedly librarians would have to make adaptations to fit their collections and patrons.

One of the problems common to most school and college libraries is that of the accumulation of pamphlet material to supplement text books. A handy aid to selection is the George Peabody College for Teachers bulletin, *Free and Inexpensive Learning Materials* (George Peabody College, 1944, \$.25). Titles are listed under a wide range of subjects with complete bibliographic information and a brief annotation for each. Librarians might do well to make copies available to teachers who are hard pressed to find condensed, graphic material to catch—and hold—the streamlined attention of the modern pupil.

Of particular interest to college librarians is Guy R. Lyle's *Administration of the College Library* (Wilson, 1944, \$4.50). The result of his experience in the field, his wide reading, and the application of his analytical mind to the varied problems of this phase of librarianship, the book is a gold mine of information. Sufficiently detailed to be of practical value, the length of the volume will not discourage the serious reader. Four chapters in the book were contributed by authorities in their fields. Arnold Trotter, Assistant Librarian of the University of Illinois, is the author of the chapter on cataloging and classification. Chapters on book selection and acquisition, and on the selection and acquisition of special types of materials were written by Paul Bixler, Librarian of Antioch. Marjorie Hood, Head of Circulation at Woman's College, wrote the section on circulation work. The book will appeal to library school students because it is lucid and sufficiently concrete to be within their comprehension. Excellent chapter bibliographies direct the student to the best professional literature on each subject, should he desire to do further reading. The more experienced librarian will be impressed by the penetration of the author's observations, and by his ability to relate each aspect of college library work to the total picture of campus library service. The college library is revealed, not as an independent, static institution, but as an integral part of the college, responsive to the changing needs of the faculty and students whom it serves.

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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Consistency, the epitome of perfection in the librarian's criteria, is sadly lacking in the N.C.L.A.'s own medium of expression: to the disgust of careful guardians the size of the magazine has changed; to the disgust of the editors the style of headings has varied; the home office has swung back and forth across the state with change of Association president; and, most important, the editors come and go with surprising frequency. Again change has come to the editor's block. As a new set-up takes command, they feel the absence of the energy, initiative, and vision of their former editor-in-chief. NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES won your vote of confidence at the 1943 biennial conference; help it perform its duty as the Association's mouthpiece by contributing suggestions, criticisms, news.

A.L.A. NEWS

Plans are under way for a campaign to extend library service effectively in the post-war years. In October, the American Library Association proposed to Congress and to the Surplus Property Administration that army camp libraries be turned over to the states to start rural libraries when the camps are closed. For North Carolina, a state low in books per capita, this is an opportunity not to be overlooked. Camp libraries have been used with profit by the men in the armed forces, who will return to civilian life with a better reading skill and taste which should be met by more and better books. A library must meet demobilization with definite plans for more attention to its service as an adult education center. The individual's need for easy access to the tools of learning must be filled by the community and the library is the logical instrument for such service.

The American Library Association now has a Division of Public Libraries comparable to the long-established Association of College and Reference Libraries. The Council voted favorably, for the second time, on October 13 on the petition of nearly 1200 members. An organization meeting was held October 15 with Carl Vitz as convener and temporary chairman.

Provisional officers were elected to serve until the first annual meeting with Amy Winslow, Cuyahoga County Library, Cleveland, as President.

Interested librarians may designate this Division, in paying their 1945 A.L.A. dues, as the one to which they wish 20 per cent of their dues to be paid. At the same time they may indicate membership in one of the following sections: Adult Education, Branch Librarians, Business and Technology, Lending, Large Public Libraries, Order and Book Selection, Service Librarians (Army and Navy), and Small Public Libraries. Other sections will undoubtedly be organized later, for example, medium-sized public libraries.

PUBLICITY BY RADIO

About two hundred small and medium sized public libraries are using the monthly series of radio spot announcements which are issued free of charge by the Public Relations Division of the American Library Association. Each series is concerned with one particular phase of public library activity. It is planned that over a long period of time all types of library work will be covered. The spots are general in tone, so that they may be used with little or no adaptation by any public library. In order to be added to the mailing list, a public library must make arrangements with its local radio station for use of the spots. A sample series may be obtained by writing to the American Library Association, 520 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago 11.

TAR HEEL LIBRARY NOTES

In January Ernestine Grafton, editor-in-chief of volume three of NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES, became head of the Extension Division of the State Library in Richmond, Va. Her

successor in the position of tri-county librarian of Person-Orange-Caswell is Mrs. Ethel Walker Whetstone.

In January the President and the Secretary of the Association attended the public hearing of the Joint Committee on Appropriations of the General Assembly when the need for an increased appropriation for State Aid for Public Libraries was presented. Miss Williamson, the secretary, who is Librarian of the Johnston County Public Library told of the benefits of state aid from the point of view of the local library. This request for an increased appropriation has been favorably received by committees.

Miss Akers, President of the Association, Mrs. Hawkins, Co-chairman of the Legislative Committee, Miss Beal of the Library Commission, and Miss Clyde Smith, Librarian of the Olivia Raney Library, Raleigh, represented the Association at the February meeting of the State Legislative Council.

The Summer Session of the School of Library Science of The University at Chapel Hill will present a modified program for 1945. The University's change from the quarter to the semester system, with the Summer Semester beginning July 2 and running through October, and certain other factors made changes necessary. The School will offer full courses in Young People's Book Selection and Children's Book Selection during the first term, July 2 through August 29. Miss Emily B. Meigs of the regular faculty will give both courses. They are open to students interested in the library science degree and also to those who desire work towards the Teacher-Librarian certificate.

Mr. Hoyt R. Galvin, Director of the Charlotte Public Library, has been appointed State Director for the nation-wide campaign in behalf of the Library Development Fund scheduled for April 1945. He was sent by the Association to the meeting called by the A.L.A. in Chicago during January.

A number of valuable books are being added to the Warrenton Public Library in memory of soldiers from the community who have lost their lives in the World War. The books are inscribed on the fly leaf with a dedication to the soldier and the name of the donor. This custom of books as memorials, inaugurated over twenty years ago, has been productive of many additions to the Warrenton Library. The Memorial Collection now numbers over a thousand volumes, carefully selected for their permanent value. The plan is publicized in the library's weekly column in a local newspaper. Recently the idea has been adopted in other neighboring towns in the Granville County Library at Oxford, the Granville Colored Library, and the Edgecombe Public Library at Tarboro. The Thomas Hackney Braswell Memorial Library at Rocky Mount has over 3,000 memorial volumes.

Fire destroyed the Caldwell County Library at Lenoir on December 18th and badly damaged the interior of the County Agricultural Building in which it was housed.

The family of Evelyn Boyd, assistant in the Charlotte Public Library, 1932-39, and acting director of Schools Service Department of Enoch Pratt Free Library, 1939-40, is establishing the Evelyn Boyd Memorial Library in the Christian Church of Winterville, the home of her brother, R. E. Boyd. Winterville has a small branch library from Greenville. The memorial library will consist mainly of children's books, the classics, church books and other serious reading for adults. Mr. and

Mrs. R. E. Boyd have had school library experience; they will be in charge of the collection and circulate books on Sunday mornings.

The Middle Button, character of Katherine Worth's book by that name and beloved by teen-age girls, died on December 5, 1944, at the age of 86. Maggie MacBryde Walthal, the real Middle Button, lived near Fayetteville in an old home which burned recently. She did not attend medical school nor become a physician but was head of the music department at Agnes Scott College for a time and, after her marriage, went as a missionary to China where she worked for twenty years.

Katherine Worth, born in Wilmington, is claimed as a North Carolina author although as Mrs. Walter Clyde Curry she now lives in Tennessee.

NORTH CAROLINA BIBLIOGRAPHY

Compiled by MARY L. THORNTON

Note: This is the second in a series of North Carolina bibliographies, the first appearing in the February, 1944, issue of NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES. Books are limited to those published during the past fifteen years.

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MEMBERSHIP NOTICE

NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES is sent to members of the Association. As of February 9, these consisted of:

- 165 librarians
- 37 institutions
- 25 board members
- 4 Friends of the Library and book salesmen

Are your associates, your Friends of the Library and board members included in the above count? Ask them.