

EARLY LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT IN WASHINGTON

Fifty years ago at the Philadelphia Centennial, the American Library Association was founded. In that year the United States Bureau of Education published a most important report upon the *Public Libraries in the United States, Their History, Condition and Management*. This report gave statistics of all public libraries having three hundred volumes and over. According to this report the Pacific Coast had 103 libraries located as follows: California 86, Oregon 14, Washington 2, Alaska 1.

In the fifty years that have elapsed since 1876, great progress in Washington has been inevitable. That progress has been almost wholly confined, however, to the period since Statehood. The first law making possible the levying of a tax for the support of public libraries was not passed until 1890, the year after Washington became a State. Since that time there has been a development of libraries within the State keeping a fair pace with its growth in population and wealth.

The notes prepared for this paper have been purposely confined to the Territorial period, 1853-1889. In 1853, when the territory north of the Columbia was cut off from Oregon the white population of the entire Territory was but 3,965 white people, or about one-half of the present yearly attendance of the University of Washington. The growth in numbers moreover was very slow until the coming of the railroads beginning with the later 80's. It is small wonder that a survey of Territorial libraries reveals the number to be few and the size to be small.

Washington Territorial Library

The first library to be established in Washington Territory was the Territorial Library. The Organic Act of March 2, 1853, appropriated \$5,000 for the purchase of books and this money was expended by Isaac I. Stevens before he left the East to take up his post as first Governor. In Governor Stevens' first Message to the Legislature, he reported that 1,850 volumes had already arrived and that the remainder on the way would bring the number to about 2,000 volumes. These books were carefully chosen and made an excellent beginning to what became the most important library during the entire Territorial period. In passing it may be noted that Congress had made similar appropriations for other

Territories. Wisconsin was given \$5,000 in 1836, "for the use of the legislature and the Supreme Court". An equal sum was granted to Oregon in 1848 and to New Mexico in 1850.

An excellent short account of the history of the State Library has been compiled by Mr. J. M. Hitt, the present State Librarian, and is available in printed form in the *Report on a Survey of State Supported Library Activities* (Olympia, 1917) pages 43-45. There is also much documentary material relating to the history of this Library in the Legislative Journals and official reports of the State. In October, 1889, the number of volumes had grown to 10,448 and the Library was in charge of Eleanor Sharp Stevenson.

Steilacoom Library Association

The next library established was that of the Steilacoom Library Association. This was incorporated on February 3, 1858, and is in many ways the most interesting of the subscription libraries of the Territory. A *Constitution and By-Laws* (Steilacoom, *Puget Sound Herald* Office, 1860,) was printed in a 12-page pamphlet. The duties of the officers were here set forth in detail. Dues were 25 cents per month and admission was \$5.00. The purpose of the Association is thus stated: "The object of the Association shall be the diffusion of useful knowledge and sound morality: First, by establishing a library; Secondly, a Reading Room; Thirdly, by procuring Public Lectures, Essays, and establishing Debates".

This Library flourished successfully for several years. At the end of the first nine months \$300.00 had already been expended for books and an equal amount of money was in the hands of the treasurer. Money was raised by balls and other entertainments. Many public lectures and debates were given.

As the importance of Steilacoom dwindled, interest in the Library waned. An effort was made in 1895 to revive the Association and a new constitution and by-laws was framed. Papers were prepared placing the books in the custody of the Principal of the Steilacoom Academy.

A permanent revival of the Association failed and in February 1908, the property of the Association was deeded to Thomas W. Prosch, of Seattle, in accordance with a bill of sale now in possession of the University of Washington Library. This instrument recites that:

"We Chas. Prosch, of Seattle, and Ezra Meeker, also of Se-

attle, the only members of the Steilacoom Library Association, organized in March, 1858, in accordance with an Act of the Territorial Legislature of February 3, 1858, as the parties of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of one dollar lawful money of the United States of America, to them in hand paid by Thomas W. Prosch of Seattle, and for other considerations of a proper character, he being the party of the second part . . . do by these presents grant, bargain, sell and convey unto the party of the second part . . . all of the books, papers, pamphlets, case, furniture, records, and other things pertaining to the Steilacoom Library and the Steilacoom Library Association, now stored in the town of Steilacoom, unused by the public they were intended to serve and consequently of lessened and constantly lessening value . . . to have and to hold the same to the party of the second part his executors, administrators and assigns forever.

“Signed,

Charles Prosch
Ezra Meeker”

Affidavit attested by C. B. Bagley, Notary Public, on Feb. 24, 1908.

The document just cited was turned over to the University of Washington Library in a collection of manuscripts donated by Edith Prosch after the death of her father, Thomas W. Prosch. I have been unable to learn what volumes formerly belonging to the Steilacoom Library Association were acquired by Mr. Prosch, or where any of them may be at this time.

Next in chronological order comes the shadowy beginning of the University of Washington Library.

University of Washington Library

The history of the University of Washington Library dates from November 11, 1862. On that date the first regular meeting of the first Board of Regents was held and Samuel F. Coombs of Seattle was elected Librarian.¹

As the first Librarian of the University of Washington, a few words regarding Mr. Coombs may not be out of place. He came to Puget Sound in 1859 and taught school at Port Madison, having among his pupils Cornelius and Clarence Hanford. The next year, 1860, he came to Seattle where for many years he was

¹ *Journal of the House of Representatives 10th Session, (Olympia, 1863.) Appendix, p. v.*

chiefly employed as a clerk in Yesler's store. At the time of his appointment as librarian, Mr. Coombs was Postmaster of Seattle, having been appointed March 25, 1862, and holding the office until relieved by Gardner Kellogg, in the following year. In 1863, Mr. Coombs became Secretary of the King County Agricultural Society. In 1864, he was awarded a prize at the King County Fair for beer and porter which he exhibited. In 1865, Seattle got its first charter and Mr. Coombs was made Committing Magistrate. For several years during the sixties he ran the New Terminus Hotel. In 1873, he was one of the incorporators of the Seattle and Walla Walla Railroad and Transportation Company, and, from 1884-1888, he was Warden of the United States Penitentiary at McNeil's Island. He was a good penman and proved a handy man in many clerical capacities. He was justice of the peace and a student of Indian languages and customs. He compiled the *Dictionary of the Chinook Jargon* issued by Lowman and Hanford in 1891, and furnished the information regarding Chief Seattle which appears in Costello's *The Siwash*. His term of office as Librarian of the University was for one year only, but I have been unable to gather any information in regard to his services in that capacity.

The first record I have been able to find in regard to books appears in the *House Journal* for 1865 where a Committee appointed to investigate the University has this to say: "The library is very small and of little value; but on account of the low state of funds of the University and the high price of books at present, we are of the opinion the interest of the University would not be advanced by a further expenditure for books."²

Two years later, on April 1, 1867, Mr. Whitworth as President of the University, presented a list of University property; also a report in relation to the library, cook stove, etc. He also made a statement of crockery taken away from the University boarding house.

"On motion it was ordered that the President cause the books in the library to be properly marked and numbered, and to allow no books to be taken out hereafter, except by the students or teachers in actual attendance, and that the President take such steps as he may deem necessary to recover all the books which are now missing, and to charge all books hereafter to the parties who may take them." Evidence that the President made an effort

² *Washington House Journal*, 1865, p. 151.

to secure the return of books is shown by the approval by the Board at the meeting of October 12, 1867, of a bill of \$3.00 to cover an advertisement in the *Seattle Gazette* asking for the return of "books missing from the Library".³

The first mention that I have discovered of the actual number of volumes is that to be found in the *Report of the Board of Regents for 1871* in which President Hall estimates the number at about three hundred and fifty volumes.⁴ The University grew but slowly. It was not until 1876, fifteen years after founding, that the first graduate received her diploma.

The library likewise grew slowly. President Anderson in 1881 reported to his Board: "In September, 1877, when the writer took charge, the library consisted of 162 bound volumes and no pamphlets; but now contains 436 bound volumes and 308 pamphlets. The increase has arisen from the following sources: Lost books found, books donated by friends, books purchased with money arising from a small library fee and fines, books published by the general government and obtained through Delegates Jacobs and Brents, and also reference books purchased with money appropriated by the Legislature in 1879. In addition to the University Library, students have access to some 1350 bound volumes and 500 pamphlets, placed in the keeping of the authorities of the University by the Seattle Library Association."⁵

The catalogue of the University for 1880 states that "Since the issue of the last *Catalogue*, there have been added to the Library one hundred and fifty volumes, including fifty valuable reference books." A sidelight to the character of the University and its standard of teaching may be seen in the following paragraph drawn from the same *Catalogue* (1880, p. 16) "The Institution aims to be parental in government, to insist upon a high standard of character and scholarship, and to teach simply the true and the right without bias for sect, party or infidel."

In the next year's *Catalogue*⁶ published in 1881, the following statement is made: "Until early in the last college year, one room sufficed to hold both Library and Cabinet. Now two rooms are necessary. Including the Seattle City Library, which has been given in charge to the University, students have access to 1800 bound volumes and 800 pamphlets. The Librarian, Mr. L. F. An-

3 *Washington House Journal*, 1867, pp. 104, 107.

4 *Washington House Journal*, 1871, p. 188.

5 *Report of the Board of Regents of the Territorial University of the Territory of Washington*, (Olympia: Bagley, 1881,) p. 11.

6 *The Register* for 1880-1881.

derson, will always be ready to gratefully acknowledge the receipt of any good book or pamphlet donated to the University Library." (Page 13) It is indicated in the same catalogue that a library fee of 25 cents per term was being charged.

Two years later, it is stated that "The shelving capacity of the Library has been largely increased during the present year and the books classified and systematically arranged. Several volumes have been added, so that now the students have access to about 2,000 volumes and 800 pamphlets and periodicals."⁷

The catalogue for 1885 gives the number of volumes as 2,500 and states that \$140 had been raised for the Library during the past year by means of a lecture course given in the University chapel. "Hereafter students and teachers will have access to the Library free of charge."⁸

The *Report of the Board of Regents* for 1887 gives the size of the library as 2500 bound volumes and 800 pamphlets and its value as \$3,200. The librarian was Emma Clark, and her annual salary was \$300.

In 1889, at the end of the territorial period, the size of the Library had grown to about 3,000 bound volumes and 1,000 pamphlets. We find that the Library had been receiving for several years an annual appropriation from the State of \$150.00. The Librarian in that year was Miss Claire Gatch, also a teacher of art. The salary of the office was \$100.00 per year.

Vancouver Catholic Library Association

The Report upon *Public Libraries in the United States* issued by the United States Bureau of Education in 1876 records but two libraries in Washington Territory having upwards of 300 volumes. The first of these was the Washington Territorial Library. The other library mentioned was that of the Holy Angels College which was established in 1865 by the Vancouver Catholic Library Association. Mrs. Marion M. Pirkey, Librarian of the Vancouver Public Library, has secured from Mr. James P. Clancy the following historical sketch. Mr. Clancy, who is still a resident of Vancouver, was the acting Librarian of Holy Angels College Library at the time of its closing in 1886. His account follows:

"With the passing of the grim recorder Time, and taking along most of those who may have had a hand in any of the activities

⁷ *Catalogue*, 1882-1883, p. 9.

⁸ *Catalogue*, 1884-1885, p. 18.

connected therewith, it is difficult for one of the present day to give exact data in regard to the organization and works of the above mentioned Library Association.

"With the starting of the Catholic Missionaries in their work in the early Northwest from the Hudson Bay days of 1825, came the call for education and literature, and activities were taken up by such historic characters as Bishop F. N. Blanchet, Rev. Fathers Manns, Brouillet, G. F. Fierens, and later Bishop E. Junger, Fathers L. DG. Schram, P. Poaps, F. Flohar and others, and the Association was duly organized, recognition of the same being officially made by the National Librarian at Washington, D. C., at that time, about the year 1865. Among the citizens assisting in the organization at the time may be found such pioneer business men and parishioners as Dr. D. Wall, P. O'Keane, Jno. O'Keane, P. Buckley, N. Du Puis, Jos. Brant, L. Burgey, M. O'Connell, J. D. Geoghegan, Jno. Walsh, Jos. Healey, Judge J. M. Denny, John McMullen, Jos. Petrain and many others.

"From the remnants of the old books now on hand and scant records left for investigation it appears that the library was a going concern and active about the years 1870 to its close in 1886, containing over 1000 volumes of current literature of the time, with a trend of course to religious writers and historical matters as well. The library was housed in a large two-room building immediately in the rear of the Bishop's residence on the grounds of the St. James Mission property, (the site today being on East 5th Street as it passes through the Post, Vancouver Barracks, about two blocks from Reserve Street, in Vancouver, Washington).

"Librarians in charge during the early years were chosen from among the school teachers and educators of the time; Rev. Father P. Poaps as instructor at the Holy Angels Academy College about 1875, and later the names of Benj. Wall and Jas. P. Clancy appear as acting librarians, up to the time of the closing of the library in 1886.

"Today there are about 350 volumes of the early library still intact and in good state of preservation stored away at the St. James Parish residence at Vancouver, Washington. These books are all properly labeled and numbered, and from lists of names found in records in some of them, show that the library had a good sized patronage among the citizens, who took much pride in the upkeep and interest in the Association. An inspection of the old volumes by authorities on the subject of libraries will, no

doubt, prove interesting and much historical data might prove available."

Walla Walla Library

Library service in Walla Walla began with the incorporation of the Walla Walla Library Association, which was organized in the same year as the Vancouver Association. The following statement is drawn from Frank T. Gilbert's *Historic Sketches of Walla Walla*:

"In 1865 the Walla Walla Library Association was incorporated, for the purpose of maintaining a library in this city; \$250 were subscribed for such purpose by those interested in the matter, and the membership fee was fixed at \$5.00. The officers were A. J. Thibodo, J. D. Cook, R. Jacobs, J. H. Lasater, L. J. Rector, and W. W. Johnson. They started in with 150 volumes, and held together for some time, but finally interest in the matter died out. It was revived in April, 1874, by organization of the Walla Walla Lyceum and Library Association, and a library was maintained for use of members of the society for several years. In December, 1877, a society was formed for the purpose of establishing a free reading room and library, an institution that had long been needed in the city. An exhibition of works of art, curios, and relics of interest kindly furnished by citizens was opened. In this way, and by means of sociables and various entertainments, considerable money was procured, and the library fully established. The ladies deserve special credit for their generous efforts in this work. The old association donated its books for a nucleus, to which many additions have from time to time been made. The library and reading room are open to the free use of the public."⁹

Seattle Library Association

In August of 1868, the Seattle Library Association was formed with Mr. James McNaught as President, Mr. L. S. Smith, Secretary and Mrs. H. L. Yesler, Librarian. This organization, like the ones at Steilacoom and Walla Walla, assumed an important place in the social and intellectual life of the community. Meetings were held frequently, many important lectures were given and literary entertainments were common. "Adult education" seems to have been the unwritten motto of this organization. Newspaper publicity was given in generous fashion. Fourteen news

⁹ Gilbert's *Historic Sketches of Walla Walla* (Portland: Walling, 1882,) page 340.

items regarding the work of the Association appear in the *Seattle Intelligencer* between the dates of August 10, 1868, and December 21, 1869.

In 1873, Dexter Horton gave \$500 conditional upon the securing of \$1000 in addition. The total income for that year thus amounted to over \$1800. There were 169 members, 278 volumes in the library and at one time \$1,515 cash on hand. A reading room was maintained well supplied with the magazines and newspapers of the time. Interest finally flagged, the membership ran down and in 1881 the Association suspended. The books were at that time "given to the University."¹⁰

In 1888, a newly organized Ladies Library Association was formed due to the backing of Leigh S. J. Hunt, then owner and editor of the *Post-Intelligencer*. Mr. Hunt subscribed \$1,000 and the ladies set to work with enthusiasm to raise funds. Mr. H. L. Yesler presented instead of a subscription a lot at third and Jefferson. This was deeded with the stipulation that the Association be known as the Yesler Public Library. Eight hundred dollars was raised by a ball, \$300 by a baseball game, and another large amount by an excursion to Victoria. The Library was established, though not upon the Yesler Triangle, and the way was thus paved for the tax supported public library made possible by the state law of 1890 and suitable provisions in the freeholders Charter of 1890. The later history of the Seattle Public Library is to be found in the *Annual Report of the Seattle Public Library* for 1915, pp. 6-10. Excellent accounts of the two Library Associations are to be found in an eight-page manuscript account written by Mr. M. J. Carkeek and deposited in the Seattle Public Library and the University of Washington Library, and in the unpublished history of Seattle by Thomas W. Prosch to be consulted in typewritten form in the libraries just mentioned.

An account of the development of library service in Seattle is not complete without reference to the

Reading Room of Mrs. Maynard

Mr. Thomas W. Prosch in his biography of Dr. and Mrs. Maynard¹¹ gives this record: "The home of the Maynards was in

¹⁰ Mr. Thomas W. Prosch in his *Chronological History of Seattle*, Part 1, page 190, says they were "given outright to the University". From such evidence as is available at this time, it would appear however that the books were turned over as a deposit with some thought of recalling them at a latter date. Mrs. Carkeek states that when the newly organized Ladies Library Association visited the University in 1888, few traces of them could be found.

¹¹ T. W. Prosch's *David S. Maynard and Catherine T. Maynard* (Seattle, 1906), page 78.

the middle of the block on the east side of First Avenue South between Main and Jackson streets. There they lived until his death in 1873, and there she lived a number of years longer. The last thing she did there was to start a free reading room. In a large, light apartment, opening on the street, she placed tables and chairs, procured books, magazines and newspapers, and invited the public to use them. For a year or more, in 1875-6, Mrs. Maynard kept the place open, clean, warm and pleasant. Her example had effect with others, the result being the establishment of the Young Men's Christian Association by Dexter Horton and associates, who took from Mrs. Maynard the burden she had carried so long. The magnificent tree and fine fruit that have come from the seed thus planted by this poor woman are known to all. 'The widow's mite' was greater for good than the proud wealth of many of her townsmen."

The first public meeting which led to the establishment of the Y.M.C.A. was held at Mrs. Maynard's home on June 28, 1876. Several conferences were later held and on August 7, 1876, the Y.M.C.A. of Seattle was organized with Dexter Horton as its first President. At the end of the year new quarters were occupied but from the first a reading room and library has been one of its departments.

"The Tacoma Library" of Olympia

Another Association Library antedating 1876 was the "Tacoma Library" of Olympia. This was a library and reading room of very considerable importance in its day but I have little data regarding it. The following news item in regard to its first opening is quoted from the *Olympia Standard* in the *Seattle Intelligencer* of August 2, 1869:

"The New Library rooms were formally dedicated last Saturday evening. The library is open to the public every evening and Sundays. Visitors in town will find this an agreeable place to while away an hour".

The Dayton Library

One of the earliest libraries in Eastern Washington was located at Dayton. Mr. J. Orin Oliphant of Cheney, Washington, has supplied the following data in regard to this library:

"Another educational advantage here of which the people were justly proud was the free library and reading room, estab-

lished in the winter of 1876-7 by the Rev. E. A. McAllister and a few other liberal minded citizens. This little institution did not endure, though, and a more permanent one was founded in 1882 by the A.O.U.W. and the Ladies Educational Aid Society and several other organizations. Monthly dues of 50 cents were charged and the library flourished for years. Dr. S. B. L. Penrose of Whitman College, one of the early pastors of the Congregational Church here, chose many of the books and the remnants of this little library now preserved on the shelves of the reading room at the Dayton Commercial club show the distinctive taste used in the selection of those volumes."¹²

"Having no further use for the money, the balance of Dayton's smallpox fund, amounting to \$150.00, has been donated to the library of that place."¹³

The Spokane Public Library

Like other cities of Territorial days, Spokane made an early start toward an association library. The population of the town was but 350 in 1880, yet we find in the *Spokan Times* for January 1 of that year the following news note: "The Necktie Sociable given tonight, in Glover's Hall, promises to be a remarkably pleasant affair . . . The object of the entertainment is to make a beginning, with the funds raised, of a public library, a thing much needed in our midst. It would be a place where the young men and older ones about town could spend a pleasant evening, as often as they might choose, improving themselves. It is decidedly a praiseworthy object."

Progress is shown by the following news items, all taken from the *Spokan Times*:¹⁴

May 22, 1880: "An amateur entertainment will be given June 1, at Cornelius & Davis' Hall, for the benefit of the Spokan Library."

Nov. 27, 1880: "We are informed by Mr. Rima, secretary of the association, that at the last meeting Mr. and Mrs. Cook, of the Times office, were elected honorary members; also, that a committee was appointed to make necessary arrangements to give an entertainment on New Year's Eve, for the benefit of the school

¹² From an article on pioneer days at Dayton, written by Ernestine Peabody, and published in the Spokane *Spokesman-Review* of November 20, 1921.

¹³ From the *Palouse Gazette* of November 24, 1882.

¹⁴ As referred to under the Dayton Library, assistance has been rendered by Mr. Oliphant in this case also by searching the rare files of this earliest newspaper of Spokane.

fund. Miss Muzzy was elected librarian. About fifty dollars worth of new books have been ordered for the association."

March 3, 1881: "The Spokane Library has just received forty volumes of new books. Thirty additional volumes have been sent for."

The subsequent history of this library is to be found in outline form in the *Annual Report of the Spokane Public Library* for the year 1913, p. 23-24.

Colfax Academy Library Association

An example of cooperation between school and library is shown in the history of the Colfax Academy Library Association. Colfax Academy was established in 1878 and had an important influence in Eastern Washington as one of the first high schools north of the Snake River. In 1882, the school and the community united in establishing public library service. Again Mr. Oliphant's assistance is acknowledged as having supplied the following records of the time:

"Pursuant to a call issued by the principal of Colfax Academy, a goodly number of our citizens met in the Baptist Church on Monday evening last to perfect the organization of a library association. Mr. E. N. Beach was unanimously chosen President of the meeting, and W. J. Davenport Secretary, after which the body proceeded to adopt a suitable constitution and rules of order. Officers were elected as follows for the ensuing year: President, Dr. W. W. Beach; Vice President, Miss L. L. West; Secretary, W. J. Davenport; Treasurer, J. A. Perkins, Librarian, Miss L. L. West; Executive Committee of Three, W. A. Inman and F. W. Bunnell, the third supplied by the academy board of trustees, Rev. Geo. Campbell. Arrangements are being made to present a lecture and other varied exercises on the occasion of opening the library. Everything is propitious for a successful termination of the project thus started, and out of the \$312, previously subscribed for the purchase of books, \$112 was collected at this meeting. The object of this association is to furnish to those desiring good books to read an opportunity to secure them at a trifling cost. Any person may become a life member by paying into the treasury the sum of \$5, and an annual membership costs but \$2, thus enabling all to avail themselves of advantages to be had in no other way. The sum of \$300 has already been expended for books, and as soon as possible a public reading room will be

opened in connection with the library. The name of this body is the "Colfax Academy Library Association," and we say success to the undertaking, for it supplies a want long felt in this community. Everyone should lend a hand in forwarding this enterprise. Membership fees, either subscribed or otherwise, will be received by J. A. Perkins, treasurer."¹⁵

"The public library will be opened this afternoon for the first time. Hours from three until six o'clock. There are over three hundred volumes in the library."¹⁶

The Tacoma Public Library

The Tacoma Public Library dates its history from 1886. From a "Historical Statement," to be found in the official reports,¹⁷ the following information is gleaned:

"In the summer of 1886, Mrs. Grace R. Moore established in her home a subscription circulating library, the first public circulating library on Puget Sound, though the Steilacoom Library Association, organized in March 1858, had provided library facilities almost as public. It met a very definite need, even though Tacoma was in those days—to use her own words—"little more than a frontier town, with ungraded streets, uncleared lots and a small business district."

This library soon outgrew its original home, and by 1889 had won public favor to the point of warranting incorporation and a change of title from the "Mercantile Library of Tacoma" to "The Public Library." Partial public support was also then received. It occupied successively quarters in the Wilkeson, Gross and Uhlman buildings, Ball Block, and in 1893, the City Hall. In December of that year its trustees voted to present the library to the City of Tacoma, formal transfer being made in January, 1894."

CHARLES W. SMITH.

¹⁵ *Palouse Gazette* of December 1, 1882.

¹⁶ *Palouse Gazette* of February 16, 1883.

¹⁷ *Tacoma Public Library Annual Reports*, 1919, 1920, page 4.