

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THE SOUTH AS A REGION

A STUDY of the development and present status of any social institution must be projected against certain background features. This involves a consideration of the geographical environment, the economic development, and the social attitudes of the region. While there are certain distinct geographical differences among the states in this section called "the South," there are certain elements of homogeneity which have profoundly affected the general development of the area. The climate, rainfall, and soil have been peculiarly fitted to the production of certain crops, all of which thrive best under certain typical conditions.

In Virginia¹ and North Carolina the staple crop was tobacco, which involved a great deal of routine work and hence was cultivated successfully with slave labor. Rice and indigo, requiring marshland, were the staple crops of South Carolina and the seaboard of Georgia, and, since marshland was considered destructive to the health of those who worked in it, only Negroes, it was thought, should be exposed to its ravages.²

Sugar was the staple crop of Louisiana and lower Mississippi, and it required large investments of capital for

¹ Virginia, however, never found slave labor as profitable as those states farther south.

² W. D. Weatherford and C. S. Johnson, *Race Relations* (Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1934), p. 121.

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machinery and therefore could be cultivated profitably only on large plantations where there was concentration of labor. This also favored a slave regime. Finally, the great staple crop of the interior was cotton, which took the whole year to grow and harvest and hence, in its production, the energies of slave labor could well be utilized.³

Both tobacco and cotton ate up the fertility of the land thus requiring constant shifts to new and unexhausted areas. The work of clearing this land, as well as cultivating it, was distinctly of routine type and offered additional opportunity for the use of large groups of unskilled workers.⁴

The border states of Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee did not benefit to so great an extent by the agricultural labors of the slaves as did certain of the other southern states, but they found it profitable to sell their Negroes to the cotton states below.⁵ If ever there was a land where every condition seemed most favorable for the development of a slave regime, the southeastern states seem to have been that land.⁶

Though Texas and Oklahoma differed from the Old South in many characteristics, they were sufficiently like the southeastern area in climate, population, economy,⁷ and social attitudes to influence similarly the development of any social institution such as the public library.⁸

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ J. R. Smith, *North America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1935), p. 7.

⁶ Weatherford and Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

⁷ R. B. Vance, *Human Geography of the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935), p. 316.

⁸ It will later be seen, however, that in some sections of these two states library patterns were often followed which were inconsistent with those of the Southeast.

And, as for Texas, its adherence to the Confederacy further identified it with the older region.⁹ Thus, for the purposes of this study, it is possible to group these two sections together under the term "South."

Though the slave regime ended with the Civil War, its effects have vitally influenced the future development of these areas.¹⁰ Economically the South has never recovered. The plantation system is gone, but there has developed in its stead, and largely as a result of it, the present vicious system of farm tenantry. The whole cotton-tobacco economy with its attendant abuses keeps the South, despite its wealth of natural resources, at the bottom of the list in any regional analysis of economic resources.¹¹ Without adequate income no section may hope to provide even the minimum requirements of the present social order.

Not only has the South been affected economically by its former plantation system, but it has been equipped with a social heritage which also vitally affects its total development. The institution of chattel slavery¹² carried with it the implication that the Negro was subhuman and incapable of the attainments and devoid of the sensibilities of the white man.¹³ The persistence of this general attitude after the abolition of slavery may be taken for granted. As Garfield said: "I do not expect seven million men to change their hearts . . . to love what they hated and

⁹ Vance, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

¹⁰ See also chap. ii.

¹¹ *Report on the Economic Condition of the South* (prepared for the President by the National Emergency Council, 1938).

¹² Oklahoma did not enter the Union until 1907 and therefore was not a slave state, but her general attitude toward Negroes is that of the Old South, though divergencies are often apparent.

¹³ H. M. Bond, "Social and Economic Influences on the Public Education of Negroes in Alabama" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Education, University of Chicago, 1936), p. 29.

hate what they loved . . . on the issue of a battle."¹⁴ In fact, the Civil War in many instances intensified hates and confused loves, and, as in any society, the South attempted to meet the new conditions of life by ways which seemed to it satisfactory and profitable, though these ways may not have been the best ways. By long usage these particular modes have become hardened into customs and now dominate the thinking and attitudes of the people.¹⁵

GENERAL PUBLIC LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOUTH

The development of public library facilities for Negroes in the South must be considered in terms of this analysis. But before the facts are presented it will be well to review briefly the general development of library facilities in the region.

In 1876 Arthur Mazyck, librarian of the Charleston Library Society, Charleston, South Carolina, writes:

. . . and we must say with regret that notwithstanding the occasional instances of favorable progress . . . a view of the condition of public libraries in the Southern States presents after all but a barren prospect. In proportion to the population their number is exceedingly small, they are poorly supported; are conducted on no general or fixed system, and are confined usually to the large cities, while the smaller communities in these States are, for the most part, absolutely destitute of this most necessary means of education and refinement.¹⁶

This was 1876. In 1921 at a meeting of the American Library Association in Swampscott, Massachusetts, it was discovered that the public and association libraries of

¹⁴ Speech of Hon. J. A. Garfield of Ohio, in Appendix, *Congressional Globe* (39th Cong., 1st sess. [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1866]), p. 165, quoted in Bond, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

¹⁵ Weatherford and Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 507.

¹⁶ U.S. Bureau of Education, *Public Libraries in the United States* ("Special Report" [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1876]), p. 1890.

Salem, Massachusetts—at that time a city of 43,000 inhabitants—contained more volumes for public use than all the public libraries of Asheville, Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Greensboro, Durham, Raleigh, Goldsboro, and Wilmington, North Carolina; that the holdings of the Essex County Law Library were larger than those of the libraries of the Supreme Court of North Carolina and the principal law libraries of the state; and that the library of Essex Institute owned more books and pamphlets than the library of the University of North Carolina.¹⁷ Other statistics show that the situation in North Carolina was typical if not better than that of many other southern states.¹⁸

The South, however, did not remain entirely unconscious of its delayed library development. In the early twenties encouraging signs of interest and even deep concern became evident. Two of the most encouraging signs were the organization of regional associations—the Southeastern in 1920 and the Southwestern in 1922¹⁹—and the revitalizations of state associations. From their establishment, the regional associations met to plan and to confer rather than to read papers.²⁰ Their leaders were fully conscious of the South's peculiar problems and needs. Miss Charlotte Templeton, a former president of the Southeastern Association, put it very aptly when she said:

The South cannot afford a haphazard, trial and error method of developing its library services, we have too much to make up, we have

¹⁷ L. R. Wilson and E. A. Wight, *County Library Service in the South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), pp. 15-16.

¹⁸ M. V. Crenshaw, "Public Libraries in the South," *Library Journal*, XLII (March, 1917), 163-74.

¹⁹ T. D. Barker, *Libraries of the South* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1936), p. 1.

²⁰ L. R. Wilson, "New Objectives for Southern Libraries," *Papers and Proceedings of the Southeastern Library Association and Southwestern Library Association* (1934), p. 58.

too great a distance to travel; our means are too slender for any part of them to be squandered on futile efforts. We need a well thought out plan; . . . we need to pool our experiences, and co-ordinate our efforts.²¹

With this as a philosophy and with capable leaders the regional associations brought to library thought and effort in the South an unusual degree of direction and focus.²²

One of the methods employed by the regional associations to promote more adequate library facilities in the southern area was the stimulation of lay interest. This was done in many ways, but outstanding among them was the library conference. The most significant of these for the region as a whole, according to a specialist on southern library conditions,²³ was the conference held at the University of North Carolina, April 7-8, 1933. It was sponsored by the American Library Association and the Southeastern Library Association and was called by the president of the University. Its participants included leaders from various fields of endeavor, and the questions discussed covered the status of libraries and reading in the South and the relation of the library to other educational and social agencies. Eighty-three representatives attended the conference, and interest was expressed by many unable to attend. The findings of the conference "constituted a farsighted definition of principles for library and social progress in the South."²⁴ These findings and the *Proceedings* of the conference were widely distributed, and the result of the meeting was an increased enthusiasm in library development.

²¹ American Library Association, Board of Education for Librarianship, *A Study of the Library School Situation in the Southern States* (Chicago: The Association, 1931), p. 45.

²² Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

More tangible results also ensued from this vitalizing of library thought and action. In 1927 the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Southern States adopted the high-school standards for libraries proposed to them by the committee of the Southeastern Library Association. These standards have proved to be the pivotal point of school library development in this region.²⁵ The activities of this same committee were also instrumental in getting the Southern Association to adopt standards for college libraries and departments of library science.²⁶

Even though the state library associations came before the regional groups in point of time, the influence which the state groups have exerted on library development has been far more significant as a result of the stimulus of the larger organizations. With this stimulus as a motivating force, state associations have made outstanding contributions. Growing out of their efforts have come formal library commissions or departments charged with the duty of some sort of library promotion,²⁷ and this contribution to library progress cannot be minimized. Also, as with the regional organizations, the state associations have stimulated lay interest in library development. The president of the Alabama Library Association said in a speech to his organization in 1922 that "getting the people of Alabama to understand that libraries are a necessity in any cultured community is our first job."²⁸ This same idea was the

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

²⁶ L. R. Wilson, "Report to the Southeastern Library Association of the Committee on Relations with the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Southern States," *Papers and Proceedings of the Southeastern Library Association* (1930), pp. 64-65.

²⁷ L. R. Wilson, "The Library in the Advancing South," *Papers and Proceedings of the Southeastern Library Association* (1926), p. 8.

²⁸ *Bulletin of the Alabama Library Association*, I, No. 4 (1922), 2.

basis of much of the activity of the state associations in the period which followed 1920. In North Carolina the Library Association in 1927 promoted the formation of the "Citizens' Library Movement." This movement had beneficial results as shown by an increased appropriation for the State Library Commission and some local libraries, by the reorganization of subscription libraries into public libraries, and by first appropriations from public funds in cities and counties.²⁹ In many other states a similar movement was also initiated by the state association.

A significant characteristic of the library development in the decade which followed 1920 was a more general awareness of the need for the extension of library service to the rural areas, which at that time were practically devoid of any privileges. From the struggles of the small town and village libraries wherever they existed in the United States, it had been shown that these institutions could never receive sufficient financial support to render effective service. In certain sections of the country, however, it had been demonstrated that a larger unit of administration and support, such as the county, could afford more adequate rural library facilities. In the light of this experience, the southern states, with a high percentage of their total population composed of rural folk, began to be more concerned about the establishment of larger units of library service in the form of county libraries.

A few examples, however, of county library service in the South may be traced back even before 1920. Among them may be mentioned the service of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, with headquarters at Charlotte, which was begun as early as October, 1912, though it had to be discontinued in January, 1915, because the County Board

²⁹ Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

of Education discontinued the appropriation; the service of Durham County, North Carolina, with headquarters at Durham, begun in April, 1914; the service of Guilford

TABLE 1*
REGIONAL SUMMARY OF INDEX OF PUBLIC LIBRARY
DEVELOPMENT, 1929

Region	Rank	Standard Score
Northeast.....	1	+1.02
Midwest.....	2	+0.88
Far West.....	3	+0.60
Northwest.....	4	-0.13
Southwest.....	5	-0.47
Southeast.....	6	-1.90

* Source: L. R. Wilson, *The Geography of Reading* (Chicago: American Library Association and the University of Chicago Press, 1938), p. 188, Fig. 53.

TABLE 2*
REGIONAL SUMMARY OF INDEX OF PUBLIC
LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT, 1934

Region	Rank	Standard Score
Far West.....	1	+1.68
Northeast.....	2	+0.58
Midwest.....	3	+0.41
Northwest.....	4	-0.43
Southwest.....	5	-0.04
Southeast.....	6	-0.19

* Source: Wilson, *The Geography of Reading*, p. 186, Fig. 51.

County, North Carolina, begun in April, 1915, with headquarters at Greensboro;³⁰ and the service extended to Hamilton County, Tennessee, by the Chattanooga Public Library. The exact date of the establishment of the Ham-

³⁰L. R. Wilson, "The County Library: An Agency To Promote General Reading," *American City*, XX (April, 1919), 340-42.

ilton County service is not known, though it was officially in operation before 1920.³¹ Despite these few examples, county library service in the South did not receive its great impetus until the twenties, and even in the thirties, though the service was no longer regarded as a new idea, its distribution could not be characterized as extensive.

TABLE 3*
REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE SEVENTY-SEVEN LIBRARY
CENTERS OF THE UNITED STATES OF OVER
500,000 VOLUMES

Region	Number of Centers	Number of Volumes	Total Population	Volumes per Capita
Far West.....	10	18,076,844	8,285,491	2.18
Northeast.....	29	73,832,646	38,513,071	1.92
Middle West.....	24	35,884,559	33,961,444	1.06
Northwest.....	3	3,537,112	7,382,497	0.48
Southeast.....	8	5,578,168	25,550,898	0.22
Southwest.....	3	1,958,277	9,079,645	0.22
Total.....	77	138,867,606	122,773,046	1.13

* Source: C. B. Joeckel, *Library Service* (Staff Study No. 11, Prepared for the Advisory Committee on Education [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1938]), p. 29, Table 2.

Though from 1920 on much improvement was apparent in all types of library service in the South, its facilities still remained below the national average. Wilson, in his *Geography of Reading*, graphically portrays this fact in two charts depicting library conditions in the United States in 1929 and 1934. Data from these charts are presented in Tables 1 and 2, and it is quite clear from these figures that the southern regions, as compared with the remainder of the country, were at a decided disadvantage.

Even more recent statistics show the poverty of the South in regard to book resources, as shown in Table 3.

³¹ Information from the Chattanooga Public Library.

Out of the seventy-seven library centers in the United States of 500,000 volumes, only eleven are in those areas known as the Southeast and Southwest; and, when measured in terms of volumes per capita, the paucity of resources is even more apparent.

DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE
FOR NEGROES

If this, then, is the general picture of the background and development of southern library facilities, it will be less difficult to understand the growth and present status of public library service to Negroes. Not only must the handicaps caused by the general inadequacy of library provisions be overcome, but, in addition, there must also be considered those other factors, social and psychological, which fundamentally affect the progress of any Negro institution.

In broad terms it may be said that the growth of public library service to Negroes paralleled that of the development of facilities for the white group, though its extent has been less inclusive and of smaller magnitude. During the slave regime and the Reconstruction Period one would hardly expect to find public library facilities available to Negroes in the South, and one does not. Nor does the last quarter of the century produce any noticeable variation from the earlier pattern. With the beginning of the twentieth century, however, a change is evident. Public school systems, of some sort, had been established for the minority group;³² illiteracy was decreasing, and the Negro was well on the way toward a more normal participation in the American social order.

³² E. E. Redcay, *County Training Schools and Secondary Education for Negroes in the South* (Washington: John F. Slater Fund, 1935), pp. 1-2.

In the period 1900-1910 a number of public libraries in the South extended service to the Negro reader. In the main, this service was made available either by restricted privileges at the main library or by the establishment of a separate branch to serve the Negro patron. The limitations imposed at the white library were usually the denial of the use of the reading-room, or the privilege of browsing in the stacks, though books could be borrowed for home use. The type of restriction varied from city to city but, in the majority of cases, was present in some form.

Two of the most interesting, though not particularly widespread patterns, which public library service to Negroes was destined to follow, were in the making as early as 1903. In this year the Cossitt Library of Memphis, Tennessee, entered into an agreement with Lemoyne Institute, a Negro school, whereby the school would furnish the room and the Cossitt Library would furnish the librarian and the books. In addition to being a school library, this collection was accessible to all interested Negroes of the city of Memphis and its surrounding district.³³ This is a procedure which has been followed, with variations, since that time.

One year later the Rosenberg Library of Galveston, Texas, a private institution, followed a similar course, though connected with it were certain other developments which made it unique. The board of directors of this institution established in 1904,³⁴ a Negro branch of the Rosenberg to serve as a public library agency for the entire Negro population of the city of Galveston. To house this branch the board of directors built an addition to the Central High

³³ W. F. Yust, "What of the Black and Yellow Races?" *Bulletin of the American Library Association*, VII (July, 1913), 162-63.

³⁴ Opened for service, January, 1905.

School building,³⁵ thus making it the first example of a structure which was erected for the sole purpose of providing quarters for a public library to be used exclusively by Negroes.

The second library pattern of peculiar interest to Negroes developed in Charlotte, North Carolina. A library for the white group was incorporated in 1903 by the legislature in a special act entitled, "An Act To Incorporate the 'Charlotte Carnegie Public Library.'" ³⁶ In addition to the establishment of the above institution, this act created, at the same time, a separate Negro institution to be governed by an independent board. These sections of the act read:

SECTION 23. That there shall be in the city of Charlotte a public library for the colored people, to be known as the "Charlotte Public Library for Colored People."

SEC. 24. That Thad L. Tate, J. W. Smith, P. F. Maloy, P. P. Alston, H. A. Hunt, W. P. Phifer and their successors be and they are hereby created a body corporate by the name of the "Charlotte Public Library for Colored People," and shall have charge of the library for colored people, with the same powers, duties, responsibilities, etc., as are conferred on the trustees beforementioned for the white library. That the Board of Aldermen shall provide a suitable place for said library, and the said trustees shall make all rules, regulations and by-laws for its government and have all the powers conferred on and subject to the limitations imposed on the white's trustees.³⁷

This is the earliest example of the independent Negro library.³⁸ To provide quarters for this new library, the city spent \$5,000 on a site and the erection of a building, thus giving to Charlotte the honor of being the first city to build a library for Negroes with its own funds.³⁹

Unfortunately, the act which created the library did not

³⁵ Data from J. S. Ibbotson, present librarian of the Rosenberg Library.

³⁶ *N.C. Private Laws* (1903), chap. 16.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Did not open for service until 1905.

³⁹ Yust, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

provide a very satisfactory means for its maintenance. It stipulated:

That the Board of Aldermen shall annually turn over to the trustees of said library for the white and colored people the sum of twenty-five hundred dollars, which the people voted for that purpose on May 6, 1901; that the said sum of twenty-five hundred dollars shall be distributed between the trustees of the two libraries in such proportion as is just and equitable, all things being considered.⁴⁰

By 1913 the annual income for the institution seems to have become stabilized at \$400, and, because of this inadequate revenue, the book collection had been built up in the main through donations.⁴¹ In 1911 the head of the white library enlisted the aid of a woman in Pittsburgh, who collected 600 volumes throughout the North for the library. Also the librarian at Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, sent to it the best of her discarded books.⁴²

With such meager support achievement is arduous and difficulties are inevitable. Since governmental organization may often be partly responsible for the failure or success of a public institution, it was perhaps felt that some change in the original plan might alleviate some of the problems. Consequently, in 1917, the legislative act of 1903 was amended. At that time Sections 24⁴³ and 26⁴⁴ were stricken out and Section 25⁴⁵ had the following clause added: "The board of trustees of the Charlotte

⁴⁰ *N.C. Private Laws* (1903), chap. 16, sec. 27.

⁴¹ Yust, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ See p. 20.

⁴⁴ *N.C. Private Laws* (1903), chap. 16: "That . . . term of office shall expire . . . and their successors shall be elected by the Board of Aldermen of said city."

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: "That the two libraries shall be separate and distinct, and one shall be for the white race and the other for the colored race. That the white library shall be used exclusively for white people and the colored library for the colored people."

Carnegie Library hereinbefore provided shall have the power to select other trustees who shall have immediate charge of the Charlotte Public Library for colored people, under the general supervision of said trustees of the Charlotte Carnegie Library." The library continued to operate under this governmental organization until 1929, when it was changed to a branch of the Carnegie Public Library in order to comply with the stipulations of the Julius Rosenwald Fund with respect to Negro service, when that library became one of the Rosenwald county demonstration units.⁴⁶

When the Louisville Free Public Library opened in 1905, there was a plan for ten branch libraries, two of which were to be for Negroes. The first of these was opened in rented quarters the same year the main library was established, but three years later was moved into a new Carnegie building.⁴⁷ The cost of the plant was approximately \$45,568, which included the following items: site, \$3,180; improving grounds, \$1,048; building, \$27,511; light fixtures, \$433; furniture, \$3,395; and books, \$10,000.⁴⁸ The organization at Louisville was on a more extensive scale than that found in any other city at that time. The branch librarian and his two assistants were Negroes,⁴⁹ and the foundation was laid for the creation of a "Colored Department" operated and administered entirely by Negroes, though supervised by the main library. This department actually came into existence with the opening of a second branch building in January, 1914,⁵⁰ and has remained until the present time the only example of this kind of pro-

⁴⁶ Wilson and Wight, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

⁴⁷ Yust, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

⁴⁸ G. T. Settle, "Good Reading for Negroes. I. The Louisville Free Library," *Southern Workman*, XLIII (October, 1914), 537.

⁴⁹ Yust, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

⁵⁰ Settle, *op. cit.*, p. 539.

cedure in any public library system in the United States. This type of departmental organization is perhaps of special significance in that the department is rated above the level of ordinary branches, with the main Negro branch acting in the capacity of headquarters for Negro service in both city and county.

Louisville realized that buildings and books alone did not make a library but that personnel was an important factor in any successful public library enterprise. In accord with this idea, an annual apprentice class was established for those interested in library work.⁵¹ Originally the applicants had to be residents of Louisville, but this regulation was waived so that young women from other cities might be admitted. All candidates were required to have a high school education, or its equivalent, and to pass an examination at the end of the course. In addition, three months of practical work in the library was compulsory before the apprenticeship was satisfactorily terminated.⁵² This apprentice class is the first example of any attempt in the South to provide library training for the prospective Negro librarian. That it served a need of the time is evidenced by the fact that other cities, such as Houston and Memphis,⁵³ sent their Negro branch librarians to Louisville for their professional education. No other means of training seems to have been made available until the establishment of the Hampton Library School many years later.

The second example of independent governmental organization for Negro library service seems to have come

⁵¹ Louisville Free Public Library, *The Colored Department* (Louisville: The Library, 1927), p. 7.

⁵² R. D. Harris, "The Advantages of the Colored Branch Libraries," *Southern Workman*, XLIV (July, 1915), 389-90.

⁵³ B. W. Bell, "Colored Branches of the Louisville Free Public Library," *Bulletin of the American Library Association*, XI (May, 1917), 170.

with the establishment of a small library in Savannah, Georgia, in 1907.⁵⁴ It originally was housed in rented quarters but later moved into a Carnegie building which it has continued to occupy as an independent institution until the present time.

Houston followed the example of Charlotte and Savannah and organized its Negro public library service as an independent unit.⁵⁵ It was established in 1909 and was housed in the Negro high school but was moved into a Carnegie building in 1913. Later its organization was changed to a branch of the general city library system, and it is still operating under that form.

The number of libraries offering service to the Negro did not seem to increase rapidly or uniformly during the period 1910-20. The growth could perhaps best be described as sporadic and limited mainly to comparatively large urban areas. The governmental form most often adopted was that of the branch affiliation.

In contrast, the growth in facilities from 1920 until the present has been far more even and consistent. It has been mentioned that the decade following 1920 was one of general library advancement, and this increased understanding and enthusiasm was reflected in the development of service for Negroes. State and regional library associations took cognizance of the prevailing inadequacy of the existing public library provisions and included service to the minority group in their programs for expansion, and county libraries brought tax-supported public library service within reach of the rural Negro for the first time. Never before had he been allowed the opportunity to enrich his cultural experience or to broaden his vocational activity through the resources of a free public library.

⁵⁴ Yust, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

Even during the depression years both rural and urban progress has been apparent. One outstanding project which influenced the development during this period was the organization of the Rosenwald county demonstration libraries already referred to in regard to the Carnegie Library of Charlotte, North Carolina.⁵⁶ "The Fund stipulated that equal service was to be given to all of the people of the county, urban and rural, white and Negro, and that the service be adapted to the needs of the group."⁵⁷ Miss Tommie Dora Barker, regional field agent for the South of the American Library Association during the period in which the experiment was tried, says of it: "In addition to extending library service to 140,459 Negroes who had never had library privileges before and greatly enlarging the facilities for the 111,403 who were already receiving some service, an important precedent was established which has had influence throughout the region."⁵⁸

Another factor which gave impetus to the development of public libraries for Negroes in the South was the establishment of the Hampton Library School in 1925. Though this school was founded primarily for the training of college librarians, its influence has been felt in all spheres of library activity. Through its efforts both the Negro and the white citizens of the area have become more aware of the contribution which a well-administered public library may make to the life of a community. The director of the school, Miss Florence Rising Curtis, through her individual efforts has done a superior job in promoting the cause of better library service for the Negro. It was with sincere regret that Negro librarians noted the closing of the Hampton Library School effected in June, 1938.

⁵⁶ See p. 22.

⁵⁷ Wilson and Wight, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

⁵⁸ Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

State library agencies have not exerted so much influence on the establishment of public libraries for Negroes as one might suppose, nor, as a whole, have they rendered extensive service through their own collections. As early as 1913 the Kentucky Library Commission reported two libraries of fifty volumes for circulation among the minority group.⁵⁹ According to Mr. Yust, this was the only state in the area under discussion which reported a library extension program for Negroes from a state agency. In 1926, when the American Library Association made a study of library extension services, the situation was little improved. Three state agencies offered service to Negroes—Kentucky, North Carolina, and Texas.⁶⁰ No later information on this type of service seems available in print, but more recent data have been collected for this study and will be presented in a subsequent chapter.

An interesting system of library extension service for Negroes sponsored by private enterprise was that established in 1910 by Mr. James H. Gregory of Marblehead, Massachusetts. Mr. Gregory, a wealthy, elderly gentleman, applied to Mr. G. S. Dickerman of Hampton Institute for the names of important schools in the South so that he might send to their students on graduation certain "character-forming books." In the course of the correspondence Mr. Dickerman brought out the lack of suitable libraries for Negroes and suggested that Mr. Gregory's efforts in this direction might prove useful. This idea appealed to the old New Englander, and he immediately began to plan for a traveling library service. Lists of appropriate material were solicited from Negro schools and from

⁵⁹ Yust, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

⁶⁰ American Library Association, Committee on Library Extension, *Library Extension* (Chicago: The Association, 1926), p. 76.

Miss Sarah B. Askew of the New Jersey Library Commission. Miss Askew's work in the rural sections of New Jersey had caught the attention of Mr. Dickerman, and through him her advice was sought. The final purchasing list was made up of books from both the above sources and additional titles added by Mr. Gregory. Each library consisted of about 48 volumes, and distribution was effected through the Atlanta University Library. All sets were available to any individual who agreed to be responsible for the collection, or to any institution, on the same basis.⁶¹

Advancement in public library facilities for the Negro has unquestionably been made, but this progress has been somewhat dimmed by the darker aspects of the situation. The total picture, in terms of character of service and extent of coverage, is not one which is especially encouraging. Joeckel, in his recent publication, *Library Service*, gives some insight into the condition when he says:

In practice throughout the South, public library service is usually available to Negroes only in those places where separate library agencies for Negroes are provided. In other places, library service is commonly limited to the white population. In 1935 only 83 of the 565 public libraries in 13 Southern States were reported as giving service to Negroes. Of the 9,000,000 Negroes in these States, only 1,500,000, or one-sixth, reside in places where public library service is available to them.⁶²

SUMMARY

In a summary of the growth and development of public library service for Negroes in the South, certain facts are pre-eminent. No service seems to have been offered prior to 1900, but in the decade following the turn of the century several public libraries extended service to the Negro

⁶¹ Data for paragraph from G. S. Dickerman, "The Marblehead Libraries," *Southern Workman*, XXXIX (September, 1910), 490-500.

⁶² P. 15.

reader. In the main, this service was made available either by restricted privileges at the main library or by the establishment of a separate branch to serve the Negro patron.

Two of the most interesting patterns which public library service to Negroes has followed were initiated as early as 1903. The Cossitt Library of Memphis, Tennessee, entered into a contract with Lemoyne Institute, a Negro school, to provide public library service to the Negro citizens of Memphis; and in the same year there was established in Charlotte, North Carolina, a Negro library with an independent board of control. To provide quarters for this institution the city of Charlotte spent \$5,000 on a site and the erection of a building, reserving for Charlotte the honor of being the first city to erect a library for Negroes out of its own funds. In 1904 the Rosenberg Library of Galveston, Texas, constructed an addition to the Negro high school to house its branch which was to serve the entire Negro population. Thus this library has the unique distinction of being the first public library for Negroes to begin active service in a structure erected solely for that purpose.

Louisville was the first city to organize service for Negroes on an extensive scale and was the first city to provide professional training for prospective Negro librarians. No other opportunity for library training was made available until the opening of the Hampton Library School in 1925.

In the period 1910-20 the number of libraries offering service to Negroes did not increase rapidly or uniformly, and extension of service was largely confined to comparatively large urban areas. In contrast, the growth from 1920 on was more accelerated and more even in its spread,

and through county service the rural Negro came into some portion of public library development.

The Hampton Library School and the Rosenwald demonstration units have widely influenced the development of library facilities for Negroes in the South, but state library agencies have not contributed so much as one might reasonably expect toward the establishment of libraries, nor have they rendered extensive service through their own collections.

Though considerable progress has been made in the field of public library service for Negroes in the South, the complete picture is still one of variation and inadequacy.