

Report of the Council

THE most important recent event in the Society's activities was the painting of the interior of the Library building. Not since the library was constructed thirty-eight years ago has the interior finish been cleaned or repainted. It speaks well for the original contractors that no leaks have developed and that the paint has lasted all these years. The building committee, or the Committee on the Hall as it is called in the records, engaged the Frank L. Adams Company for this important undertaking, and in January last the work was started. The painting of the rotunda dome was accomplished by the use of roller staging, and the complete work required the cleaning and painting of all the rooms surrounding the central room, in fact all of the wall surface in the building in front of the book stack. It was also decided to refinish the hardwood floors in two rooms and to repaint the basement. The total cost of the entire work was \$7,403, and it is to be hoped that no further painting will have to be done for another generation.

One minor problem has arisen as a result of repainting the central library room. It is in this room that we hold the annual meeting, and throughout the year it is used as a reading room. When the Society first met in the present building in October, 1911, it was found that the acoustics were far from perfect. Of the several speakers at that meeting, only Ambassador Bryce could be easily heard in the back row of chairs, possibly because his voice was exceptionally clear and resonant. The Council immediately considered the matter of acoustics and Professor Wallace C. Sabine of Cambridge, leading authority on architectural acoustics, was consulted. He came to Worcester and in

July, 1912, rendered a written report of his findings. He figured that because of the large flat panels on four sides of the room the sound waves were repeated fourteen times in a second in various parts of the room. He advised resurfacing the four panels with Gustavino tile or hanging tapestries in the four spaces. A compromise was effected by hanging four curtains of green burlap, backed with flannel. That was in 1912, thirty-seven years ago. The green hangings long ago changed to a dingy brown, and when they were removed a few weeks ago, it was found that they had rotted and could not be rehung. It was always Mr. Waldo Lincoln's hope that four tapestries could be acquired, thus providing the room with attractiveness and with improved acoustics. A committee of the Council is taking this whole matter under advisement.

It was because of the reception given late last fall to Worcester County residents that the officers of the Society realized the unsightly appearance of the interior of the building. This reception, held on two late afternoons, Friday and Saturday, November 5 and 6, was highly successful. Four hundred invitations were sent out, and about three hundred persons visited the Library during the two days, most of whom had never entered the building previously. Refreshments were served, an exhibition of rare books was displayed, and all inquiring visitors were shown our various collections and treasures. Since the Library appeals primarily to visiting scholars and researchers who come here to consult material in connection with the writing of books, there has been little cause for Worcester residents to be interested except to be sensible of the cultural value of the Society. Therefore this reception was a good method to bring our friends and neighbors to the building and to give them some idea of what the Society has accomplished in the field of American scholarship.

The recent death of Mrs. Homer Gage released to the Society the bequest of \$100,000 from Dr. Gage, intended by him to be used for the construction of the addition to the book stack. The Council soon found that whereas this amount would have sufficed to build the entire stack some ten years ago, it was far inadequate today—in fact, the sum required would be nearly \$250,000. Therefore it was decided that in due time the shell of the stack should be constructed, leaving for the future, hopefully the immediate future, the erection of the steel book stack within the walls. Presumably during the present year work on the shell of the stack will be begun.

One problem which has beset the Librarian during recent years has been solved. Since there was no commercial microfilm firm in Worcester, and since we could not entertain the thought of purchasing such photographic equipment, we could not meet the constant demands from all over the country to provide microfilms of our unique material, especially in the field of newspapers. Last fall the Micro-Copy Service started operations in Worcester, and in January they moved one of their large cameras to the library building, because of the amount of orders received. It will be summer before these orders are filled—and all this work is done, expeditiously and without expense to the Society. Since microfilms can be enlarged and printed on thin paper, a satisfactory method has now been found to make our printed items available in exact size.

Early in the winter it was decided to close the Library on Saturdays. We were previously open in the morning only, and the use of the Library on that forenoon did not seem to justify its being open for so short a time. We also found that college and research libraries in New England were generally closed on Saturdays, in common with banks, factories, and many business concerns. But the chief reason

for our closing on Saturdays was to reimburse the staff to some extent for the inadequacy of salaries. It is the staff, which has been extraordinarily faithful, that we depend upon to keep up the standard of our service to researchers.

An unusual number of rare books in the field of early Americana have been acquired during the winter. But the summary and description of these titles must await the Librarian's Report in October. It is noticeable, however, that a greatly increased interest in juvenile literature has developed in recent months, and in this field we have made some valuable additions. Since the founder of the Society was the leading publisher of children's books of his day, there is reason why we should strengthen our collections. Also some rare titles of Western history and exploration have been acquired. Such purchase has been made possible through the sale of books which became duplicate as a result of the gift of the Donald McKay Frost collection. The sale of Frost duplicates has already brought in over \$9,000, much of which should be spent on adding to the Frost collection of Western narratives.

There have been two deaths in the Society's membership during the past six months. Maxwell Savage, minister of the Unitarian Church in Worcester for many years, elected in 1929, died November 4, 1948. William Brooks Cabot of Boston, student of Algonquian nomenclature, elected in 1925, died January 31, 1949. Obituary notices of these members will appear in the printed *Proceedings* of this meeting.

Financially the Society has sailed along on a fairly even keel, at least it has kept up to its precedent of never having had a deficit in its operations. The Council realizes that this happy result has been obtained only through the interest and generosity of the members and friends of the Society. We have problems to approach in the near future, especially

the necessity of raising a fund to complete the addition to the book stack. But our appeals for aid have never failed before, and faithfully we hope that the present call will not go unanswered.

Respectfully submitted,
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For the Council

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