

My Recollections and Some History of the Public Library of Arlington by Miss. Elizabeth J. Newton

(50 years Librarian) – Acc 1923.B.8 2/22/1930 Typed 7/26/17 by Volunteer O. Plimpton

The evolution of our Public Library has been interesting. When the present library building was dedicated in November, 1892, Dr. R. L. Hodgdon, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, gave a valuable sketch of the history of the Library up to that time, and I take the liberty of quoting from it and also from Judge Parmenter's printed article in *Arlington Past and Present*. "In 1807, shortly after Menotomy (or the northwest precinct of Cambridge) was incorporated as the town of West Cambridge there was formed the West Cambridge Social Library. This was a corporation in which each member held a share and paid an annual assessment. The library was kept at the house of some member from which the books were circulated among the subscribers. It contained histories, biographies, books of travels and such works as Pilgrim's Progress, Paradise Lost and Scott's novels. Mention is made of this library to indicate the taste of the people of that time because that library continued till after ours was established and finally became a part of ours.

In 1935, Dr. Ebenezer Learned, a physician of Hopkinton, N.H., left to the town \$100 by a clause in his will. Dr. Learned was a native of Medford, a graduate of Harvard College in 1787, and in his early life was a teacher in Menotomy. During his whole life, in addition to the performance of the duties of an exacting profession, he was active in promoting many good causes, especially that of education. The selectmen, ministers and physicians purchased the books as directed by Dr. Learned's will, established the library and then by common consent acted as trustees till, at a later date, the town elected trustees. In 1836 the West Cambridge Sewing Circle gave \$60 to increase the fund left by Dr. Learned on condition that all members of the Circle should have a right to the library granted them. This right was granted on the condition of the payment annually of a more nominal sum.

In 1837 the first appropriation by the town was made for the library when the town voted to appropriate \$30 annually for the increase of the juvenile library. The trustees at once voted that each family in town should have the right to take books from the library while the appropriation was continued; so in 1837 West Cambridge had a free public library open to everyone of its people. I can find no record of such an institution in any town in Massachusetts at that time. West Cambridge then has the honor of being the first town in the Commonwealth to have a free town library.

In 1843 the Social Library became a part of the Juvenile Library, and the town voted that "the books purchased with the money furnished by the State and town for District School libraries be placed in the Juvenile Library." In 1858 the library received a donation of the books of the West Cambridge Agricultural Association. In 1860 the appropriation for the library was made \$100 and soon after \$200. In 1870 the proceeds of the dog tax were voted for the first time to the library. That has been done annually since. The first two librarians kept the library at their homes _ Mr. Jonathan M. Dexter in January 1836, in his house which is the three-story house next to the railroad crossing on the south side of Arlington Ave, and Miss Sarah Estabrook in the old Adams house which stood at the corner of Mystic Street and Arlington Ave. Mr. Dexter's daughter Mary was chosen instead of her father in 1837, but she declined to serve.

In 1842 it was moved into the vestry of the First Congregational Church and then contained 545 volumes. In 1849 Miss Charlotte Cutter became librarian, and in 1851 Miss Helen M. Jarvis was appointed. In 1852 it was transferred to a small building where Rice's shoe store now stands. When

the Town House was completed in 1853 it was moved into that and remained there for more than thirty years until it had outgrown any room which was available. In 1861 Miss S. G. Stanwood was librarian. Regarding gifts up to that time, Dr. Hodgdon said: "The library has received many gifts of money and books. The first was a joint contribution of books by Hon. James Russell and Dr. Timothy Wellington. In 1853 Dr. Timothy Wellington who had been clerk of the trustees from the beginning, left a legacy of \$100, the same sum left by the founder. This was invested and the income is spent annually for the purchase of books." In this connection I may add that Mr. George Y. Wellington has told us that he trundled books in a wheelbarrow from his house to that of Mr. Dexter.

My earliest recollection of the Library, then called "The West Cambridge Juvenile Library" was in a small room on the second floor of the old Town House on the right of the staircase where Mrs. Eliza W. Locke was librarian. This was in 1865. A low railing separated the public from the shelves, and the small paper-covered catalogues were hardly more than lists. We called for the books by name, saying "Is such a book in!"

The following abstract from the By-laws shows how methods have changed. Article 7: "The library shall be opened every Saturday at 3 o'clock p.m. and closed at 8 o'clock. No person except the Librarian shall remove a book from the shelves, nor shall any person, except those in charge of the Library pace within the railing. Any person who has a right to use the Library may take one volume therefrom, and retain it four weeks, provided no family has more than three volumes at any one time. All books shall be returned on or before the Saturday preceding the first Monday in April. A fine of ten cents shall be imposed and demanded for every week a book is retained beyond the allotted time."

Mrs. Locke was succeeded by Miss Mary A. Green in 1866. In 1867 the name if the town being changed, the library was called "The Arlington Juvenile Library" and in 1871 it was moved down stairs to the first floor of the Town House back of the Town Clerk's office. In the report of that year, it was said "There is now a well-arranged room. Individuals can avail themselves of the use of the Library without endangering their lives. The room is well lighted, ventilated and warmed. There are some six alcoves, will adapted to the present necessities of the Library. The number who avail themselves of the use of the Library is constantly augmenting. Applications for books have therefore exceeded any former years. In order to render the Library more accessible, it is now under consideration whether it should not be opened twice per week."

In 1872 the name was again changed to "The Arlington Public Library" by vote of the Town. Miss Green resigned at the end of that year to be married in 1873 to Mr. George Guild. One of the Standing Committee spoke of the vacancy to a member of my family and I applied for the position which was given me a few days later. I began work in January 1873, Miss Green remaining also for a time to give the necessary instruction. I took care of the room which was heated by a stove until it was decided to add it to the duties of janitor John Henry Hartwell.

The Standing Committee, Dr. R. L. Hodgdon, Rev. Amos Harris and J. W. Peirce decided early in the year to open the Library every week day, the hours being 3 to 8 p.m. on Wednesday and Saturday, and 3 to 6 p.m. on other week days. My records at the end of the first year are somewhat doubtful as I say in a memorandum book that these were made before the Library was revised. It is safe to say, however, that the numbers of volumes were over 3,000. The books were covered and numbered, but I remember no special system until later. The records of books loaned were entered by their number in a large ledger with date, and each borrower had a card with name and number of page written on it. The

white paste board cards, measuring 6 ½ X 4 3/8ths inches were marketed off in spaces capable of holding 75 numbers of books. The borrower copied the numbers from a catalogue which had been made before 1873. In order to discover delinquents, it was necessary about once a month to examine each account in the large ledger, a tedious operation.

In 1874, a clock bought of Daniel Pratt's Sons and costing \$11.00 was added to the room. The same clock now hangs in the Stack room of the present building with a record of 56 years of service. The Standing Committee for 1874 were Dr. R. L. Hodgdon and Rev. G. W. Cutter, Rev. D. R. Grady, D.D. and Rev. G. W. Cutter gave their services also. The result was a large package of foolscap paper with material which had to be very carefully examined by the Librarian in arranging the alphabetical catalogue. The time spent on it was almost incalculable as mistakes are easily made by untrained workers. D. K. Jones also of Boston were the printers of the catalogue and did very good work. It was during this year, 1876, that the American Library Association was formed which marked the beginning of modern methods.

In 1878 we were visited by a library thief who stole four large books, having them charged to four members of his family. He offered to get a reference, but we did not require it then. We learned our lesson and have required it since. Soon afterwards the newspapers reported the thefts from other libraries probably by the same man. He was arrested, but we did not recover our books.

The records for 1879 mention the following Trustees as elected by the Town: John H. Hardy for one year. It was considered best this year not to close the Library for the annual inspection until the summer vacation when there are fewer borrowers. On Wednesday evenings the Town House was usually very quiet as the Town Clerk's office was closed. It was not an uncommon thing for tramps to come to the Library door while I was there alone, but they proved to be harmless. On one occasion in the early evening, I heard the uncertain footsteps of a heavy man going to the end of the corridor past my private door. There he fell, and after locking the door as quickly as possible, I looked from the other door to see him in a heap on the floor. Officer Hartwell appeared later and he took care of him. He proved to be one of the townsmen who had been imbibing too freely. I was frequently the last person to leave the building on Wednesday evenings and I locked the outside door with the large, heavy, brass key.

In 1880 we decided to change over our charging system from the ledger to a slip system where each week day was represented by a pass containing on slips the records of books issued with the date. Now cards were provided for borrowers on which the loan and return dates were stamped. This was a great improvement as it enabled more than one person to work at the counter at the same time, and the slips of delinquent borrowers were easily assembled in one pan.

As time went on, the question of assistance became very pressing as it was impossible for one person to exchange books at a crowded time without much waiting on the part of the borrowers. It was discouraging to see the books piled up, and after searching through lists of members to find nothing in. It was thought that no regular assistance could be afforded, but I called upon an occasional helper paying them from my own slender salary. With one exception, I was reimbursed later by the Trustees. The Misses Grace L. Whittemore, Olive Peirce and Elizabeth A. Day were among the helpers. On one busy afternoon, a Trustee took a seat in the rear of the stack room, watch in hand, to observe my assistant and myself at over counter work. We supposed that it was evident that we needed more help,

and were surprised to be told when he arose to go, that he could have selected the books more rapidly alone than we did together!

In 1881 a supplement to the catalogue was issued. Mr. Trowbridge's services in selecting books for the Library while a Trustee were very valuable as he knew so well what was desirable. In his report of 1881 he says: "The selection of so many books has been a matter of no little care and labor; among the multitude of new publications it is not always easy to decide what to choose, and what to reject. Sometimes the most valuable books are those for which there is least demand; while on the contrary the most popular are often the most ephemeral. Between these two extremes there is a large class of works which are both entertaining and instructive – biography, history, travels, popularized art and science, and fiction, which may be as true to life as history itself. Of this important medium class our new purchases will be found chiefly to consist. With a little care and oversight from sympathetic elders, the young may be induced to add to their lists more and more thoughtful works of literature, and to read fewer and better books.

I was much indebted to Mr. Trowbridge in those early days in the solving of various problems. In 1882 Miss Marion B. Fessenden kindly acted as substitute during my vacation in August, although comparatively new to the work; she became a regular assistant later. In 1883 Mr. John H. Hardy resigned from the Board of Trustees and was succeeded by Mr. James F. Parmenter who showed a keen interest in the practical workings of the Library and was a great assistance to us all.

A weekly delivery of books by basket to Arlington Heights was established during this year through the courtesy of the Postmaster Mr. G. B. Bailey. This was in the railway station and five years later, his daughter Miss Lucy G. Bailey took charge of the books. In December 1883, a much needed Card Catalogue was begun by Miss Myra Poland who went to the Newton Free Library for instructions from Miss Hannah James, Librarian. In January 1884, Miss Emily Buckman assisted in the work, taking full charge in August 1887, when Miss Poland removed from town to accept a library position in Wilkes-Barre, Pa, under Miss James who went there at the same time. The room occupied at first was the old library room across the corridor and there with the help of other printed catalogues, the work was started which developed into an index of the Library of incalculable value. A small-sized card was used and the library hand-writing was studied and mastered to a marked degree.

Miss M. Carrie Lawrence served as an assistant in 1883 in addition to Miss Fessenden. In 1884, the Library had quite outgrown its quarters and the Trustees had spoken in their reports of the great need of a Reading Room. The annual appropriation from the town, income from funds, and dog tax made a change possible and the townspeople, becoming interested, voted that the Library should be removed to Swan's Block which was done in July. I remember that Judge William G. Parmenter strongly favored the move. The hall was divided by low partitions into three rooms, the first serving as a waiting room and the second as a Reading Room. The remainder of the hall was used for the book stacks, cataloguing, and other library business.

The pay roll for 1884 included the names of Miss Jennie Scott, an evening Reading Room attendant, and the boys, Wm. H. Bacon and W. Lewis Clark, Jr., who were janitors and covered books. In 1885 Miss Mary L. Dupee began her services as assistant, continuing with us in the new building where I shall refer to her again. George C. Clark took the place of young Bacon this year. In 1887 and 1888 the new helpers were Mrs. B. L. Brooks, Miss Nellie G. Marston and Charles A. Clark. The Clark boy lost one of his fingers on one occasion as it was caught in the heavy street door.

In the report for 1888 the suggestion was made and has since been followed that "Any users of the Library who wishes to have a book bought can obtain at the desk a blank form of application." The book would be procured unless there is some special reason to the contrary. The person recommending it would be notified and given first chance to read it. The Library was first lighted with electricity December 6, 1888.

The next catalogue issued in January, 1889, was a consolidation of those of previous years, and separate lists and was known as an Author-and-title Dictionary Catalogue. It is difficult to estimate the amount of time and labor spent on a catalogue of this size in addition to everyday duties, and interruptions. The work should be accurately done if the catalogue is to serve its purpose. I had some trained assistance from my father who had been a printer by trade. Charles S. Parker & Son, whose office was then conveniently located in Swan's Block, took the matter in charge and issued a fine looking book. Libraries generally are discontinuing these catalogues on account of the expense. Our card catalogue was of greatest assistance in preparing it. Through the courtesy of Mr. Parker, short lists of new books added to the Library were printed in the Arlington Advocate which custom has been followed to the present day.

In the Town report for 1889 we read that by permission of the Selectmen a title-list added in 1889 is printed with this report. This alphabetical title-list was made up from those published in the Advocate, and in this way was circulated with the town Report. This custom was continued until 1901 when there was no longer room for it. From that time until 1922, we had a separate supplement printed. It was then considered too expensive. In March 1890, Miss Fessenden resigned. She had been a faithful assistant for eight years and to quote from the Trustees Report, "Her uniform courtesy and readiness to oblige as well as her diligent performance of duty, made her departure a subject of general regret."

Miss Nettie E. Barton served for a short time this year returning later for a long period in the new building, and Miss Edith A. Whittemore began her career first as a counter assistant and later as the competent head of the department. At Arlington Heights the weekly delivery of books in charge of Miss Lucy G. Bailey was continued until her removal from town in December, when Mr. H. S. Russell took her place. In 1891 on account of continued absence abroad, Mr. Trowbridge resigned from the Board of Trustees and was succeeded by Mr. Joseph C. Holmes of Arlington Heights. A Branch Reading Room was established in May of that year in Crescent Hall at the Heights with Miss. M. Macie Seabury as Librarian. It was conveniently supervised by Mr. Holmes. It was open three afternoons and evenings during the week, and a delivery of books from the main library was made twice a week.

In this year a legacy of \$5,000 was received from the estate of the late Deacon Henry Mott which was a welcome addition to our slender resources. The fund was temporarily invested in a loan to the town of Arlington at four percent interest. At this time the Trustees expressed their thanks to Mr. Charles S. Parker for his gift of a complete file of the Arlington Advocate from 1872 which has been continued to the present day, making valuable reference material for the student of local history.

In July 1891 in response to an invitation from members of my family in Europe, the Trustees kindly granted me a leave of absence to join the family until November. I saw something of Holland, Belgium and France, a most welcome change from everyday duties. In the Paris National Library I found the catalogue chained to the desks and I was given a printed form to show when I passed out my guide book belonging to myself and not to the Library.

New helpers for 1891 include the names of Misses Annie Ml. Barton, Deborah L. Cutter and Helen M. Tufts with her brother Russell D. Tufts. In eight years we enjoyed the spacious room which gave us plenty of air and light. Our rent was reduced by sub-letting ante-rooms. One of them was occupied by Dr. Julia Tolman who opened her Arlington office there. The patient public climbed the long staircase, but they found a pleasant Reading Room and willing helpers at the top.

Before leaving Swan's Block, I will mention a personal incident. While on my way home one dark, rainy night after nine o'clock, I was stopped on Pleasant Street by a man who said he had come from Belmont where someone had put poison in his tea, and he was in search of a doctor. I hesitated, but he seemed to be in a desperate condition, I conducted him first to Dr. Hodgdon, who was out, and then to Dr. Harris. The latter gave him a powder and said he had delirium tremens, asking me to show him the Police Station where he might spend the night. I escorted him to a point on Pleasant Street within sight of the Town House. He gave me the name of Frank Billings, 36 Middlesex Street, Lowell, Mass., who must be notified the next morning when the unfortunate man would be found dead. This proved to be unnecessary when the time came, as he was discharged and able to go on his way.

A few years later on a cold night in early spring, I saw an elderly woman without wraps wandering up Academy Street. With the aid of a woman physician who happened along, we conducted her to the house on the corner where she lived and was supposed to be under lock and key. We were told by the gentleman boarder that the woman's sister was probably out of town, but hourly expected. After waiting a long time, we led the woman upstairs to her bed. On the way we were startled to find the sister calmly seated in an upper room! When she realized the situation, the physician and I were excused and as we descended the stairs. The gentleman boarder exclaimed "This has been a comedy of errors and a tragedy of facts!" We did not have prohibition in those days.

The Red Letter year in the history of the Library was 1892, when Mrs. Maria C. Robbins of Brooklyn, N.Y., a native of this town, built and presented to the Town as a memorial to her husband Mr. Eli Robbins, also a native of the town, the present fine building (at a cost of \$150,000). She did not live to see its completion. Dr. R. L. Hodgdon, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, said in his dedicatory address: "This magnificent building says more of Mrs. Robbins than any words of mine can express. It will stand not only as a memorial to her husband, but as a monument to her generous nature which prompted the gift." Her nephew, Mr. Winfield Robbins, was of great assistance in carrying out her plans with good taste and judgement. A very necessary liberal endowment fund of \$50,000 was then made by her brother Mr. Eldridge Farmer, to be held by trustees for investment, the income of which was to help support the Library. Mr. Farmer also gave portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Robbins and of their two children. Daughters of Dr. Ebenezer Leonard, the founder, kindly presented a portrait of him. The building was accepted by the town September 29th and it was voted to change the name from the Arlington Public to the Robbins Library of Arlington.

The Library was closed at Swans Hall Oct 20th and opened in the new building for the delivery of books November 9th. The dedication took place November 29th at Robbins Library in the afternoon, and at First Parish Church in the evening. Supper was served in the vestry. Those who took part in the afternoon exercises were Rev. Charles H. Watson, D.D., Hon. John Q. A. Brackett, Mr. Winfield S. Durgin, Dr. R. L. Hodgdon, Hon. John D. Long, and Rev. Irving C. Tomlinson. Mrs. T. F. Dwight, Librarian of the Boston Public Library delivered the evening address and a chorus furnished music.

Dr. Hodgdon died about two months later, January 30, 1893. As he became a member of the Board of Trustees when he first came to West Cambridge in 1853, he was officially connected with the Library for nearly forty years. He regarded it as a kindred institution to the schools and constantly urged his fellow citizens to help support it. In the last year of his service he had the satisfaction of seeing the Library in a handsome building with a substantial endowment. In 1892 Miss Louise V. Marsh's name appears as assistant in the new building, and Edward Mears was janitor. Five boys were employed in the moving of books. They were Harry L. Eastman, Daniel Keleher, Charles G. Prescott Charles K. Bunker and H. Maxwell Brooks.

Up to this time there had been no classified system of the books, and Mrs. James Parmenter, foreseeing the necessity of such a system in the new building, gave much time to the study of the subject. Of the different systems in vogue, he chose Dewey's Decimal Classification with modification. This was a decided step in advance and was continued for over thirty years. In 1893 the number of trustees was increased to six as follows: Samuel C. Bushnell and Matthew Rowe for three years, James P. Parmenter and Frank W. Hodgdon for two years, Joseph C. Holmes and C. Nelson Blake for one year. Mr. Holmes said in his report "The increase in the number of trustees from three to six has been found very satisfactory. Two sub-committees were appointed, one on books and another on the building. Miss Dupee has been employed afternoons in the reading room not only to look after the room, but advise readers, especially children, and to assist them in obtaining the particular books needed. This task she has performed to the entire satisfaction of the Trustees and we trust of the public also. The continued interest of Mr. Winfield Robbins in the Library has been evinced by various valuable gifts during the year. Since this report was written, the Trustees have heard with deep regret of the death of Mr. Eldridge Farmer, whose noble endowment of the Library will be long remembered by the citizens of Arlington. A resolution was adopted at a meeting of the Trustees."

In 1894 the sum of \$100 to be expended for books was received from Mr. Henry Dexter of New York, son of Jonathan M. Dexter, our first Librarian. For the first time we had room enough to set apart a table in the Reading Room, especially for the new books where the public might see them before they were put into circulation. Miss Cora T. Kimball was one of our helpers this year. Our fine building attracted many visitors from all parts of the country, and was universally admired for the simplicity and elegance of its style. One of those most interested was Mrs. Peter Thacher, who, as Miss Betabrook, had the honor of being the second Librarian from 1839 to 1841, when the library was moved into his home, the old Adams house. She gave us as a curiosity a small pamphlet entitled "The Constitution of the West Cambridge Charitable and Reading Society" instituted the 19th of August, 1816. In 1894 it was said that "the Trustees have recently appointed a sub-committee consisting of Mr. Hodgdon and Mr. Blake for the purpose of receiving and caring for such articles of interest, especially those relating to local affairs, as the citizens may be disposed to place in its care." This led to the formation of the Arlington Historical Society organized December 7, 1897. A room in the basement was fitted up and served the purpose well until the Society secured the Jason Russell House.

In the report for 1895 mention is made of gifts of Mr. Winfield Robbins of the handsome bronze statues of Louise sixteenth time, representing the season, and a magnificent Louise fifteenth clock of brass and tortoise shell, which adorns the mantel over the fireplace in the Reading Room. Also it is noted that Miss Annie Barton after six years of faithful service, resigned in September to accept a position elsewhere. Her always cheerful face and willing spirit will not soon be forgotten." The vacant place was filled by Miss Angie V. Adams. The new assistants in 1976 were the Misses Helen K. Learned

and Josephine R. Fowle. Through suggestions from the Woman's Club and Improvement Society, the number of hours for opening the Library was increased on weekdays and the Reading Room was opened from 2:30 to 3:30 on Sunday afternoons. This was a much needed improvement for the accommodation of our patrons.

On Sunday afternoons there were two classes of visitors: the serious class who came for reading and study, and the others who made it a meeting-place for fun and frolic. The attendant in charge often found it a nerve-racking position. A part of the time we were allowed the help of a police officer. This year it was decided to issue a second card to be used for non-fiction only if desired, thus allowing the borrower to take two books at a time. This was much appreciated, and circulation was thereby increased.

The report for 1896 says – "We are indebted to Mr. Winfield Robbins for the gift of five large pictures to adorn the Reading Room. These are copies from paintings by distinguished French artists. The subjects are "At the Fountain," "Alexander and ??", "Columbus Received by the Sovereign of Spain on His Return from the Discovery of America," "Washington and the Siege of Yorktown," "Napoleon after the Battle of ??". At Christmas two other very interesting gifts were received from Mr. Robbins, a miniature of Franklin painted during his residence in France by Mme Le Brun, and a series of pictures on vellum, dating from the 15th century representing the parable of the Prodigal Son."

Our new helpers for 1897 were part-time workers in covering books and putting them and the shelves in order. They were Miss Edith C. Rice, Arthur L. Trowbridge, G.K.H. Bartlett, Mary H. Means and Charles Barry. In the report for 1898 it was said "After more than fourteen years of acceptable service during which she gave increasing satisfaction to the Trustees and to the public, Miss Mary L. Dupee sundered her connection with the Library Nov. 30, 1898." No-one knew better than the Librarian and her assistants how valuable Miss Dupee's services were, but her approaching marriage to Mr. C. H. Gannette was sufficient excuse for leaving. Miss Nettie G. Baston who had been with us eight years before, was appointed to succeed Miss Dupee in the Reading Room Dec. 1st, and Miss Rice became a regular member of the staff also. Our boy helpers were Stanley Smith and G. Hathaway Mills.

As there had been no catalogue printed since the classification of the Library, a new one largely for home use had become essential and the first section, a fiction list, was issued this year at the nominal price of ten cents a copy. The second section, a non-fiction list, was prepared in 1899 and offered at the same price, but comparatively few were sold. An extra helper, Miss Jennie M. Roden was employed in making this List.

The cost of the catalogue added to the heavy fixed charges for services, heating, lighting and repairs greatly restricted the funds for the purchases of books, and the Trustees could not meet the demands of the reading public. By paying a subscription of \$5 a year, we became a member of the Mass. Library Art Club that supplied us for a few weeks at a time with a great variety of pictures to hang on our walls. These interesting exhibitions were continued for about 25 years when they were given up for lack of space.

The Misses Niles of Arlington presented to the Library a large and handsome crayon portrait of Louisa M. Alcott. Mrs. Edward C. Turner paid for subscription and binding of the magazine *Mayflower Descendent* from vol. 1, 1899 for twenty-six years. By 1900 we accomplished along-desired result, the opening of the stack to the public. It was necessary to separate the juvenile books from the others, and

we had no children's room. As the second floor of the stack was not in immediate use, it did not take long to convert a part of it into a pleasant room which was opened on July 24th with Miss Louise V. Marsh in charge. It served its purpose well until the town increased in size. On September 11th the stack was opened to adults on the first floor. There were over 3000 more books circulated that year than during the year before, showing how much the change was appreciated. A new helper was Miss Alma Noyes and at Arlington Heights, Miss Alice S. White.

Mention is made in this and nearly every Report of books and pictures from Mr. Winfield Robbins. This year books were received from Mr. Henry Dexter of New York, son of our first librarian and a generous benefactor of the library. Also from Mr. Edwin S. Farmer, the J. Howell Crosby and a Neighborhood Book Club. A beautiful statue of Nydia, the blind girl of Pompeii, was presented by Mrs. S. G. Bushnell and stands in the rotunda.

Mr. Frank W. Hodgdon declined re-election in 1901 after serving as a Trustee for eight years. Mr. Walter B. Farmer was elected to fill the vacancy. Dr. Timothy Wellington and his Hodgdon successors therefore had the honorable record of unbroken connection with the Library from 1835 to 1901.

The many large cases received from Mr. Winfield Robbins as he travelled abroad contained not only books but hundreds of portraits engravings and other prints. As he became convinced that the art of engraving was passing, he seized every opportunity to make a collection for our Art Gallery which should be interesting and valuable. The Misses Robbins, his cousins, were especially interested and the work of assorting, mounting, cataloguing etc. was given into the hands of Miss Cairn who was well fitted for the position, and gave unsparingly of her time as long as she remained here. At her request, the work is being continued by Mrs. F. W. Achuff, who before her marriage had charge of the Department of Prints at the Art Institute of Chicago. The Librarian, Mrs. Spofford, hopes that by the time this work is completed there will be a suitable place for exhibiting various groups of the portraits from time to time. The large collection already prepared by Miss Cairn Robbins in the Art Gallery may be examined by adults who will be furnished with a catalogue upon application.

Our new associate for 1901 was Miss Harriet C. Mills. My recollections of the Town Clerk and Treasurer Messrs John R. Allen, B. Belmont Locke and Harvey S. Sears are very pleasant to recall as they always trusted one with the utmost courtesy, and library business obliged one to see them quite often. It was in the year 1901 that Mr. Locke's misplaced confidence in a clerk brought much suffering to all concerned. The receipt for fine money which I handed to the clerk was not credited to the library.

In 1902 there were two changes in our Board of Trustees. Dr. Charles A. Keegan took the place of Mr. Matthew Rowe who resigned after nine years of faithful service, and Mr. Arthur J. Wellington succeeded Mr. Walter B. Farmer who moved to Brookline. Mr. Wellington represented the fourth generation of his family members connected to the Library.

In 1902 and for several years, valuable books and magazines were given us, but the donors are too numerous to mention here owing to the length of this paper. The remaining history may not be written in detail, but from 1903-22 our assistants were the Misses Myra de N. Wood, Caroline D. Higgins, Marjorie Wood, M. Linda Black, Matilda K. Leetch, Mildred L. Marsh, Eva M. Smith, Nina L. Winn, Gertrude C. Rideout, Ruth Sampson, G. Louise Holt, Ella Sampson, Grace M. Champlin, Josephine D. Baker, Jennie Frost, Marietta Belt and Grace N. Ogilvie. Boy helpers were Arthur S. Freeman, Howard

E. Marsh, William S. Black, Richard H. Bird, John E. Cronin, John W. Gowen, Philip T. Robinson, Herbert L. Collins, Harry N. Masson, Patrick W. Canniff, Edward M. Bacon, who was a trusted Branch Manager and was drowned. Proctor Michelson succeeded him. Janitors were William T. Canniff, T. W. Hurley and James Sullivan in the main Library. Michael E. Callahan in Heights Branch and Henry T. Scannell in East Branch.

In 1904 the Library was greatly crippled by a loss of \$600 in its income largely due to a cut in the appropriation. The Trustees had only \$250 to spend for books that year, but in 1905 our appropriation of \$3,000 was restored to us. A contract was made with the Booklovers Library to supply 50 volumes of the latest fiction to be exchanged for others when desired. This was continued through 1906 both for the main Library and the Heights branch increasing the circulation in both places. Miss Deborah L. Cutter resigned July 31, 1905. She had been employed evenings as a Reading Room attendant since 1891, taking a lively interest in the Library in her declining years. She passed away in 1912.

In 1906 the Trustees regretted to announce the withdrawal from the Board of Mr. Joseph C. Holmes after 16 years of faithful service. Mr. Cyrus Dallin of Arlington Heights was chosen to succeed him. The Report says: "Reference work is carried on as usual under the direction of Miss Baston, who not only endeavors to assist all applicants, but acts in cooperation with teachers of the schools, sending them books for use in the school rooms, and keeping the reading tables at the Library well stocked with books on special topics." Miss Louise Marsh at this time was doing good work in the Children's Room, interesting the smaller ones with pictures, puzzles, etc.

On the 11th of October it was our privilege to entertain the Massachusetts Library Club. Mr. S. C. Bushnell, the Chairman of the Board, made a brief address at the morning session which was held in the Unitarian Church where a collation was served in the vestry. In the afternoon Mr. J. T. Trowbridge gave a reading from his works. We took great pleasure in receiving our many guests from his works. We took great pleasure in receiving our many guests at the Library which was much admired.

In the Centennial celebration on the first of June, 1907, the Library was represented by a float containing two fine paintings of the old Adams house which stood on the corner of the Avenue and Mystic St. It was while the Library was located here that it became a Free Public Library. The building was opened in the afternoon, receiving 300 visitors. From June 1 – 10, an exhibit of photographs of old houses and portraits with articles of historic value was arranged by Arlington Historical Society to celebrate the town's centennial anniversary. The Board was pleased to receive in 1907, a photograph from Mr. Trowbridge as a former trustee and keenly interested in the Library. It was framed and hung in the Catalogue Room later. Mr. Trowbridge passed away on February 12, 1916, aged 88 years.

In August, Miss Louise V. Marsh resigned from the Children's Room after rendering every satisfactory service in the Library for 15 years. Miss Edith G. Rice was given her position and as time went on she succeeded in interesting the children to a remarkable degree. It is possible to mention only the framed collection of autographs which hangs in the room. They were sent by favorite authors to the children in response to their requests for them. The subscription to the Booklover's Library being withdrawn at the end of 1906, thirty books, fiction and non-fiction, were sent to the Heights Branch from the Main Library for circulation beginning in June, 1907. They were exchanged for others occasionally. Through the kindness of the School Committee, the Heights Branch was moved temporarily from Crescent Hall to one of the unused rooms in the Locke Schoolhouse August 30th, 1909. It had to be moved again in 1913.

The Report for 1910 recorded the death of Mr. Winfield Robbins at Nice, France, November 5th, 1910. It said that "the pictures which have been framed and hung upon the walls are only a part of Mr. Robbins gift, and will excite the gratitude and pride of every citizen." Arlington is indeed fortunate to be the owners of this magnificent collection." Bronze busts of Washington and Franklin, small bronze statues of Dante and Virgil, the firefly statue, and 10 bronze medallions of American authors also came from Mr. Robbins. A plaster cast of the Madonna and Child was presented June 30, 1910, for the Children's Room by Miss Ethel L. Wellington.

The Report says: "On the 6th of September, 1910, our janitor, Mr. Edward Mease passed away after a long and faithful service of nearly 18 years. Mr. William T. Canniff was appointed in his place."

In July 1911, the Library was opened continually from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. except on Sundays and in August. The circulation was thereby increased.

By the will of Mr. Winfield Robbins, the generous gift of \$25,000 was made to care for and increase his splendid collection of prints. In 1912 it was voted to adopt the Postal Reserve System whereby a book will be reserved for a person by paying the cost of a postal card. On April 15th the bust of Mr. Winfield Robbins was placed in the Rotunda. It is made of white cassava marble, pedestal of carved grotto green marble by O. Spalmach, sculptor, Rome. On May 9th, Mrs. James A. Bailey, Jr. presented a handsome Sevres urn with pedestal of Mexican onyx marble. In the Report of 1913 it was said "After many years of able and faithful service, Mr. G. Nelson Blake resigned from the Board in October, the vacancy being filled December 8, 1918 by the election of Mr. William A. Muller. In parting with one of their number, who has never failed to do his share of their common work, the Trustees wish to put on record their sense of the value of Mr. Blake's services to the citizens of the town.

As the School Committee required the use of the large room which they had continuously placed at the service of the Branch Library at the Heights, it was moved in October, 1913, into smaller quarters in the same building. It was too small for a Reading Room, but has served for the delivery of books. We hope that the day is not distant when a suitable place will be provided for the Branch. At the main Library, a long needed telephone was installed this year.

In response to a request from Mr. Scully, Sup't of Schools, that we should instruct High School pupils about the use of the Library, Miss Baston gave a series of talks to different pupils in the forenoon beginning January, 1913. A teacher came with them.

The American Library Association founded in 1876 has held annual conferences since in different parts of the country and abroad. We were able to attend only a few of these meetings on account of the expense, but in May, 1914 I enjoyed going to Washington, D.C. The Massachusetts Library Club, meeting generally in this state, has given us many opportunities to visit interesting places in New England and to profit by information and discussions. As one result monthly staff meetings started by the Librarian and her assistants, were continued for a time in the building from 9 to 10 a.m. In 1915, the Trustees ordered of Mr. Doane, photographer, a beautiful volume of photographs of the Arlington Pageant of 1913 and in the next year Mr. W. G. Marshall presented a handsome set of 64 Pageant postcards from the Litchfield Studio. These will be of great and increasing value in the future.

In the Report for 1916, it was said, "The death of Mr. J. T. Trowbridge on the 12th of February, removed from our midst not only a highly esteemed citizen of Arlington but a famous member of our

Board of Trustees when the Board consisted of only three individuals." On November 23rd of this year, a so-called group meeting was held on the Catalogue Room of the Library. The towns represented were Lexington, Belmont, Cambridge, Somerville, Chelsea and Winthrop. Miss Mahoney, Director of the Book Shop for Boys and Girls in Boston told how the movement for better reading was started, which resulted in opening the shop in October. At the close of the meeting, the visitors were invited to inspect the print collection in the art gallery, the new Town Hall and Memorial Park.

An interesting exhibit of water color paintings by H. Louis Gleason of Arlington Heights, took place December 13-26, 1916. In acknowledgment of the privilege we were allowed to select one which hangs on our walls. The eastern end of the Town having grown rapidly, the Trustees felt that the time had come when the East Arlington branch library should be established. A large and well-lighted room in the basement of the Crosby School was secured, and on February 15, 1917, the Branch was opened for use with Miss Mildred L. Marsh in charge. "After serving for seven months, she resigned September 22nd to take an office position in Boston and Miss Eva M. Smith took her place. Miss Marsh rendered important service in the establishment of the Branch and will be gratefully remembered in connection with it." Taxi-cabs were employed in transporting books to both branches. Later in 1924, the Branch was obliged to be moved into another basement room on account of the crowded condition of the school. In the spacious and attractively furnished new room, Miss Smith is doing excellent work.

In this year the Book Committee decided to have covers discontinued on books in the Children's Room, thereby making the shelves more attractive. Covers had been kept for sanitary reasons, but the individuality of the book was sacrificed. In trying to cooperate with the authorities in the matter of book conservation this year, books and pamphlets relating to the subject were put on a shelf by themselves and reserved for reference.

The Librarian was Treasurer for Arlington's share of the million dollar fund for Camp Libraries when \$750, the amount asked for was raised. From 1917 – 1919 there was an urgent appeal to libraries to collect and send books and magazines to soldiers and sailors. We responded with thousands of copies. Miss M. Linda Black resigned December 1, 1917, after ten years of faithful service. She accepted a position in the Library of the Twentieth Century Club in Boston, and in 1927 became Librarian of the United States Court of Appeals. Early in 1917 a box of library art treasures was received from Mrs. N. C. Nash of Cambridge and the name of Mrs. E. L. Turner constantly appears in the reports as a generous giver of books to the Library. Owing to a coal shortage, the Main Library and Heights Branch were closed for a few days at the end of the year. We also used fewer lights in the evening.

In 1918 the Library was closed from September 27 to October 18 on account of the influenza epidemic. A collection of German and French war souvenirs was presented to the Town this year by Lieut. Harold L. Frost and exhibited in the Reading Room. Miss Nina L. Winn, after a service of four years with us, accepted a position in Somerville Public Library as an assistant November 25. She now has an advanced position in the Framingham Public Library. Miss Ruth Sampson, who had been a substitute in East Branch, began work in the Main Library on Nov. 17th. Among other duties she took charge of the basket containing the books sent to the Branches. She now holds the important position of Cataloguer.

A machine used for counting circulation had to be discarded in May 1918. It had been in use for about forty years. Colonel T. A. Dwyer of 53rd Railway Artillery (Regular) presented to the Library, February 15, 1919, a German infantry rifle taken near Mancourt (?) east of the Meuse River, during the advance of the American First Army, November 8, 1918. Col Dwyer lived on Irving St. in 1919.

The long time Chairman of our Board of Trustees, Rev. Samuel C. Bushnell, was obliged to resign early in 1920 on account of his removal from Town. He first became a member in 1893 and served continuously since then. It was said "His good judgement and broad-mindedness together with his knowledge of books and interest in the Library have made his services of unusual value to the Town during this long term of years." In September, 1920, Mrs. Lucius M. Stanton of New York kindly sent us framed photographs of Mr. and Mrs. Eli Robbins, which she said were the best she ever saw of them. They were placed in the Librarian's Room. "Children's Book Week" was started by Miss Rice in the Children's Room, November 15th, 1920. The exhibit in later years was enlarged and shown on the first floor, the purpose being to encourage the home reading of good books for children.

In 1921 Mr. Bushnell was succeeded in the Board by Miss Caira Robbins. William T. Conniff resigned his janitor's position in July, serving willingly and well for nearly 11 years. He was followed by T. W. Hurley who resigned in 1922 in favor of James Sullivan, the present efficient janitor. Early in that year, Judge James P. Parmenter resigned his membership on the Board, and Miss. M. Helen Teele was elected to fill the vacancy on March 6th. Judge Parmenter service was the longest of any other Trustees – 39 years. There were many problems in the management of the Library which he helped to solve, and as a member of the Book Committee his taste and good judgement were invaluable. In addition to this, I have spoken of his modification of the Dewey System of Classification to which he gave much thought and time. In all the changes he had an important part and no-one has been more interested in seeing the growth of the institution from 1883 to the present time.

"At the suggestion of the Bureau of Education, Miss Rice used the State Certificate Reading Lists among 25 school children of different grades. Much interest was shown, the children writing brief reports of books read, and receiving a certificate which was displayed in the room later." The Inter-Library loan system was in operation for a few years before 1922, and constantly increased. Mrs. E. C. Prescott presented to the Library, September 9, 1922, an Album of Etchings in 25 parts and Mrs. Harold Rice gave on October 11th, 310 Post Cards of different countries. In the Report of 1923 we find another change in the Board. Mrs. Therese N. Turner being elected in place of Miss Caira Robbins resigned.

On May 1st, the Trustees gave a public reception to the Librarian in honor of her fifty years of service. To quote from the Report, "The reception was held in the Reading Room of the Library and an orchestra provided music for the occasion. The Chairman Mr. Muller presided and the speakers were Judge J. P. Parmenter, Rev. S. C. Bushnell and Charles F. D. Belden, Librarian of Boston Public Library. Mr. Belden gave a fine address, indicating what a Library should stand for in the community. Mr. Cyrus G. Dallin presented Miss Newton with a purse of \$1000 in gold, given by the people of Arlington." Mr. Dallin remarked in his speech that the Librarian had found the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow which every child hopes to find. I responded with a weak "Thank you" which was meant for all the good people of Arlington who had treated me so generously, but there was no radio at hand to broadcast it. In addition to this, before the reception, the associates had presented me with a ten dollar gold piece.

On account of continued ill health, Miss Nettie E. Baston retired from her position as Reference Librarian on December 12th, 1923. On December 1st, she had completed 25 years of devoted service and the Trustees and Librarian accepted her resignation with regret. Besides the reference work, she was called upon to serve in other departments, giving special help to the Librarian at times. She was prompt, faithful and efficient.

In 1924 Miss Emily Buckman who served the Library as Card Cataloguer for 41 years retired December 1st. Her knowledge of books and ability to classify them, together with her finally written catalogue cards, made her a valuable assistant. Beginning with December, 1924, the Trustees decided to close the building on Sundays partly on account of the expense. The next year the Trustees wrote, "It is with deep regret that we report the death of our co-trustee De. Charles A. Keegan in January 1923. Mr. Keegan was first elected a member of the Board in March, 1902 and has served since that date. His interest in affairs of the Library was sincere and active and the Trustees desire to place on record their high esteem of him as a citizen and their appreciation of his splendid cooperation in all matters pertaining to the welfare of the Library. On February 2nd, 1925, the vacancy was filled by the election of Dr. Charles J. Walsh."

Miss Matilda K. Leetch, who served faithfully in various capacities for 18 years, passed away December 26, 1925. The resignation of Edith C. Rice was reluctantly accepted in 1926 as she was unable to continue longer. She had served 28 years, filling different positions and finally most successful work in the Children's Room. Miss M. Macie Seabury, Branch Librarian at the Heights for 37 years, was forced to resign in June, 1928 on account of ill health. She had many difficulties to overcome in that long term of years, but she succeeded in supplying the wants of her people as far as she was able.

From 1924 to 1927 various changes were made in the work of the Librarian, including a leave of absence on an interesting southern trip. In the spring of 1928 her work ceased and she was honored with the title of Librarian Emeritus – an honor to be proud of. In conclusion, a few statistics may be given: Number of volumes in the Library, December, 1873, 3,200 approximately. In 1923, 32,300. Number of books loaned in 1873 -15,597. In 1923 – 62,028. Fines paid to Town Treasurer in 1873: \$48.79. In 1923: \$715.50. Librarian's salary for 1873 - \$267.30. Gradually increased to \$1,000 in 1920.

This paper would not be complete without a word of appreciation of the pleasant relations existing between the several assistants and the Librarian and the kindness of the Board of Trustees, especially the present board, consisting of Messrs. W. A. Muller, C. G. Dallin, A. J. Wellington, C. J. Walsh, Miss M. H. Teele, and Mrs. T. N. Turner. In addition to this, the sympathy and helpfulness of various townspeople, including the three Robbins sisters, will never be forgotten.

Elizabeth J. Newton. February 25th, 1930