

## The Abbie Greenleaf Memorial Library.

Conspicuously located on a plot of ground bordering Main Street, the Abbie Greenleaf Memorial Library building is a gem of architecture and the pride of the citizens of Franconia.

This little village, nestled in a hollow of the mountains, had been the adopted home of Charles H. Greenleaf during the many years of his connection with the Profile House. Having the best interests of his fellow townsmen at heart, Mr. Greenleaf with his keen observing mind could discern the needs of the community, and the citizens can recall with much appreciation his many expressions of generosity, the best of all being the presentation to the town of this beautiful building. Already the town had acquired several thousand books, the number being far in excess of proper accommodation, so the news of this great gift in 1912 was received by the taxpayers with mingled feelings of surprise and delight.

We can hardly realize that there was a time when our forefathers did not have the privileges of a library like ours, but we learn it was not until after 1750 that any such institution was in existence, for we read that the first traces of a tendency towards the development of the public library came with the establishment of the social library, the first of which is said to have been located in our state at Dover and came into existence in 1776. It was incorporated in 1792 and thrived for a number of years, and between 1792 and 1853 two hundred and fifteen social libraries sprang up in as many towns in the state. Of these, none could be really classed as free libraries; most of them charged a fee for membership, or were owned and managed by some association or

school district, so the library privileges were limited to comparatively few of the inhabitants of the town.

In the lower part of the state especially, much interest had developed in "book reading", and in 1822 a free library was opened in Dublin, and this excellent example was followed by neighboring towns, the libraries being generally supported by subscriptions collected from the inhabitants. In 1849 the state of New Hampshire passed a law authorizing the towns to tax the people for the establishment of public libraries, being the first of the states to do so. During the next half century many such libraries were organized, and Peterborough has the honor of having the oldest tax-supported public library, not only in this state, but in the United States.

In this general awakening of better reading service throughout the state, Franconia had its part. The attractiveness of its many scenic beauties in days gone by as well as the present time brought to the town many enthusiastic lovers of the beautiful in nature and literature. Among the permanent summer residents were the authors, Mrs. Annie Trumbell Slosson and W. C. Prime, and their fine literary taste was shown in the 100 books presented to the citizens March 1, 1880 these being the nucleus of our present library. Kate Field (1838-1896) has written

"They talk about a woman's sphere  
 As though it had a limit.  
 There's not a place in earth or heaven,  
 There's not a task to mankind given,  
 There's not a blessing or a woe,  
 There's not a whispered 'Yes' or 'No',  
 There's not a thought, or life or birth  
 That has a feather's weight of worth  
 Without a woman's in it."

all of which is very applicable in this case, for we feel that

the establishment of this institution in our midst was the result of the feminine foresight of Mrs. Slosson, materially assisted no doubt by Mr. Prime, and for their generosity the citizens will always be grateful.

The presentation of these books was a splendid thing for the educational development of the town, and the citizens have shown their appreciation of the gift in the care of ~~these books and the addition of the best in literature as time~~ has gone on. A small room in the southwest corner of George H. Burt's store was secured for the housing of these first 100 volumes, the room being where <sup>now</sup> the staircase is located leading to the general hall above. The building, situated near the Sugar Hill bridge, was later bought by the I.O.O.F. and is at this date (1928) owned and occupied by L. L. Bowles, general merchant.

The patrons of "Burt's store" naturally became the patrons of the library as well, the genial proprietor serving as librarian, his salary as far as recorded being---nothing--- for twelve years of service. It was called the "Social Library" and was supported by membership fees and fines, the hours probably being those when the store was open. No records can now be found of the number of members, or in what way the number of books was increased, but an important change in library affairs was made in 1892 when it was voted to make the Social Library a Free Library to all the inhabitants of the town.

The books, which by this time had increased to 339 in number, were then moved to a room in the east end of the

present Post Office building and two years later to the larger room in the west end of the building. The first trustees were Marshall A. Bowles, James M. Smith, and W. F. Parker. Miss Daisy Wood<sup>u</sup>ard was chosen as librarian, and later Miss Eva Aldrich became her assistant. The room was open twice a week, on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 2-5 and 6.30-8 p.m. As time went on more books were added to the collection, some being gifts from the summer visitors, but largely the source of supply was from the town treasury.

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For about 20 years this room served well its purpose for the housing of the books, but the yearly additions had so increased the number that by 1912 the accumulation had overflowed the shelves devoted to their use.

Then Charles H. Greenleaf came to the rescue. He had always taken great interest in the town's prosperity, given employment to its people whenever possible, listened with interest to the needs of the people through the town officials, and noted the village improvements that had come with the years. He knew of the inadequate library accommodations, and the idea came to him of providing a suitable library building as a memorial to his wife, Mrs. Abbie Greenleaf. This being his aim, he spent much time and thought in the development of his plan.

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An acre of land bordering the north side of Main Street was purchased, and over 1000 loads of gravel were used to fill in and grade the lawns, which are bordered with a cement curbing. Stately brick and cement posts topped with electric lights were placed on each side which adds dignity to the two entrances, and the cement walks leading to the building are separated by a space for flowers, this being usually gay with blossoms in the summer

season.

Mr. Greenleaf visited several libraries and conferred with many architects before he definitely decided on what style of a building should be used, and surely the result "is a lasting monument of the true spirit of one of Franconia's most respected citizens." This building is patterned somewhat after the library in Augusta, Me., with some of Mr. Greenleaf's suggested improvements. It is placed nearly in the center of spacious lawns, and the gray sandstone and Indiana brick, which is used on the outside, blend in a pleasing manner with the surrounding landscape. Several cement steps, protected with an iron railing, lead up to the front entrance, and driveways at the back entrance allow the fuel etc. to be taken through a large door which also provides a means of entrance for the janitor with the necessary tools for the care of the building and grounds.

The basement extends under the whole building, is well lighted by several windows and electricity, has a water supply, a cement floor, and contains the fuel to supply the one large furnace which heats the building. A steel spiral staircase extends to the upper floors, the second floor occupying the entire length of the building is used as storage room for books and magazines and has a cement floor. The building is practically fireproof, and has steel girders on the inside with mahogany trimmings and furniture.

The ground floor is entered through a vestibule, and a heavy glass panelled door separates this from the spacious main room which is divided into three departments, each end being of the same size and shape with a fireplace surmounted