

Report of the Council

ALTHOUGH the war is over and hypothetical peace reigns throughout the world, there are many deterrents to a former standard of living. So far as this Society is concerned, the embarrassment is expressed in increased expenses and in the prohibitive cost of construction and repairs. We have long wanted to repaint the interior of the Library. Not since the building was constructed thirty-six years ago have the rotunda rooms and the exhibition balconies received a freshening coat of paint. The walls and ceilings have become increasingly discolored in recent years. But today the cost would be nearly three times what it was a few years ago. Therefore, it seems advisable to await the return of more normal times before engaging in this undertaking.

As pointed out in former Reports, the crowding of the shelves in the Library is a pressing problem, but constant re-shelving of books and utilization of every bit of space has so far partially taken care of the situation. An additional temporary bookcase has been acquired to shelve the increase in genealogies, and soon a new case must be installed in the manuscript room. The entire question of an addition to the book stack, to house a quarter of a million volumes, is left to the future.

Acquisitions to the Library have kept pace with former years, certainly in importance, but this subject will be treated in the Librarian's Report. The most notable gifts are rare western books from Donald McKay Frost and a fine collection of early Connecticut Laws from Albert C. Bates.

Publication of the *Proceedings* is considerably in arrears, due to the complications attendant upon printing the Abigail Adams letters. This highly important undertaking under the able editorship of Stewart Mitchell is larger than anything previously attempted in our *Proceedings*, and will consume the two issues for the preceding year. The question of making a reprint, with a special index, intended to provide an edition of over three thousand copies, is now under advisement.

The Director hopes that this is the last time he will have to refer to the publication of the *Bibliography of American Newspapers* except to mention it in retrospect. The printing of this work in two large quarto volumes has been delayed beyond our most pessimistic expectations. Increased printing demands and shortage of help in the printing-office have been the uncontrollable factors. But proof of the Index, which in itself takes over three hundred pages, has now been read, and if nothing unforeseen occurs, the work should be published early next year.

The Society, with other local institutions, recently acted as host when the Walpole Society made one of its periodic visits to Worcester. This interesting group of scholars and collectors came to Worcester on September 27 and 28, their first visit since 1921, except for an abortive attempt in 1938 when the meeting was cancelled because of the hurricane. This Library was inspected, also the Art Museum and the Higgins Armory, and the final meeting was held at Time Stone Farm in Marlborough. In honor of the visit the Library placed on view an exhibition of first and important books in the field of Americana—a Mexican imprint of 1544, the Bay Psalm Book being the first book printed in this country, the first Bible in any language, the first book printed in Boston, the first military manual, the first book in French and also in Spanish, the first books printed in New York,

Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine, the first miniature book, the first work on the horse, the first with a woodcut illustration, the first library catalogue, the first cook book, the first treatise on sport, the first Bible in English, the first book copyrighted, the first dictionary, the first novel, and many more books interesting for their printing or their importance.

There were 60 books shown in the exhibit, and the number could have been doubled by extending the scope of subjects and localities if there had been room in the cases. If only as a sample showing of rare Americana, a list of the items exhibited could well be printed, and if the Walpole Society does not find room to print such a list in their *Note Book*, we will try to include the list in our *Proceedings*.

A previous exhibit placed in the cases during the summer consisted of about fifty examples of American printing in color. The first color printing from wood blocks, invented by Benjamin Dearborn, was shown by the "Perspective View of Niagara Falls" published in 1814. This was followed by colored aquatints, including the first colored book illustration in the United States engraved by John Hill in 1819, by hand-colored lithographs in considerable number, by litho-tint printing in color in 1841, by chromo-lithography in 1843, and by color printing on steel, in mezzotint and in aquatint. Many examples of chromo-lithography, the most popular method before 1860, concluded the exhibit. The prints were selected from our own collection by Miss Emma Forbes Waite, of the Library staff, and the exhibit, which was also shown at the Worcester Art Museum, attracted general interest.

Since the April meeting there have been six deaths in the membership. Joseph H. Sinclair of New York, author of valuable works on South America and especially Ecuador, elected in 1931, died May 24. Henry Lefavour of Boston,

president emeritus of Simmons College and ex-president of the Massachusetts Historical Society, elected in 1940, died June 16. Joseph A. Skinner of Holyoke, Massachusetts, manufacturer and philanthropist and founder of the Skinner Museum at South Hadley, elected in 1928, died September 6. T. Franklin Currier of Belmont, Massachusetts, librarian and bibliographer, elected in 1942, died September 14. Henry W. Belknap, historian and genealogist of Salem, elected in 1922, died September 19. Allen French of Concord, Massachusetts, historian of the Revolution, elected in 1942, died October 6. Obituary sketches of these members will appear in the printed *Proceedings* of this meeting.

The Council decided at its meeting in April that the Society should appeal to its members for funds with which to increase and maintain its collections. It felt that the Society must either add to its income or narrow its field of collecting and limit its services. The letter of appeal included the following comments: "The cost of operation is steadily mounting and the need of funds, chiefly for the purpose of buying books to fill in the several collections in which the Library is already strong or preponderant, is more felt than ever. In such fields as newspapers, early American printing, American literature, illustrative material, and local history, the Library already has outstanding collections which are extensively used by researchers either by consultation or correspondence. Its field of work is ever expanding. We write about 15,000 letters annually, largely in aid to scholarship. Administrative expenses have been kept to a minimum and the staff has not been increased. But, although there has been no loss whatever in our principal funds, the lower interest rate on many of our investments has caused a substantial diminution of our income. Members must realize that this is a cultural institution of wide influence and that without funds it cannot accomplish the pur-

poses for which it was founded. Members who contribute even small sums show a confidence in the Society and enable us to purchase books for the Library which it could not otherwise obtain.”

The result of this appeal exceeded our expectations. Seventy-seven members replied, with gifts ranging from \$5.00 to \$5000. A total of \$15,865 was therefore received, enabling us to purchase needed books and to maintain our activities at a proper standard. Two of the gifts, amounting to \$2050, were specifically made to take care of the salaries of two of our library assistants. The complete list of donors is printed in the Treasurer's Report. In addition, many members who realized that they could not afford to make gifts, wrote expressing their interest in the Society and their appreciation of membership. We in the Library are greatly heartened and encouraged by this manifest support. The Council desires to place on record its gratitude for the gifts. We feel that only by thus developing and strengthening our collections can we continue to further American research.

Respectfully submitted,

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For the Council

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