

Report of the Council

DURING the summer months the Library has, as usual, been extensively used by researchers from every part of the country. Newspapers, early printing, American literature, biography, the graphic arts, children's books, maps, manuscripts are only a few of the many subjects for which we have been asked to supply material. The rather unusual subject of early American dance literature has brought at least three visitors from distant parts to use the outstanding collection which is available here.

Manuscripts are frequently used. Although we do not have the extensive collections which are to be found at Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, the historical value of our collection is unquestioned, and certainly what we have is unique. The excellent arrangement of the manuscripts, with over half a million documents, makes comparatively little trouble for the staff. Early this year a request came from the National Historical Publications Commission in the National Archives Building in Washington for us to furnish a catalogue of our manuscripts. Mr. Albert G. Waite started to make such a list, and within three months enumerated and described all of those manuscripts which might be deemed nationally important. The resultant catalogue lists two hundred manuscript collections, grouped under family papers, institutions, subject arrangements, or well known historical names. The manuscript room contains over half a million documents, arranged in three sections—octavo bound volumes, folio bound volumes, and 976 folio boxes for loose manuscripts. There are 1320 running feet of shelving.

It is possible in this short space to refer but briefly to the important collections. In the early New England field, there are the Mather Papers, with diaries, letters, and sermons of Richard, Increase, Cotton, and Samuel Mather; the letter-book of John Hull, mint-master from 1670 to 1680; the Curwin Papers, with over five hundred letters written by notable colonial divines of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Of a later period are the Craigie Papers written by merchants, land owners, and colonial officials of the eighteenth century; the John Bradstreet correspondence of 1755-1773; and the French and Indian War Papers of 1754-1774. Somewhat later come the papers of Dwight Foster, United States Congressman and Senator from 1793 to 1803. Valuable series of papers concerning American publishing are the Mathew Carey Papers, the William Cobbett ledger, and the papers from the firms of West, Richardson & Lord, Daniel C. Heath, Lee & Shepard, and Copeland & Day. Allied with publishing, but far more important to this Society, are the papers of Isaiah Thomas, consisting of letters, diaries, and documents. Probably the largest collection are the papers of the Salisbury family, covering the period from 1674 to 1904, in sixty-three volumes and sixty-eight boxes. Special collections which are frequently consulted are the early Diaries, the Orderly Books, and the Account Books. The last collection, containing over five hundred volumes, covers the accounts of inn-keepers, jewelers, ship-builders, store-keepers, and a hundred other trades and occupations. One of the most used collections is the file of the American Antiquarian Society correspondence in 247 boxes from 1812 to the present year, with scarcely a letter of importance or a reply copy missing. Few societies in the country can boast of such an array of correspondence, extending over nearly one hundred and fifty years. Also it should be noted that

nearly all of the important collections are catalogued or calendared.

The Society has always had a problem with its foreign members. It has been difficult to keep in touch with them, or even to communicate with them. They almost never visited the Society; in fact during the last fifty years one of the few foreign members who came to Worcester was Nicolás León of Mexico who visited the Library about 1912. He seemed much interested in our Spanish-American collections, but since he did not speak English, and my Spanish was conversationally restricted, his knowledge of the Library came chiefly from gestures. For a century, at least, no foreign member was qualified for election unless he accepted in writing, and most of the letters were appreciative. Sir George Otto Trevelyan, the English historian, wrote in 1915: "I am deeply proud and gratified over the honour which has been conferred upon me by the American Antiquarian Society. If ever a man lived in imagination in another country than his own, and if any man ever knew the literature of another country with lifelong and familiar love, that man am I, with regard to America."

In the very early days of the Society foreign members were frequently elected. The 1839 membership list showed forty-five foreign members—from Denmark, France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Greece, Prussia, Switzerland, Central and South America. Throughout the century foreign members were often elected, especially during the presidencies of the Salisburys who were interested in Spanish-American scholars. In the years soon after 1907, when the Waldo Lincoln regime came into control, effort was made to strengthen the membership, both resident and foreign. By 1912 there were thirty-two foreign members, fourteen in Europe and eighteen in the western hemisphere. In 1925 there were as many as thirty-eight. But foreign

members showed little interest in the Society. Often the dates of deaths reached the Society years too late to be properly recorded. After 1930 there were few elections to foreign membership, and since 1940 only two have been elected.

In 1947 Frederick L. Weis compiled his List of Members from the establishment of the Society in 1812, a painstaking and accurate list. He noted that from 1812 to 1947, 182 foreign members had been elected, from thirty-three foreign countries—sixteen in the Western hemisphere, fifteen in Europe, and two in Asia. Mr. Weis succeeded in finding many dates of deaths which had hitherto eluded us.

This discourse on foreign members has been prompted by the recent receipt of the news that George M. Wrong, of Toronto, Canada, elected in 1910, died June 29, 1948, at the beginning of his eighty-ninth year. He was for many years professor of history at Toronto University. He wrote many books on Canadian-American history, especially *Canada and the American Revolution*, in 1935. He was one of the founders of the Champlain Society and received international distinction as an historian. There was an excellent sketch of Professor Wrong's career in the *Canadian Historical Review* of September, 1948. We have received the news of the death of William Wood, of Quebec, Canada, on September 2, 1947, at the age of 83. Although he wrote numerous volumes of Canadian history under the name of William Wood, his full name was William Charles Henry Wood, and he was Lieutenant-Colonel, retired, with the Canadian army. We have also received word of the deaths of Carlos de la Torre of Havana, Cuba, elected in 1922, died on February 19, 1950; Jorge M. Corbacho of Lima, Peru, elected in 1920, died March 16, 1947; and Anastasio Alfaro of San José, Costa Rica, elected in 1919, died on January 19, 1951. It is unfortunate that this Society did not learn of these deaths more promptly.

There have been three deaths of resident members of the Society. Foster Stearns of Exeter, New Hampshire, member of the United States Congress for six years and a generous friend to this Society, elected in 1936, died June 4, 1956. Hiram Bingham of Washington, D.C., former United States Senator and a leader in Peruvian exploration, elected in 1909, died June 6. Robert Kendall Shaw, of Worcester, Librarian of the Worcester Free Library from 1909 to 1939, elected in 1919, died July 3. Obituary notices of these members will appear in the printed *Proceedings* of this meeting.

The financial situation of the Society seems highly satisfactory. We always strive to keep within our budget. Our ability to purchase books to complete our various collections has been aided by gifts from generous members.

The several important accessions to the Library during the year are covered in the Librarian's Report. The most important gift, and one of the most valuable ever received by the Society, was the Railroad collection presented by Thomas W. Streeter. When incorporated with our own collection it makes a remarkable contribution to the history of early American Railroads.

Respectfully submitted,
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For the Council

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