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BULLETIN

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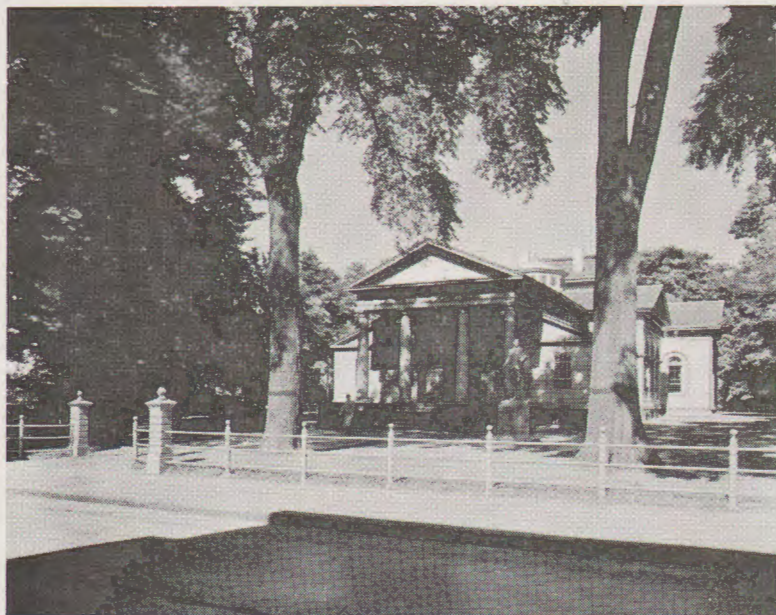
RHODE ISLAND LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

VOL. 9

JUNE, 1936

Copy 2

No. 1



THE REDWOOD LIBRARY AND ATHENAEUM

**ANNUAL MEETING OF THE RHODE ISLAND LIBRARY ASSOCIATION,
TUESDAY, JUNE 16, AT THE REDWOOD LIBRARY AND
ATHENAEUM, NEWPORT, R. I.**

MORNING SESSION

10:30 Business Meeting

EARLY DAYS IN NEWPORT

Miss Edith Ballinger Price

A Second Speaker

Subject to be announced later

LUNCHEON

La Forge Cottage, as the guests of the Directors of the Redwood Library.

AFTERNOON

Sightseeing Trip: Around Ocean Drive, stopping at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton Fish Webster for tea.

BULLETIN
of the
RHODE ISLAND LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Published every now and then,
and designed to be of interest
to librarians of Rhode Island.

R. I. L. A. BULLETIN COMMITTEE
Josephine A. Hope, Providence Public Library
Annise Kane,
Classical High School, Providence
Mrs. Dorothy H. Hellen,
Elmwood Public Library, Providence

Vol. 9 JUNE, 1936 No. 1

THE REDWOOD LIBRARY

A BRIEF HISTORY

The Redwood Library was incorporated in the year 1747. The Articles of Incorporation by the Governor and Company of the English Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations declare "Whereas Abraham Redwood Esq. hath generously engaged to bestow five hundred pounds sterling, to be laid out in a collection of useful books, suitable for a public library proposed to be erected in Newport . . . the said Governor and Company do give and grant that the said Abraham Redwood, James Honyman, and others be, and are hereby constituted, a body politic incorporate, by the name of the Company of the Redwood Library."

This generous act upon the part of Mr. Redwood came as the result of conversations held at the meetings of an association "for promoting virtue and knowledge", formed in 1730 at the suggestion, it is believed, of Bishop Berkeley, and continuing to hold weekly meetings under the name of the Philosophical Society until its life was merged into that of the Redwood Library.

The members of this Philosophical Society included the leading men of the colony, governors, judges, men of political, social and professional importance. To their broad vision the need of a public library became apparent, and they set about the task of forming such an institution.

If the first gift of five hundred pounds by Mr. Redwood gave the impetus which started the Library, the second gift, by Henry Collins, of land on which to erect the building, was no less important, and within one month of the receipt of the charter, the committee was appointed to collect funds for the building. The beautiful structure at the Bellevue Avenue end of the present series of buildings was the result,

In these days of light and frivolous reading, it is interesting to recall the seriousness with which the first governors of the Library entered upon the work, as evidenced by the books which were purchased with the five hundred pounds presented by Mr. Redwood. These contained over thirteen hundred volumes, of which about three hundred were theological, and the rest either historical, classical or scientific. One looks in vain through the list for anything in the nature of fiction.

An important event in the history of the Library was the coming to Newport in 1755 of Ezra Stiles, drawn to accept the call to the Second Congregational Church, as he says, largely by "an agreeable town and the Redwood Library." Within a year of his settlement, he became the librarian, a position much of a sinecure, which he accepted in order that he might have always the key of the building, and be able to pass as many hours in the perusal of its books as he desired. Almost always, he informs us, was he entirely alone among its treasures.

His importance to the Library is proved by the fact that through his efforts many valuable books were obtained as gifts from Europe, as well as from this country, and he left it in a very flourishing condition and carefully arranged.

December 8, 1776, the British Army landed at Long Wharf, and took possession of the city. A large number, about three-quarters of its inhabitants, including Rev. Ezra Stiles, fled from the town. The British officers proceeded to make of the Redwood Library a club room, and were so reckless in their treatment of its contents that when, after an occupation of three years, they withdrew their forces from the city, there remained about one-half the number of books which the Library contained at their arrival.

Whether a later king of England was prompted to repair this injury done by his countrymen, or whether the promptings were simply those of a generous spirit, certain it is that King William, in 1835, made to the Library a generous donation of books, amounting to eight-four volumes, of which seventy-two are large folios. Not all the books being printed at the time of his death, the gift was completed by Queen Victoria.

After the Revolution till the beginning of the nineteenth century, as in the town itself, so in the Library, everything was in confusion, people were discouraged, and few efforts made at restoration.

At this time an interesting event in the history of the Library occurred, when on September 11, 1780, the General Assembly of the State came to Newport, after an absence of four years, and finding the State House much dilapidated, having been used as an hospital by the British, they convened in the Redwood Library building, which during that session became the capitol of the state.

The condition of the Library during these sad years is well illustrated by the following advertisement which appeared in the Newport Herald on the 9th of September, 1790:

"The key of the Library being missing, supposed to be lent by the former librarian, the person who has it in his possession is earnestly requested to deliver it to Mr. Stephen Ayrault, one of the directors."

Another advertisement, printed in the Newport Mercury the 27th of September, 1801, is the first sign of an attempt to restore the Library to usefulness.

"The long neglect of this institution by the proprietors may possibly have furnished an excuse for neglecting to return the books, so that a large portion of them have in one way or another got upon the shelves of individuals in different quarters of the town."

The spirit which prompted this advertisement in the paper also caused a new movement in the Library itself; affairs were re-organized, new members taken in, a catalogue of the books made, and gradually the interest in the institution became widespread.

From that time until the present, with varying degrees of energy, the directors have advanced the work of the Library. All the prominent residents of Newport, as well as members of the summer colony, have from time to time taken an interest in the prosperity of the institution, and it has gradually, though not steadily, increased, until today it occupies a prominent position among the proprietary libraries of the country.

THE BUILDINGS

Not the least interesting part of the Redwood Library is the history of its buildings.

The original portion, erected in 1750, included the much admired front room. This was designed by Peter Harrison, one of the few trained architects who came to the colonies in the eighteenth century. The building is an imitation of a Roman temple of the

Doric order, the pediment of the front supported by four columns of graceful form. The result is one of the finest examples in the country of the classical style of architecture. The details of the woodwork are exceedingly interesting, while at the rear of the room, as he erected it, was a window of three parts, gracefully arched, and enriched with columns of the Roman Ionic character, which is now to be seen on the north end of the second building or reading room.

This first building for over a century served the purposes of the Library, but in 1858 it was found necessary to add to it that which is now used as the reading room. The architect of this addition was George Snell of Boston, who sought to carry out the idea suggested in the first building.

In 1875 the Library was further increased by the erection of the large addition now used for a delivery room, which was designed by Mr. George C. Mason of Newport.

All these buildings were erected by popular subscription.

In 1913, through a legacy of Mrs. Gardiner Blanchard Perry, the directors were enabled to erect the fourth building, a fireproof stackroom.

In each of these additions, an effort has been made to harmonize the architecture with the original building of Peter Harrison, but naturally none has equalled that in proportion and decoration.

THINGS TO SEE IN NEWPORT

Old Stone Mill
Old Colony House
Trinity Church
Jewish Synagogue
Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House
Newport Historical Society
United States Naval War College Library
St. George's School
People's Library
Redwood Library

We have a real poet in our midst. We hope everyone read the lovely poem, "Winter's Crystals", in the Library Journal for March 1, for it was by Miss Elizabeth C. Spicer of the Brown University Library. The poem was inspired by something she saw on a Saturday afternoon walk, a beautiful little pool with ice around the edge.

This Library must breed poets, for it seems that Miss Edith R. Blanchard has also had a number of things published.

RHODE ISLAND LIBRARIES

PLAN FOR THE TERCENTENARY

The Rhode Island Tercentenary is being commemorated at the John Hay Library by a series of exhibitions showing material of historical interest from the library collection.

The first of the series in January featured Roger Williams, showing copies of his books, of which the library owns all but one in the original edition, and one of his letters written to John Winthrop. There were also illustrations of places where he had lived, and of maps and scenes in the early settlement of Providence. Several lives were shown, including the outstanding one by Oscar S. Straus, and, for contrast, the humorous "Settlement of Rhode Island", by Charles T. Miller, illustrated by Walter E. Brown.

The second part of the exhibition dealt with Colonial Rhode Island. Books giving accounts of many of the old families proved of much interest to present-day descendants of the early settlers; also some maps, showing the outlines of the upper bay reaching almost to the center of downtown Providence.

The third part, on exhibition during March and April, pictured Rhode Island in five wars. The battle of Rhode Island, the presence of the French troops and the several visits of Washington furnish much material for the Revolutionary period. Interest in the War of 1812 centers in Admiral Perry. A number of manuscripts from the Dorr collection relate events in his rebellion. The Civil War group contains portraits and personal narratives. The World War is shown in pictures of events in the city within the memory of many.

The next part of the exhibition, which will be displayed during commencement, will be on education in Rhode Island, with special emphasis on the early history of Brown University. Later in the summer, works and portraits of some of the many literary celebrities of the state will be shown; also material illustrating commerce and industry of the state; and, probably in the fall, an exhibition on architecture, featuring colonial and Georgian houses.

These exhibitions are open to the public from 9 to 5 week days, in the room on the lower floor most accessible from the entrance on College Street, and also in the Harris Room.

The Elmwood Public Library, under the direction of Mrs. Webster Knight,

2nd, will hold an exhibit of Rhode Island material, including books, pictures, manuscripts, and other items, in the Board Room during the month of July.

The Tercentenary Committee on education, of which Mrs. Sarah E. Sherman is a member, will arrange several lectures on Rhode Island history in various parts of the city during the Tercentenary celebration. This Committee hopes that every librarian in the city who would like to have a series of lectures in the Auditorium of his library will get in touch with this Committee.

The John Carter Brown Library has in its exhibition cases a collection of books and broadsides relating to the colonial history of Rhode Island, put out in connection with the Tercentenary celebration. The Library proposes to put on in October an exhibition relating exclusively to Roger Williams.

The Providence Public Library has observed the Tercentenary by displaying pictures of Providence as it used to be and an interesting collection of books printed in Rhode Island. It intends, during the year, to feature also, by means of books and pictures, famous Rhode Islanders and Rhode Island architecture. Books about Rhode Island: novels, biography and history, have been brought together in a prominent place, and historical and biographical lists have been posted in the library and in the outdoor exhibit case.

The Library bulletin, "A Reader's Guide to Books", is carrying two interesting Tercentenary features: a series of brief historical write-ups on each of the towns, and the results of a vote that has been taken at the Library to determine what its readers consider to be the most representative Rhode Island novel.

During the Tercentenary celebration, the Redwood Library and Athenaeum, Newport, will have an exhibition of early records, prints and documents, which will show the development of the Library.

The Union Free Library, Centredale, has a Tercentenary table which teachers and children have found very helpful. A Rhode Island scrapbook has been made, of clippings that the Library has collected itself, and this has circulated particularly well.

As part of the summer reading program of the Westerly Public Library, a special reading plan, "The Building

of Rhode Island", has been outlined in the Children's Department. To complete the building of towns and villages on huge outline maps of Rhode Island, books from all classes must be read, for, to erect a church, one must know something of architecture; to place a ship in the sea, it is necessary to know something of ship-building, or astronomy as an aid to navigation.

In memory of old ship-building days in Westerly, a regatta will be held on the pond in Wilcox Park on June 6th as part of the Tercentenary activities of the Children's Department of the Library. Any boy having read two books on boating or allied subjects may enter his boat in the contest. The races will be run off under the direction of the Westerly Yacht Club.

A series of exhibits in line with Tercentenary activities will be shown in the Library from April to November. An exhibit of lighting devices, showing the evolution of lighting from the most primitive iron candlestick to the camphine lamp of the late 19th century, is now on display in the museum. These articles are from the Frank Dewey Collection and are loaned by his daughter, Mrs. Jessie S. Berry. As part of the same exhibit, original documents from the Library collection are on display, showing the history of the town from its earliest days. From June to September a collection of oil portraits of local interest will be shown in the Art Gallery. Primitives and other pictures depicting local scenes will be displayed throughout the building, while the museum will house a collection of furniture, prints, textiles, costumes, and other items of historical interest. These exhibits will be arranged and sponsored by the Committee of the Westerly Tercentenary Group.

The Whitridge Hall Library, Tiverton, hopes to have a loan exhibit for the Tercentenary, and to have on display old records of Rhode Island and books on the old families of Tiverton.

At the William H. Hall Library books on the history of Rhode Island by Rhode Island authors, and fiction with a Rhode Island setting, are a permanent display in both adult and juvenile sections. An exhibit of pictures of the ancestors of the residents of Edgewood and Pawtuxet has been shown in the exhibit cases. Old daguerreotypes were prominent; also old photographs and miniatures and a bas relief profile of carved ivory. An oil painting of General Nathanael Greene, painted by Trumbull, was one of the choice entries among over one hundred pictures.

The Library also plans an exhibit of coat-of-arms claimed by residents of Ward One, Cranston. A description of the arms and the line from the original settler will accompany the picture. During the summer, local pictures of residences and buildings of interest will be shown—the older the better.

DOES THIS INTEREST YOU?

The announcement of the Columbia University School of Library Service for 1936-37, soon to be published, will describe in detail the new program for the first-year curriculum, including the system of comprehensive examinations which will make it possible for students of experience and superior ability to secure exemption from many of the more elementary prescribed courses and devote their time to specialized and advanced courses, or work in some subject or field under the graduate faculties. The faculty of the school is to be strengthened by some notable additions. Miss Clara B. Denham of 213 Howell St., Providence has been awarded the Caroline Hewins Scholarship for the year 1936-37.

NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

The Anne Ide Fuller Library, East Providence, was founded ten years ago and, at the present time, has about 3,000 volumes and 500 patrons. The total circulation last year was about 12,000 volumes, an increase of about 2,000 over the previous year. The Library opened Oct. 21, 1926, with 150 volumes. The librarian, Miss Jane R. Ide, notes, as a little matter of Tercentenary interest, that her aunt, Annie Ide, is a direct descendant of Roger Williams from three different sources. The Library stands on the old Ide estate, Nicholas Ide being given certain grants of land in 1646 "to make his estate up to 150£." It was in memory of his wife that Arthur A. Fuller made the books of his library the nucleus of a public library for the use of the community.

The Jesse M. Smith Memorial Library of Harrisville reports an interesting Book Week exhibit, a miniature playground. There were small sandboxes, cardboard slides and rather precarious swings. The playground was populated with figures cut from book jackets and mounted on cardboard, and the invitation read, "Come play with

the children of Bookland." The annual report of the Library showed an increase in circulation of 2,668 volumes over 1934-35.

It is with regret that the Providence Public Library announces the resignations of Miss Doris L. Hoyt, Assistant Librarian, and Miss Bess McCrea, Reference Department Librarian. The former is now Librarian of the Public Library in Pasadena, California, and the latter, Supervisor of Reference Work at the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland. Both left Providence in April.

Miss Hoyt's place is to be filled by Miss Ruth Miller, who is assuming her duties on June 15. She was formerly head of the Circulation Department and the branches of the Public Library of Memphis, Tennessee. Miss Miller is a graduate of the University of Missouri and attended the New York State Library School. Her experience includes the following: Assistant in the St. Joseph, Missouri, Public Library; Assistant in the New York State Library Extension Division; and Librarian of the Central College for Women, Lexington, Missouri. She has been in Memphis since 1925.

Miss Alice McGrath, formerly first assistant in the Reference Department, has been appointed to take the place of Miss McCrea, and Miss Elizabeth Welt, formerly in the Cataloguing Department and Miss Helen Fickewer, formerly assistant at the Smith Hill Branch, have been made assistants in the Reference Department. Miss Elizabeth Johnson has been made an assistant in the Cataloguing Department.

The Providence Public Library has been adding shelving room to its storage stacks at the Tockwotton Branch. During this period, 60,000 books were removed from the stacks and housed temporarily in school buildings. Since the addition was completed, about 15,000 books have been moved to Tockwotton in addition to returning the 60,000.

Also, this Library is now co-operating in a plan initiated by the school department, whereby teachers are loaning their time to give vocational advice to high school graduates. Consultation corners are being provided at the branch libraries for this purpose.

Letters have recently been sent out to library borrowers who have presumably been unable to pay their fines on account of straightened financial circumstances, offering them temporary cancellation so that they might use their cards. Although few availed themselves of the opportunity, several readers cheerfully paid their arrears as a result.

For the past two months, two project workers have been shelf-listing the Union Free Library, Centredale. The Sun Dial Garden Club of North Providence gave the Library a year's subscription to the "Better Homes and Gardens" magazine. Also, the club has taken upon itself the duty of having one member furnish to the Library each month some flower decoration appropriate to the season.

A series of Saturday afternoon musicales for young people were held in the Westerly Library during February and March, with an average attendance of 200. The program comprised musical selections, together with stories and dramatizations, an attempt being made to relate the arts and literature in this way.

Miss Margaret L. Waring, of the Whitridge Hall Library, Tiverton, reports that her work just started there last December. The first lines of work that she has cut out for herself are to get the Library catalogued and to develop the work for children.

The Children's Department of the William H. Hall Free Library, Edge-wood, has been trying a new scheme of library advertising that is proving most effective. In some of the neighboring schools a part of the bulletin board has been reserved for the Library; for the posting of book jackets, lists and library news. A student is appointed to care for this work; to call at the Library for the material; arrange it on the bulletin board; and return it to the library at the end of three weeks in order to receive a new supply.

This Library also reports a change in the hours of opening. Beginning April 1, the Library has opened every week-day from 10 a. m. to 9 p. m., and will not be open Sundays. This new schedule is to be tried for three months.