

# Library Progress in Georgia

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THE establishment of a free public library is probably the most civilized gesture that it is possible for most communities to make, literature having the advantage over all the other forms of art in that its productions are capable of infinite reproduction, each copy, in fact, being just as much an original as any other copy, while the establishment of any agency concerned with any of the other arts is prohibitive except for the largest centers. The public library therefore may be regarded as the index number to the aesthetic and intellectual aspiration of a community.

However, in a study of any political or social unit from the standpoint of its attainment, it is necessary to measure it against the background of the economic and social conditions.

Georgia has a population of 2,895,832 of which forty-two per cent are negroes. Seventy-five per cent of the population is rural, that is lives in the country or in towns with a population of less than twenty-five hundred inhabitants. The total white urban population is 454,602, a population about equal to that of Milwaukee; the total urban population, white and negro, is 727,859, a population about equal to that of Baltimore. There is practically no foreign population.

The state has one hundred and fifty-seven counties, over two and one-half times as many as California which is over two and one-half times larger than Georgia. In 62 out of these 157 counties, the negro population is fifty per cent or above. There are fifty-eight cities and towns with a population of over twenty-five hundred.

Fifteen per cent of the total population is illiterate: five per cent of the white population and twenty-nine per cent of the negro.

Ten years ago Georgia ranked twentieth among the states in point of wealth. (No later statistics available from Census bureau).

## EARLY LIBRARY HISTORY

The establishment of libraries seems to have been practically co-incidental with the founding of the province if we are to accept the authority of one DeBrahm, official surveyor, who in his "History of the Province of Georgia," makes the following reference to books and libraries: "There is scarcely a House in the Cities, Towns, or Plantations, but what have some choice Authors, if not Libraries of religious, philosophical and political writers. . . . This Province was scarcely thirty years settled, before it had

three fine Libraries in the City of Savannah, the fourth at Ebenezer, and a fifth 96¾ miles from the Sea, upon the Stream of Savannah."

A library society was formed in Augusta in 1808: the Savannah Library Society was organized in 1809, uniting with the Georgia Historical Society in 1847; and the Young Men's Library Association of Atlanta was organized in 1867. Similar organizations were formed in the smaller cities and towns, all having for their purpose to make accessible to their members a collection of books beyond the possible limits of private libraries. But the development of the free public library idea in Georgia was due to the initiative and genius of Miss Anne Wallace who was appointed librarian of the Young Men's Library Association of Atlanta in the early nineties. At this time, there was not a municipally supported library in the state; nor was there a state library association, or a library commission, or a public library law, or an opportunity for professional training for librarians, or a trained librarian in the state. Before Miss Wallace left the Atlanta library in 1908, the establishment of public libraries was well under way and all the usual machinery for furthering the development of the library movement had been set in motion. Two meetings held in Atlanta in 1895 and 1899, respectively, served to focus attention on the library situation in the south: the meeting in 1895 was called the Conference of Women Librarians, held in connection with the Cotton States and International Exposition, and the meeting in 1899 was the first southern conference of the A. L. A. In 1897, the State Library Association was organized. Also in 1897, the State Library Commission was created, the law prescribing very comprehensive duties for that body to perform but at the same time stating "nor shall the state pay any expenses whatever that may be incurred in any way by this commission." Nor was it until twenty-two years later that the state agreed to provide in a measure for the expenses incurred by this agency in the performance of its work. A permissive state library law was passed in 1904, which empowered municipalities to appropriate money for the support of libraries.

In 1905, the Atlanta Library School was organized in connection with the Carnegie Library of Atlanta for the professional train-

ing of librarians. The school has now one hundred and sixty graduates, ninety-eight of whom are doing library work, principally in the southern states. There are now thirty-nine trained librarians in the state, representing six library schools.

In 1899, there was one municipally supported library in the state; in 1907 when the "Handbook of the Libraries of the State of Georgia" was issued there were thirteen free public libraries, all but two of which were supported from public funds; at the end of 1922, there were thirty-five public libraries, either endowed or receiving public funds but as five of these require subscription fees, this leaves thirty free public libraries in the state. In addition to these thirty-five libraries, there are forty-six subscription, club, or association libraries, two of which are free to the public.

Latest available figures show that the annual appropriation to these thirty-five public libraries aggregates \$187,354 of which about \$47,000 are appropriated for the thirty-three libraries other than Atlanta and Savannah. They contain 221,344 volumes and have an annual circulation of 1,062,602 of which 711,000 are circulated in Atlanta and Savannah and 351,602 in the other thirty-three places. Four of these libraries are county serving.

#### COLLEGE AND SCHOOL LIBRARIES.

The available statistics would indicate that college and school libraries are on the whole poorly provisioned. The twenty schools that come under this group report a total of 220,746 volumes for an enrollment of 12,222 students. The State University with its 1,400 students has about 53,000 volumes and 85,000 pamphlets. Some of these collections, notably those of the State University, Emory University, and the Georgia School of Technology contain some rare and interesting items: the University library has a valuable collection of early Georgia newspapers and Georgia manuscripts; Emory University has several pieces of incunabula while the Georgia School of Technology has one piece as well as many other rare and beautiful books. Figures of income for the libraries in these institutions are not available but deductions can be made as to their inadequacy from the statement that the library funds of the State University for 1914 were only fifty per cent greater than the income for 1850.

High school libraries and elementary school libraries are practically non-existent. There is one high school library in the state with a trained librarian in charge. The stipulation for the library of an accredited high school is as follows:

"The library should be an important part of

every high school's equipment. The value of the library is to be measured not by the number of books contained therein, but the use to which it is put and by the relation that the books when used sustain to the work and the interests of the pupils of the school. It should contain good dictionaries of standard kind, classical dictionary, indexed atlases, World Almanac, Rules of Order, a good encyclopedia, reference works for the subjects of study, and as many books for outside and general reading as can be afforded."

There is no state aid given to school libraries. The report of the Superintendent of Education for 1921 states that the total amount spent on white school libraries for the year was \$14,231.14 and that there are 1,810 school libraries in the 6,205 white schools. The total number of volumes is put at 323,049.

#### SERVICE TO NEGROES

Three cities maintain library service for the negroes: Atlanta, Savannah and Rome. The Superintendent of Education reports that \$801.60 was spent in 1921 on libraries in the negro schools and that there are one hundred and eleven schools libraries in 3,642 schools with 9,574 volumes. The negro colleges report 34,455 volumes.

#### PRESENT SITUATION AND THE FUTURE

The situation at present may be summarized as follows:

Thru the thirty-five public libraries, four county systems, and forty-six club libraries, there are 424,029 white inhabitants to whom books are accessible. This leaves 1,265,085 white inhabitants without access to a public library of any kind.

About 105,300 negroes have access to books in three public libraries. This leaves 1,101,062 negroes without access to books.

Of the fifty-eight places in the state of over twenty-five hundred inhabitants, twenty-eight are without a public library tho twelve have subscription libraries.

There are one hundred and three counties without a library of any kind within their borders.

The two means by which this condition can be changed are to develop a system of state wide county serving libraries and to extend the work of the State Library Commission.

As regards the development of county libraries, local conditions put limitations upon the full use of this method. Georgia has an enormous number of counties and, of course, the same administrative machinery is required whether the county is large or small or the inhabitants many or few, and consequently practically all the county revenue is spent in administrative ex-

pense. In some counties there are no towns large enough to have a library which could be used as a center of distribution or even enough white inhabitants in the entire county to support a library. Jones county is an instance of this kind. The total population of Jones county is 13,269 of which 3,866 are white and 9,403 negro. The county seat and largest town is Gray which has all told a population of 559 people. The revenue of the county is relatively small as it is in every county with a large negro population as the negro element is more of a liability than an asset. Jones county wishes to have a county library but conditions prohibit it. At present the county Board of Education is making a small appropriation for books and traveling libraries are being sent to the schools. Clearly, some other method must be devised if Jones county is to have books.

As yet there is no permissive legislation for the establishment of county libraries. Two years ago an effort was made by the State Library Commission to get a constitutional amendment thru the General Assembly, permitting counties to levy a tax for library purposes. Subsequently, a test case came up in the courts that had to do with the interpretation of the clause in the constitution permitting counties to tax for "educational purposes." The interpretation by the court of this clause was such that in the opinion of the attorney general, libraries could be included and he advised that statutory legislation only would be required. Accordingly, at the 1922 session of the General Assembly, an effort was made by the Commission to get statutory legislation in regard to county libraries passed. The bill was defeated but will be introduced again at the 1923 session. It will be necessary to get this legislation thru before any great progress can be made in establishing county libraries. In those counties now making appropriations, the county commissioners put a liberal construction on their powers and are supported in it by public opinion.

As regards the State Library Commission, its work is of first importance in developing a statewide system of library service. With the small appropriations to libraries, it is necessary that every dollar be made to bring the largest returns and the Commission with its expert advice on supplies, equipment, book selection and buying, and the problems of organization and administration is performing an invaluable service to the libraries of the state. The other phase of its work is of no less importance, namely, as an information service as regards what can be found in books. This latter service is being developed on two lines: thru traveling

libraries, consisting of books for general reading, which are sent to communities and schools, and package libraries which are sent to individuals in response to requests for information on specific subjects. The largest service in this respect has been rendered to the farmers. The following excerpt is taken from the latest report of the Secretary of the Commission:

"During 1922 the Georgia Library Commission sent out seven hundred packages of agricultural books and five hundred packages of books to teachers. If each of these packages of agricultural books increased a farmer's production only ten dollars a year, these packages alone have more than paid for the Commission. If each teacher to whom a package of books was sent has only twenty children under her 10,000 Georgia children have been influenced by the five hundred packages of books sent to teachers."

There is, of course, no limit to the possibilities of this service in a state with conditions such as exist in Georgia, but there is a decided limit to what can be done with the present annual appropriation of \$6,000. The Commission has had an appropriation from the state for only three years but with this meager appropriation it has, thru its expert service, made a demonstration of its value which can be translated into terms of dollars and cents which will probably be more effective in obtaining an increased appropriation than any other demonstration that could be made.

In regard to the school library situation, the course in library methods offered in 1922 as a part of the University Summer School is the most decided step forward that has yet been made in the school library field. The state high school inspector, who is also superintendent of the University Summer School, had the course put in, the University and Library Commission co-operating in giving the course, with the principal of the Atlanta Library School in charge of the instruction. The course was offered primarily for teacher-librarians in high schools but was open to librarians of public libraries. Thirteen students, representing five states, registered for the course and it was considered so successful that it will be offered again in 1923.

#### BENEFACTIONS

The largest benefactions to libraries in Georgia from one source are from Mr. Andrew Carnegie whose generosity made possible the establishment of twenty public libraries, four branch libraries and three college libraries. These twenty-seven Carnegie buildings represent a gift of \$570,000.

A library costing \$10,000 given especially for children was erected in 1917 in Griffin, by Mr.

A. K. Hawkes of Atlanta. This building was equipped with moving picture machinery and a provision of the donation was that educational films for children be presented free. Mr. Hawkes died in November, 1917 and it was learned from his will that libraries similar to the Hawkes Free Children's Library of Griffin were left to Cedartown, Elberton, West Point, Dalton, Greensboro, and Thomasville. Each of these cities was to receive from the Hawkes estate \$7,500 of which \$6,500 was to erect a library building, \$500 to be spent for books and \$500 for moving picture equipment. Three of these towns have completed their buildings, Cedartown, Elberton and West Point. Owing to the great advance in building cost each of the towns has found it necessary to supplement the Hawkes gift. The city of Cedartown raised \$17,500, and so spent \$25,000 on its library.

The first free library in the state, the Mary Willis Free Library of Washington, was erected in 1889 by a gift of \$20,000 from Dr. Francis T. Willis in memory of his daughter. The library also has an endowment of \$17,000 from the same benefactor.

In 1900 another public library was given, this time to Macon, the gift of Hon. S. B. Price and Mr. T. J. Carling, known as the Price Free Library. This library, which is located in a mill section of the city, will probably be brought under the administration of Macon's new public library which has just been completed. This, costing \$50,000, is to be known as the Washington library and is the gift of Mrs. E. W. Bellamy in memory of her brother, Hugh Washington.

The Woman's Club of Norcross dedicated a library building in 1921 erected from a bequest of \$4,000 from the late Edward Buchanan.

The Marietta library has an interesting history. The building erected in 1893 and modeled in miniature on the reading room of the British Museum was given by Miss Sarah Freeman Clarke, a sister of James Freeman Clarke of Boston. The original collection of books also presented by Miss Clarke contained autographed copies of New England authors who were personal friends of Miss Clarke. There were some volumes from the library of Oliver Wendell Holmes which contained his book-plate engraved with a design of the chambered nautilus.

The Eatonton Public Library, which was given a Carnegie building, has also a special endowment of \$5,000 for a book fund known as the Prudden fund.

The University of Georgia has three special endowments the income from which is spent for books: the Alumni Library Endowment Fund (for cultural and recreative reading), the Wymberly Jones DeRenne Fund (for Southern

books, especially Georgiana) and the David Crenshaw Barrow Fund. Since 1905 the University library has been housed in a building given by George Foster Peabody, the building costing \$50,000.

A benefaction of Mr. Carnegie which has meant more to Georgia library development than any other gift and has had an influence on the entire South is the annual appropriation of funds for the support of the Library School which since 1905 has been maintained in connection with the Carnegie Library of Atlanta.

#### SEABOARD AIR LINE TRAVELING LIBRARY SYSTEM

A notable library work is carried on by the Seaboard Air Line Railway Company which may almost be considered a Georgia library enterprise since it is a continuation of the work begun by Mrs. Eugene Heard, of Middleton, Georgia, twenty-four years ago as a memorial to her son and still has headquarters at "Rose Hill," the old Heard plantation. Mrs. Heard's daughter, Mrs. James Y. Swift, is the present superintendent, with a trained librarian in active charge of the work, and books are sent to any community reached by the Seaboard Line, with a special effort to serve Seaboard employees. In Georgia, which is only one of six or seven states served by the Seaboard Air Line Library, there are two branch libraries in the railroad shops of Savannah and Americus, and one in the Railway Y. M. C. A. in Atlanta. Books are sent in cases for the use of schools and communities and in bags to individuals and their families. In January, 1923 sixty-two collections were in use in the state, forty-two by individuals and twenty by Georgia communities.

#### SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

There are several special collections that should be mentioned in any survey of the state, the two most notable being the library of the Georgia Historical Society at Savannah and the Wymberly Jones DeRenne Georgia Library at Wormsloe, Savannah.

The Georgia Historical Society was organized in 1839; since 1876 it has occupied its own quarters in Savannah, Hodgson Hall, the gift of Mrs. Margaret Telfair Hodgson as a memorial to her husband. The Society's collection consists of about 40,000 volumes and contains many manuscripts, documents, newspapers and books relating to Georgia history.

The Wymberly Jones DeRenne Georgia Library is so called for its founder, Wymberly Jones DeRenne (1853-1916). It is a collection of manuscripts, documents, maps and books relating especially to the colonial, revolutionary and early state history of Georgia tho it contains also some important material relating to the Confederacy and the Civil War, notably

the original manuscript of the Confederate Constitution with the signatures of all the delegates, and the correspondence of General Lee and President Davis.

The collection is housed in a fire-proof building, built in 1907, at Wormsloe, the estate of the Jones family near Savannah, which was granted

by Oglethorpe to his friend and companion, Noble Jones, great-great-grandfather of the founder of this library. It was a family of collectors, the father of Wymberley Jones DeRenne having had probably the most complete collection in existence on Georgia history, which was destroyed by Sherman's troops in 1865.