

FRYEBURG WOMAN'S CLUB LIBRARY

The Fryeburg Public Library had its first beginnings in the fall of 1888 and winter of 1889. A small group of women in the town of Fryeburg decided to have regular weekly gatherings to promote "intellectual stimulation." These meetings took the form of debates and discussions with an occasional speaker being called upon to address the ladies. This group chose as their name -- "The Fryeburg Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Society." They adopted a formal constitution and held their meetings in each other's homes.

Soon after 1890 they found it necessary to have a permanent collection of books from which they could gain information for their discussions. The next problem was how and where to make these books available and accessible to all members.

The ladies were given the use of a room over the Shirley & Lewis Store and a permanent book collection was established here. These books were mostly donated by interested women with occasional gifts and fund raising projects for necessary needed items.

About 1902 a new school building was completed in Fryeburg. Through a little friendly coercion from the women to their husbands and town fathers, the old stone schoolhouse, "in deplorable condition," was given to the Society in 1903 for a club building. It must have been about this time that the name was changed to "Library Club." This original stone building was built in 1834, and was in continual use as a school until 1903.

Over the years the women repaired the building, removed partitions, built a fireplace, "Donated one chair and one teacup each"; and added to their book collection. However, the books continued to be for the use of club members only. Several systems of volunteer library services were tried,

consultants were called in from the state library to help in cataloging from time to time, and the club attempted to hire one of its members as librarian, after donated services proved unsatisfactory.

Not until 1950 did the women decide to become a "public library open to all the inhabitants of the township". Funds were asked of the town at the annual town meeting for the purchase of books, and to aid in heating the building and paying for the services of a librarian. In 1956 a financial and circulation report was included in the annual town report.

At the request of the librarian, in 1954, the office-workroom was added and a small rest room was installed. An old shed had been renovated into a children's room in 1938.

In 1956 Mr. Clarence Mulford, the author of the Hopalong Cassidy stories and a local resident for many years, died. In his will he left his reference books, his personal library, his office furniture, his gun collection, and all his beautiful models to the Woman's Library Club. He also specified that funds be made available from his estate for the addition to the Library of a room suitable for housing these collections; and that a trust fund be established for its maintenance.

Extensive renovations were made. The new Mulford Room was added with a cellar below in which was installed an adequate heating system; the Children's room was enlarged to conform to the Mulford addition; and a kitchen was added for the convenience of club meetings and benefit suppers.

At the present time the Library receives over \$1,000.00 from investments other than the Mulford Fund, about \$800.00 yearly from the Mulford estate, and an equal sum from the town.

They have also received many other rather valuable gifts over the years and have tended to serve as a sort of historical society also. Nementos of

Robert Peary, Daniel Webster, General Frye's teapot, a sermon of Wm. Fessenden, paintings by Newman and sculpture by Volk, are examples of this type of gift.

The library is maintained by the Woman's Club through a board of trustees composed of 6 women, members of this club, 2 of whom are elected each year. The librarian, treasurer and club president are members of the board without voting privilege. These trustees are responsible only for the physical care of the property, the supervision of financial affairs, and the hiring of the librarian. This librarian is responsible for all of the actual library work. Club members are welcomed as "Friends of the Library", but much of the volunteer work of the library is performed by interested women and teen-agers in the town. The club exists primarily as a social group. There have been three paid librarians so far, all of whom have been college graduates and interested in books, in reading, and in people. No written personnel policies or library procedures have been in existence.

This library has an unusually large collection of children's books for the size of the town and has always enjoyed an excellent rapport with the young readers. School classes come to the library during regular school hours and cards are kept on all the children in town listing the books read. These cards are returned to the child when filled and turn up as well loved souvenirs many years later. The teachers borrow specified numbers of books to be kept in the classroom and these collections are changed once a month.

Books are loaned to a local nursing home on a regular basis. The local B.P.W. club and the Now and Then Club (those in the community over 70) use the building occasionally for their meetings.

The librarian has a good work room and a special reference department is located beside her office and adjacent to the newly installed telephone.

The reference collection and teen-age departments are small and are maintained primarily at the 7th and 8th grade level as all students 9th grade and above attend the local academy which has a fine school library which is privately endowed. This Academy library has an excellent reference collection and much fiction geared to the regular school reading lists. Therefore the Woman's Club Library is geared to adult taste in fiction and non-fiction with a large mystery division.

Fryeburg is a small, (population in 1966 was 1,987 people scattered over the Center, the Village, North Fryeburg, East Fryeburg, and the Harbour) rural community. The Saco River Valley has much very fertile farm land and large dairy herds are common. Its many lakes offer summer recreation and it is midway between two major ski areas for winter recreation. There are only two local industries - a lumber mill and small shoe shop. The majority of the population are self employed in small stores, farms, and in the recreational business. Fryeburg Academy serves as the local area high school and has an additional 180 boarding students from all over the United States and Canada.

The Library had a circulation over 11,000 last year for a community under 2,000 people. This must mean that a lot of people are reading a lot of books. The trustees would like to see the library open more hours and could use more funds for more books, but meanwhile, we hope we are continuing to "encourage the habit of good reading and cultivate a literary atmosphere for the surrounding area by maintaining the Library" as was stated in the original constitution of the Library Club, as their objective.

## FRYEYBURG LIBRARY HISTORY

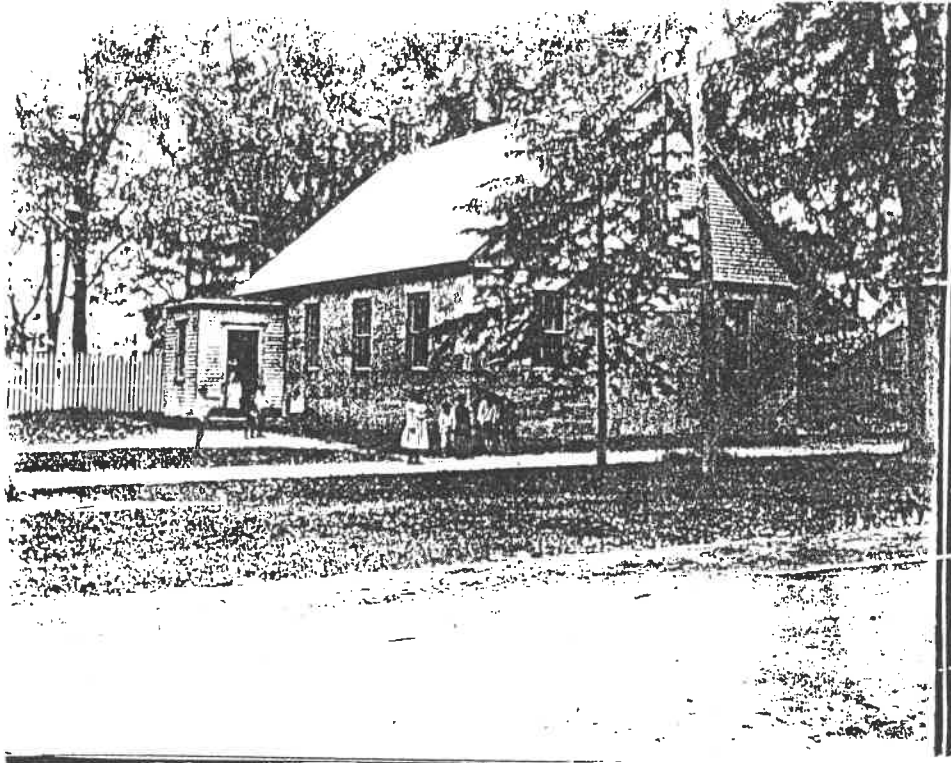
I am happy to tell you a little about the Fryeburg Public Library. It is of interest first to look at the history of the building itself which is one of the oldest buildings in the town. It was built by a Mr. Arnold Floyd of Conway Center for a School house. The work started in August of 1832. The building progressed so well that a meeting was held in the new school house on December 24 of the same year. A Miss Abbie McMillan was the first teacher and she infers that this was the first school taught in the building. It was built of grey granite, with green blinds, a small tower or belfry, stone steps and a front door very much like the present one.

On April 2nd, 1833, it was "voted that this house be open at all times on the Sabbath, and at other times when not in use for a school, to any minister of good moral and religious principles and of good character.

On August 25, 1890 a group of Fryeburg women formed a library club. They started out by holding meetings in their respective homes. They acquired a few books and when the books became too bulky to take from home to home shelves were made in the back room of a local store. The club grew, the number of books grew, and no doubt the business of the store grew along with the book customers.

At the March Town Meeting in 1903 the Town generously gave the Fryeburg Woman's Club the "Stone School House" to fit it up for a library. Over \$400.00 was spent repairing the building. The location of the library is unsurpassed, facing the western mountains. The present day Library Club realizing the value of the Town's gift attempts to express an appreciation by returning, in part, to the community some of the benefits received. The students of Fryeburg Academy are given the use of the rooms for study and reference work. During the winter of 1924 the Home Hygeine Class held it's meetings in the library,

The aims of the Woman's Club members today still hold fast to the aims of the founders. They achieve to bring education and relaxation to all town residents through the medium of books.



Keyeburg library when it was a schoolhouse.

New Library Building, Fryeburg.

Address of A. F. Lewis, Esq., at the Dedication of the Woman's Library at Fryeburg, Nov. 13th.

MISS PRESIDENT AND FRIENDS:—I am very happy to be with you on this pleasant occasion, the dedication of your new library home. This is indeed an age of libraries and reading—books, magazines and newspapers falling from the press as thick as the leaves of Vallombrosa. The world is in danger of being inundated, overflowed, yes, deluged with an ocean of literature of all kinds and qualities. If all that comes from the press were good and helpful to mind and morals, we might say to it, "Welcome." But so great is the number of readers and so great the time given to reading that it has become a question with some thoughtful minds whether the quality of the books and the reading we so largely have is an unmixed blessing. Some intelligent and discriminating readers do not hesitate to put the reading habit as now indulged in by many as among the dissipations.

Mrs. Edith Wharton has an essay in the October number of the North American review on "The Vice of Reading." That sounds rather paradoxical to some of us. She maintains that it is a mistake to advocate that young people should contract a habit of reading which is often classed with thrift, sobriety and early rising, as a virtue to be cultivated. Thus people are induced to read something, no matter what, and think they are becoming intelligent. She calls this "mechanical" reading, or "volitional" reading, and condemns both. No reading, in her judgment, amounts to anything which is not done because a person cannot help it. The cheap novel and the so-called interesting magazine are only means of intellectual dissipation and debilitation. She is most concerned for those of this class of readers who are moved to be writers also. No doubt those are mechanical readers and mechanical writers, but this cannot be prevented. The trouble is that at the age when boys and girls are taught to read and write it is not easy to select those who will turn out to be discriminating readers and inspired authors; but it is best to teach them to read and write and take the chances.

Bacon says, "Some books are to be tasted." Of many books we may say the smaller the taste the better for the faster. I trust that all such books may be conspicuous here by their absence. This room is too fine for the presence of such literature, and from what I know of the members of this club I feel sure that all such books will find no lodgment here. Bacon also says, "Reading makes a full man." It would hardly be considered a compliment to day to call a man "full," so also 1800 years ago, as we read in the Book, emptiness "swept and garnished" was preferable to fullness. There is sometimes too much of fullness.

Fullness and emptiness are relative terms. The fullness of the modern man and the ancient man is the result of very different elements, but they are both the effect of the same fullness, too much of "evil spirits."

If all writers of books and reading matter were as careful and thoughtful as the old Italian master, Fra Angelico, was about the influence of his paintings, we should see a marked improvement in our modern literature. He never commenced a picture without a prayer that he might make it pure and beautiful and put into it all that was heavenly and divine. Those old masters painted for time—we might almost say for eternity. Their motives were art, beauty and truth, not gain and lucre. And now, when one of their old, worn and moldy canvases is found stowed away in some loft or garret fabulous prices are paid for it. They command thousands, yes, for some of them hundreds of thousands of dollars. Or if their purpose and motives were like those of one of our best English poets, who, when he sent forth one of his columns of verse, accompanied it with this imploring benediction:

"Go, little book, from this my solitude,  
I cast thee on the waters, go thy ways;  
And if, as I believe, thy vein be good,  
The world will find thee after many days."

If all books were like that they would be like sweet evangels, renewing and reforming and regenerating the world. If we had only such books and literature, I had almost said we could dispense with our churches and ministers, so great would be their influence and evangelizing powers. What wonderful foists, what strength, what power for character and brain-building men and women have found in the days long gone in little libraries, little in numbers of books, but great and mighty in quality, in influence and inspiration to all that is great and ennobling in human life. Look at Lincoln, Greeley and Franklin, see what they got out of the few books they read by the light of the pitch knot pine. Now with the multitude of books, the endless amount of reading, in the rush and whirl of life, we glance at, we skim over and hurry, so that practically we get but little benefit from our reading and it well nigh becomes a waste of time.

When Webster came here a hundred years ago, he found in our then small village what was called "the social library" composed of a few choice books upon history, biography, science and poetry. He read and studied them carefully, and in his letters written at the time speaks of finding books here that he could not find in the great libraries of Dartmouth College. A few of those books are now in the Academy library; more are in that omnium gatherum dwelling of our village, that museum, so full of books, pictures, bric-a-brac and curios, which so delight the antiquarian, the student and the scholar.

Now, Miss President, a word in regard to your new home, its surroundings and associations. Dr. Holmes says, "It is great happiness to live in an old house haunted by memories." I suppose I didn't mean what is commonly understood by a "haunted house." You have what has been an old house, modernized and made new, which has stood here 70 years, and, escaping the fiery element made, like the Pantheon of Rome, to last 70 centuries; beautified by books, beauty, art and adornment, located in the fairest section of our village, near where the original academy stood fifteen years known formerly as "The French Corner," where, in Fryeburg's "Golden Age," lived many of the families that gave character and dignity to the town—the Osgoods, sometimes, erstwhile, Miss President, called "The Royal Family of Fryeburg." I am glad to note that you worthy president does her part toward keeping the flag of her family and the town "still full high advanced."

Also near this spot the Clements, the Towles, the Howes, the Ripleys, the Griswolds, the Danas and the McMillan. In this immediate neighborhood we born and lived a trio of poets with a national reputation, two of them now living, the bright and versatile Gov. Li-

coin having written "The Village," in a house where he lived just across the street. By the way, this was the first volume of poetry written in Maine. He in this vicinity lived two Governors of Maine, two Members of Congress, a Minister to Bolivia, a distinguished judge and a Senator of the United States.

Then there is an aroma of pleasant association in the old original Academy being moved here and standing on this spot a quarter of a century. Its walls echoed to the voices of the poet, preacher, the seer and prophet, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Harvard's beloved Professor, Rev. Dr. Andrew P. Peabody. I was kind enough, at my suggestion, to give to your library all the numerous books he has written, and the steel engraving of his own benignant face which now adorns the walls of this library room. And then when this same building stood on yonder plot, our great Academy teacher there taught boys and girls how to be men and women, and later on taught men and women how to make a great, a growing and a glorious country. After surviving its uses here as a theater for the instruction of the young, and for receiving lessons in spiritual instruction from the Great Over Soul, it was moved down upon Portland street, and there was used for repairing worn and dilapidated under-soles by the father of the late Gov. Pingree of Michigan. Thus the old building was worn out and moved away, and finally went up in fire and smoke in November, '66. "You may break, you may shatter the vase, you will, But the scent of the roses will hang 'round still."

OVER

So, my friends of the Woman's Club, let me congratulate you that you are now housed in your new and beautiful home, on a spot and in a neighborhood hallowed with so many delightful associations and haunted by so many pleasant memories.

In conclusion, I give you this sentiment:

The Woman's Library Club of Fryeburg, its useful and beneficent work is already felt as an inspiration to a new and better life. May it live long, "hang its banners on the outer walls," and continue its good work of "sweetness and light," till it shall bring Fryeburg back to its "Golden Age."

Mountain Ear 9/14/54



(Karen Cummings/Mountain Ear Photo)

## Library named to register

It's now known as the Fryeburg Women's Library, but when it was built in 1832, the granite building at 98 Main Street in Fryeburg, Maine, was a school building. Due to the efforts of the Fryeburg Woman's Library Club (which took over the use of the building in 1903) and club member Jean Warren, the District No. 1 Schoolhouse has been added to the National Register of Historic Places. In making the announcement in Washington, D.C., Senator William S. Cohen said the school was one of only two known school buildings in Maine built entirely of stone. Two wood-framed wings have been added to the schoolhouse, one of which was donated in 1957 by the late Clarence E. Mulford, an illustrious Fryeburg resident. Mulford was the creator of Hopalong Cassidy as well as other western characters. The Mulford room contains memorabilia of his works dating back to the 1920s, in addition to other documents from the history of Fryeburg. The schoolhouse served primarily for grades one through eight.