



Gratia A. Countryman and Family Papers.

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Read at 50th anniversary of the Minn Lib Assn.
Written by G. L. Cunningham Charter member

The conclusion of a fifty-year period in the history of any organization usually marks a desirable point from which to lookbackward and summarize its accomplishments and trace the thread of its history.

In many organizations the very first suggestions of its beginning are lost, and cannot be restored. It is not so in the Minnesota Library Association. Its first suggestion coming from Dr. W.W. Folwell in a letter to J. Fletcher Williams, then Secretary and Librarian of the Minnesota Historical Society, appears in Dr. Folwell's Autobiography, published by the University of Minnesota Press, 1933.

The letter reads as follows:--

Minneapolis, Minn. Dec. 23, 1891

My dear Mr. Williams: I see that the librarians of Iowa have formed a state society. This strikes me as a fashion which we might follow to advantage in Minnesota. I think we could help one another by meetings and discussions. Such meetings might take place in connection with the State Teachers Association. Public school libraries need to be fostered.

If you on reflection, should think well of this suggestion, will you not issue a call for a preliminary meeting to be held next week? State Teachers Association meets in St. Paul and in the Capitol I suppose.

Very truly yours, etc.

William W. Folwell

(P.S.) I would prefer that you issue the call personally, but if for any reason you would prefer two or three names, use mine as one if you wish.

W.W.F.

The minutes also from the first organization meeting are very complete, and might almost be reproduced to form this history. Not only is place of meeting and members present and routine business recorded but an analysis of the papers presented and the discussion of the library problems considered. It is possible to trace the first beginnings of many subjects which have subsequently developed into action and successful accomplishment.

ORGANIZATION The first organization meeting was held in the directors' room of the Minnesota Historical Society on December 29, 1891. ~~The minutes relate that~~

The following notice had been inserted in the papers of the state and printed postals had been mailed to libraries throughout the state.

* Librarians State Association

A meeting of librarians of this state will be held during the session of the

* From St. Paul Pioneer Press, December 25, 1891

of the Minnesota Educational Association in the Historical Society's rooms in the capitol, St. Paul at 3 p.m. Tuesday, December 29th for the purpose of organizing a state association of librarians, which all members of the profession in Minnesota are urged to attend.

W.W. Folwell, State University
Helen J. McCaine, St. Paul Library
W.H.H. Taylor, State Library
J.F. Williams, Historical Society

The meeting assembled at 3 p.m. with Dr. Folwell presiding, and Mr. J.F. Williams acted as secretary. Dr. Folwell stated that the object of the meeting was the organization of a State Library Association similar to those formed in other states and on a plan recommended by the American Library Association. It was resolved that the librarians present do organize themselves into such an association and a committee consisting of Dr. Folwell, Mr. Williams and Col. Taylor, the State Librarian soon presented a short constitution, probably prepared aforetime, which was duly adopted. The secretary was instructed to prepare a circular announcing the organization and send it to every librarian in the state.

The officers elected were Dr. W.W. Folwell, President; Mrs. Helen J. McCaine librarian of the St. Paul Library, Vice-president and J.F. Williams, Secretary. Dr. Folwell continued as president until 1900, but Mr. Williams was secretary for one year only and although he attended the next annual meeting in 1892, he was taken ill shortly after and died in 1895. The Association passed resolutions of sympathy, and we pause here to express appreciation of this charter member who for 26 years, 1867 to 1893, was the competent librarian of the State Historical Society. His paper given at the annual meeting in 1892 on the "Librarian as a Public Servant", indicates the spirit of helpfulness which he always displayed. He introduced the first note in the new association, that the library is not only an educational institution but a social force and the librarian an agent dealing not only with books but with human beings. His message still rings clear throughout our libraries.

MEMBERSHIP The role of membership in 1891 includes eight names, though not all were present at the first meeting, and of that number only one, possibly two are still living.

At the second meeting on December 26, 1892 the membership rose to 15 and at the close of 1893 to 28, including Ex-Governor Ramsey and George B. Meleney of the Library Bureau. The membership was exclusively from the Twin Cities, Duluth

and the two colleges at Northfield. After 1893, members from such towns as Stillwater, Redwing, Anoka, Mankato and Winona appeared. The circulars which were sent out and the extension work done by the secretary, Miss Countryman, who succeeded Mr. Williams, in visiting and helping to organize town libraries began to produce a professional spirit and a desire to cooperate and consult with other librarians. The membership gradually ^{grew} ~~increased~~ and represented an increasing number of towns. In 1896, the first representatives from towns outside the Twin Cities and Duluth were present coming from St. Cloud, Mankato, Rochester, Redwing, Anoka and Stillwater. We began now to really feel that we were a State organization. By 1898, representatives from 11 towns were present and acquaintanceship with each other became a unifying factor in promoting state library development.

MEETINGS The time and place of meetings were evidently planned in the beginning to coincide with meetings of the Minnesota Educational Association and except for one meeting, the first five annual conferences were held in the Historical Society rooms in the month of December. The fifth annual meeting in 1896 was the first one which held more than one session, the first session being a joint meeting with the State Teachers Association, with papers from representatives of each organization. The minutes state that "all of the papers were heard with interest and went far to identify the work of the two Associations". Thus early in the history of the Association did librarians recognize that schools and libraries should cooperate closely as the two arms of the educational system.

Beginning with the 6th meeting in 1897, however, the Association no longer arranged its meetings as to time and place with the M.E.A. The Association moved out from the Twin Cities and met in the town libraries, changing the time to October. Rochester had a new library building and was hostess to the first meeting away from the Twin Cities. Then followed St. Cloud, Winona, etc. There was one attempt to meet quarterly, but only one quarterly meeting ~~was~~ is recorded in March, 1893. This being the year of the Columbian Exposition, the quarterly meetings evidently died a natural death, as no further mention is made of them

The annual meeting in 1893 in the Minneapolis Public Library was an informal discussion of the Chicago meeting of the A.L.A. in connection with the Exposition and a description of various devices displayed there including the Rudolph Indexer, probably entirely unknown even by name to the younger generation of librarians. But we may record that it was a filing device for catalog cards on the plan of our present cardex.

PROGRAMS The first meeting was of course simply one for organization.

The second meeting of 15 persons had a program consisting of a paper by J. Fletcher Williams on "The Librarian as a Public Servant" (previously mentioned) and a paper on "Browsing" by Dr. James K. Hosmer which had previously appeared in the Library Journal. The paper led to a discussion of freedom of access to the shelves. This was a troublesome problem in those days, and a privilege much insisted upon by the public, now fairly well solved by the Open Shelf Reading Room which was a later development. The conclusion of the discussion on access to shelves was "The more the better, so long as the privilege is not abused."

The one quarterly meeting considered two important subjects. The University was about to erect a new library building and Dr. Folwell talked on Library Architecture, presenting the plans proposed for the new building. (The building now known as Burton Hall.) This led to further discussion of student access to shelves, of which Dr. Folwell did not approve. The other subject was a presentation by Miss Countryman of a plan of travelling libraries, which will be discussed later on.

The third annual meeting in the Minneapolis Public Library was attended only by Twin City librarians. There was no program, but as mentioned above, the time was devoted to a discussion of the World's Fair meeting. The minutes mention that the Library Bureau had developed a plan for printing cards, and the association went on record in favor of it.

A most interesting matter, worthy of note was proposed at the fourth annual meeting. Dr. Folwell advocated a Department of Library Science in the University to prepare young people for positions as chief librarians. As there were then but four library schools in the country, this indicates a forward-looking policy charac-

characteristic of this "pioneer of culture." Again at the 5th annual meeting, in the session with the M.E.A., Miss Lettie Crafts of the University Library stressed Library training in the College Curriculum. She advocated a chair of Bibliography in the Faculty, systematic training of students in the use of the library and argued for a course in the Summer School where teachers might learn something of library economy. This latter plan was adopted in . At this same meeting in the session of the librarians, the work with children was presented for the first time. The Minneapolis Public Library had established a separate children's room in 1893, and now in 1895 a paper was read by the children's librarian on "The Library and the Children." This 5th meeting was notable and more ambitious than any preceding; it was the first with the M.E.A. as before mentioned, it was the first to have a paper by a trustee, the first to have a printed program and three full sessions instead of one, the first to have a social meeting with refreshments. There were 45 present at the evening session when Miss Margaret J. Evans of Carleton College gave the address on "How Best to Render the College Students familiar with the College library." This meeting also had nearly half a column of publicity in the newspaper, and so set the pace for better meetings, with larger attendance and more varied programs. The minutes report "the best meeting which the Association has ever had."

The sixth meeting in Rochester in 1898 kept up the reputation of ^{the} preceding meeting with a still more ambitious program, occupying parts of three days instead of one. A public meeting the first evening welcomed by the mayor, was addressed by Dr. Fölwell. The afternoon session the next day was devoted entirely to children's work which was growing in importance, and the evening session to an address by Dr. Hosmer and an illustrated talk on the "Library Situation in Minnesota" by Miss Countryman. The following morning also presented an innovation, being devoted entirely to book reviews and book selection, a feature which has since had a permanent place on conference programs. An important resolution was passed at this meeting, as follows: "That we desire a library section to be formed in the State Teachers Association." Our Minnesota Association was now attracting attention, and Miss Ahern, editor of "Public Libraries" came up from Chicago to attend the Rochester meeting. A most vivid personality, she

added to the interest of the meetings and brought an outside and broader viewpoint. As a result of her visit, papers given at the meeting were published in "Public Libraries" v. 27:35, Jan. 1899. ^{These were} How to develop interest in the Library, by Miss Minnie McGraw, librarian of Mankato, The Library and the Clubs by Mrs. W.W. Fowler, trustee, Rochester Public Library and The Children's Room by Marie A. Todd, children's librarian of the Minneapolis Public Library.

The 7th annual meeting was held at St. Cloud, at the same time as the State Federation of Women's Clubs, uniting with them for the evening session when the address was given by Miss Margaret J. Evans of Carleton College. The program reveals several new items of interest. Public documents were brought to the fore in a paper on "Public Documents, how to catalog and use them". Another interesting subject was "Periodicals, how to care for and use them." In the meeting of 1893, the Association passed a resolution urgently ^{requesting} their Minnesota senators to vote for a certain Printing bill which aimed to promote better distribution of public documents. Another departure at the meeting was a class taught by Mrs. W.J. Southward, covering the technical processes of library work, probably the first attempt at technical training given in the state. For the first time an exhibit was held, including bulletins loaned by the Aguilar Library, New York, the Wisconsin Library Commission and the public libraries of Minneapolis and Winona, together with a large display of Perry pictures loaned by the Burt Art Co. of Minneapolis.

^{3rd Library Commission} We would like to return and outline the progress of the largest piece of work which the Association accomplished prior to 1900, a piece of legislation which established the State Public Library Commission with its system of traveling libraries and fostering of the public library movement. We will follow the steps as they are recorded in the minutes of the meetings.

New York State had established a State Library Commission in 1893. In the Minnesota conference of that year, the Secretary, Miss Countryman outlined a scheme for traveling libraries, which was one of simple cooperation between groups of town libraries, according to which each town would contribute a certain sum for the purchase of books, and receive in return the privilege of using the ^{books} bought with the sum total contributed

the library so formed to travel in sections from one town to another until all had ^{been} circulated. A resolution was passed favoring the general plan, and cordially recommending it to the towns of the state. A circular was printed and distributed to many towns, without visible effect except to introduce the idea of traveling libraries.

In the legislature of 1895 a bill based on the New York law establishing a State Library Commission was introduced but got little attention. During the next two years, the Secretary spoke before many groups, especially Women's Clubs. They were interested in the project and appointed a legislative committee to work for it. Another bill was defeated in 1897 due largely to the opposition of Ignatius Donnelly and Judge Hicks of Minneapolis who thought that the traveling libraries were impracticable.

At the 5th annual meeting in 1896, Miss Countryman gave a paper at the evening session on the "Need of a State Library Commission", and at the Rochester meeting in 1898, she gave an illustrated talk on the "Library Situation in Minnesota", a plea for a Library Commission. Again the Association passed a resolution expressing its hearty sympathy with the proposed legislation and its intention to do everything in its power to secure such legislation. So the Association put its whole influence and that of library friends behind the next bill which was introduced in 1899.

In the meantime, the Wisconsin legislature had established a Library Commission in 1897, which was of distinct benefit to our next effort. The Women's Clubs also aided not only by urging their senators and representatives to vote for the measure, but by putting on actual demonstrations in several counties and our joint efforts were crowned with success.

The State Library Commission was established by the legislature of 1899, its appropriation beginning with January 1, 1900. Miss Margaret J. Evans was the first chairman, Miss Countryman, secretary and Miss Clara Baldwin librarian. Under the guidance of the Commission (later the Library Division) the libraries of the state have constantly increased in number and effectiveness. The Association is as strong as the libraries which belong to it, and naturally prospered through added numbers and enthusiasm. A new epoch for the Association began in 1900.

History of Minn Lib Assn.

Read at 50th anniversary 1941

f paper on libraries
read at Paripetis
Apr 85

Note for
Speech at
50th Anniversary

50 years long a least - short history

① Beginnings

Atk

Mini Acad

Therap's School of Fine Arts

Setting of library Site.

Houses - Cars &c

Bridging the gap -

Setting ready.

New books unpacked

Invitation

Club women breaking in

Description of building

Literary Mecca

Notes: Assumptions

Picture of opening day rules

3 branches opened under
Mrs Putnam

(2)

books loaned to schools

stations started.

Everything foreshadowed by him

Tribute to him.

4 Librarians

Their characteristics

Building, its enlargements -

Gifts. Mrs Gale. Mrs Vandenberg
Mrs Walker Gift
Mrs Pillsbury
Learning Branches.
Gift of Franklin Branch
Mrs Walker's gift (

Our Library Contributions

③ To State Library Commission -
State Traveling Libraries.

The County System -

Fee for non residents

Development of Dept.
Reference Dept. first
Technical Dept.

Technical
Art & Music
Business Branch
Connection with Schools
Teachers Room

Social Work
Factories & business houses
Hospital work
Social Service Proj -
Through Branches -

50 years ahead (c)
a long time

50 years backward
is short, like a
dream that is past.

I am a little different
in telling of these
past years, "all of which
I saw, and much of
which I know."

It seems almost as if
I were
bring

and refresh and inspire" as well
as teach. The library must be

a hospitable, desirable place to
come for recreational pleasures
as well as a scholars' retreat.

All this the library has tried
to be during these fifty fruitful
years. All this and more it
will continue to be.

But no institution can be greater
than the minds who guide it. Here
in this audience are many who have
served through the years. To them
I wish to show what it has received from
its public library. Is just such to follow
will the library over its future

Democracy School, it is a
Propagandist for education, It
believes in the dissemination
of Knowledge, it offers its services
Continually, it pushes itself
into notice, it advertises itself.
Continually, it spreads its opportunity
over the city, and welcomes every
new approach to the Community.

It means to be all things to
all men. — to young and old,
without age limit, to rich and
poor, without class limit, to
educated and ~~un~~educated, without
cultural limit

But besides its educational
function, it has a great social
function, Books are tools which
can give pleasure, as well as
Knowledge, Books can cheer
(ours)

May I quote from one of my
own Reports:-

The Library is the one institution
which gathers together and preserves
the printed thoughts of mankind
for the free use of all the
people. That is a great function.
But it is something far more
vital than a collection of
material waiting for some one
to come and use it.

The modern library is great living
working school for all the people.
It is the school for adults. The
school in citizenship for the foreigner,
the school in crafts for the artisan,
the chance for those who missed
an education.

But it is not only a great

Exposition Building
in June 1884

The public not used to the
rules - nor the American Exhibition

The very first Sunday
after the opening - an
article appeared
discussing Sunday opening
a whole Column of
opinion pro and con

Tonight we bridge a
gap of 50 years

Pop then was

The Ymca building

The Court House

City Hall now
all under 1901

The First Baptist Ch

Across the Street stood

The New Am M.E. Church

Major Byrd's house

with big elms across
the way

On the next street the

Orrwood's Home

Judge Wood's home

Traffic, horses - on street cars

Our literary meeting

Dec 12 8/1

Dec 14 6/4

Rich Langmuir

Highville Cape

At 4 o'clock the
carriages. with their

fashionably attired
occupants began to
arrive

Two days before boats
cannot be drawn -

(1)

50 years ago, is as clear
in my mind as yesterday, to
be present and to be a part
of an entirely new institution
which might perhaps exist for
hundreds of years was a great

privilege

Minneapolis, with its 160,000
population has now had a
public library. It has grown
to maturity, graduated hundreds
of students from its high schools,
but never before did it have a
public library.

How did it finally come
to be. Will you bear with a little
history of its beginnings, at this
anniversary. Many of you know of

its beginning, many of you do not
do you remember when stores
occupied the block which the
present fairpark now occupies,
stores facing on Washington; stores
running through ^{Hennepin} ^{in which Mr. Ester had a branch.}
to Nicollet, with the city hall ^{city}
reaching down into the point. ^{for 10 years we were here}
was the center of the city's ^{on} ^{day}
activity, the old Nicollet Hotel, twice
rebuilt was where it now is. But
all street cars converged at that
corner, when you will remember that
a little house with the street car starter
was located.

In this block, just back of
Vogel's drug store, where Mr. Ester had
a library station, was a building owned
by the Maple Athenaeum, a subscription
library which has been growing through
the years until it has a fine collection
of books. I remember in my early college
days, the scholarly old gentleman, Thomas
Hall Milman who was responsible for

Caring up this fine book collection
 to which scholars and teachers resorted.
 In 1884 he retired, and the
 Athenaeum Board were fortunate
 enough to secure a very cultured
 young Harvard man, Herbert Putnam
 a member of the great family which
 formed the publishing firm of G.P.
 Putnam's. He recognized at once
 that Mr. Peabody showed how a free public
 library. In the meantime two
 other great interests had been developing.
 The Minn Academy of Sciences, Caring
 up a scientific museum, had no place to
 house their collection and were considering
 a building. The Society of Arts, with
 Dr. Jewell's inspiration wanted to establish
 a gallery and a school for exhibits and
 a school for the Athenaeum Library
 had to have space to stretch -
 This far visioned young librarian
 soon was in touch with all these
 aspiring ventures, and getting them
 behind him, a building to house
 them all was soon planned. It

(4)

He was the man of the hour, and
he lived for more than he
dreamed. The city was behind him
and within a year, the Legislature
had passed an act amending the
city charter, so that a public library
with a tax levy might be established.
The Athenaeum library turned over its
collection of books in a 99 year contract,
the Minn Academy was the 3rd floor
and the Art School and gallery ^{had} ^{to have}
the Fourth floor. Everybody got behind the plan,
but that is the way it was, when
in 5 years after Mr Putnam ~~came~~
opened up library activities 30 years ago.
~~It was an exciting day, for~~
~~months books new books had been~~
~~coming in. It had been exciting~~
~~for the small library staff for~~
~~months before as boxes of new books~~
~~were coming in, being classified~~
~~and numbered and prepared for~~
~~the shelves. There were six of us~~
~~besides Mr Putnam, and 4 of us at~~
~~Mr Putnam are still alive and well~~
~~today. It only Mr Putnam comes here~~

But not Everybody got behind the
 place to locate this community
 building. When the site was built
 caught in 10th St. Many thought it
 was too far out. I can see
 just how it looked around it
 a residence district, big elm
 trees on 10th St as far as down
 to you can see, big elm trees
 down Hennepin, past Mr
 McKee's home and Mr Baston's
 who divides the big lawns between
 8th & 9th St. Major Bigelow's
 home was across the street, and
 down further, the Denwoodys on
 Mary Place (now La Salle) and Judge
 Woods across from them, Mr
 Carver Langdon big brick mansion
 where the Sterns Buick Co now
 is. Madras 10th St was a fashionable
 street and so was Harmon Place, and
 Hawthorne Ave was one of the fine

Streets of the city. The library was
really set down in the Residence
District and it did seem quite
always out. ~~At~~ Horace Cars
went jangling by, and fine carriages
drove along the elm lined 10th St.
But it was a quiet spot for the
first few years of its existence.

¶ Tonight we are bridging the gap
of 50 years - an exciting evening.
For months we had been unpacking
boxes of new books, and marking
them. Six of us including Mr Putnam
~~were~~ busy. For weeks we had been
directing invitation and picking stamps
even while we were so busy, some
energetic club women rushed
the sign, positively no admittance
and insisting on our hunting up a
book which she must have. The
Public had waited 3 years for that
building to be finished and they
couldn't wait any longer.
On the opening day, fine carriages

Began to roll up about 400
 o'clock in the afternoon and
 continued until 10⁰⁰. The Library
 Board and Mr Putnam received
 and the assistants stood guard in
 the book rooms and answered questions.
 Wang Orchestra played throughout
 the evening on the stairway platform
 decorated with ferns and flowers.
 The Papers called it our literary
 Mecca and described the building
 as sumptuous and an architectural
 gem. It was sumptuous; the
 Ladies Reading Room has terra cotta
 moquette carpeting and heavy silk ^{no ladies}
 hangings. The directors room ^{can have}
 an enormous room with green moquette ^{a room}
 and silk hangings were sumptuous. The
 directors now have a corner in the library
 office.

The next day Tuesday, bright and -
 early at 8.30 the parties were there
 open in earnest, But

Dear Me, Could anyone get a book
 no sir anyone had ^{to have} a certificate
 signed by some responsible household
 guaranteeing the borrower. That
 certificate had to be filed for
 two days. And the library ass'ts had
 to look up the residence of both
 borrower and guarantor, before a
 card could be issued. It was
 two days therefore before books were
 actually drawn. Children under
 14 years couldn't have cards at
 all. The public hadn't been
 accustomed to the use of a library
 and rules were irksome, the
 staff had no experience and
 hardly knew ~~how to handle the~~
~~technique~~ ~~crowds~~ or interpret
 the methods or rules. So we had
 some strenuous times until Mr
 Putnam ~~made~~ wrote a question
 and answer article explaining the
 reason for all this restrictions.
~~Anything stopping the crowd~~

They Mr wouldn't consider such
 rules now, they have all been
 wiped off the proceedings. But
 Anyway nothing stopped the
 public from using the library.
 The crowds often extended down
~~the~~ in two lines down the hall
 down the front steps to the front
 doors. There were so few books
 that it seemed to me that the
 shelves would surely be completely
 empty by night. There was no
 catalog, people didn't know what
 we had or what to call for.
 It was against principles to let
 any but the chosen few into
 the shelves, what few books we displayed
 were behind glass ~~shelves~~ partitions.
 The small staff had to be
 increased within a few months, and
 pages to run for books ~~had to~~
 were put into service.
 It was a busy, hectic winter and

No one but Mr Putnam could
 have kept the staff alive and the
 public satisfied. It was as
 new a job to him as it was to the
 public as to the staff. We learned
 much that winter, ~~that since the past~~
~~year~~. Perhaps nothing since then. The
 difference between then and now shows
 the change in rules. Then a borrower
 had to give a guarantor ship, and
 wait 2 days, and get one book for 2 weeks.
 Now he can get a card at once and
 draw as many books as he wants
 most of them for a month.
 Then

We have never been busier. No
one but Mr Putnam could have kept
the staff from getting discouraged
and the public satisfied.

That first winter two of the branches
were opened, one on Saukville
and one in rented quarters, and one in
the North High School basement and
the next winter the East Branch
was established in the old masonic
building. Mr Putnam started
almost everything that has been
done since and the anniversary
is the fruit of his early efforts.
He started our branch system
with the 3 first