



LOWER CAPE FEAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc. BULLETIN

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WILMINGTON, N. C.

NOVEMBER, 1965

A Story of the Port of Wilmington

By James Laurence Sprunt

THE PORT OF WILMINGTON was in my early days far more picturesque than at present; before I was born its commerce in naval stores and lumber, the main exports, was borne by sailing ships, gradually supplanted by steamers in my day. It was an absorbing diversion, living on the river as I did, to observe the various types of vessels in the harbor: barks and barkentines; brigs and brigantines; and schooners, three-masted, four-masted, and, if I am not mistaken, an occasional five-master. There were also several "stern wheelers" of such shallow draft that they could navigate on a heavy dew, or so it was said. One in particular was quite large and carried passengers and freight to Fayetteville. The others were smaller and traded with the settlements along the river which the railroads did not serve. There were also many large log rafts destined to the several saw mills; two men operated long oars, called sweeps, and another used one as a rudder; somehow they managed to keep these rafts on their proper course. Small two-masters called "Corn Crackers" did a thriving local trade along the river and sounds.

There was also a graceful and speedy passenger and freight steamer that plied between Wilmington and Southport, stopping off at Kendal, Orton, Carolina Beach, and Fort Caswell, then an active Army post.

Just below our home was a dock where rosin in barrels was loaded. It was fascinating to observe the process, for in place of steam winches the barrels were hoisted from dock to vessel by a stout line on a pulley secured to a mast, one end with a large hook and the other hitched to a mule. A colored man had hold of the mule by a bridle or halter and at a singsong command the creature would go forward and raise the barrel and, at another, walk backwards to let it down into the vessel's hold. All day long this went on; the monotony of the mule's backward and forward movement paralleled the fate of blind Samson turning the grinding machine of the Philistines. So far as I know the mule reached his Journey's End without the satisfaction Samson had in pulling down the temple of his tormenters. Today the winch of a steamship is called the Donkey Engine, and I wonder?

SINCE SAILING CRAFT could carry only a small portion of cargo compared with steamers and since the former required a far greater number of sailors than, in proportion, did steamers, the old port of Wilmington always contained a number of sailing ships and had a large contingent of sailormen seeking recreation. The Christian merchants organized a

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MEETING

Time: November 17, 1965, 8:00 p.m.

Place: Gilmour Hall of the First Presbyterian Church, Third and Orange Streets.

Speaker: Dr. Herbert R. Paschal, Head of the Department of History at East Carolina College.

Subject: The Stamp Act.



Dr. Paschal, a native of Suffolk, Virginia, received the A.B. degree from Wake Forest College in 1950 and later the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of North Carolina. At one time archivist in the State Department of Archives in Raleigh, he has taught at Eastern Carolina College since 1955. His publications include "The Tuscarora Indians in Bertie County" and *A History of Colonial Bath*.

A letter from the PRESIDENT

Douglas Hudson

The purpose of this Historical Society is to collect and preserve records and materials and disseminate knowledge and information pertaining to the history of the Lower Cape Fear area, the state, and the nation. No print or picture or other means can ever serve this purpose so well as the fine old buildings that are still standing in our City. These are the only visual links to the past that can give our community individuality and give its citizens understanding, inspiration, and realization of their potentials. Through neglect and decay it is possible that within another half century we will lose most, if not all, of the City's significant historic buildings. As your new president, this thought alone makes me acutely aware of the responsibility the Society has to the community.

The most important single project for the coming year is that of doing something positive about preservation. A start was made when the Division of Community Planning of the Department of Conservation and Development was asked to prepare a plan for the historic district. Preparation of the plan will start officially in November, 1965.

The realization of the plan and its recommendations will depend on how well its purpose is understood by the community, and the Historical Society can play a most important part by helping to create this understanding.

What will the historic area plan do for the community?

1. It will give assurance to residents, property owners, and those contemplating purchases of property that nothing can be built or altered that will detract from the style of architecture which has made the district attractive.
2. This assurance of permanence of architectural heritage will encourage many to improve their properties and increase civic pride in the district.
3. It will prevent any deterioration in the future—the possibility that the district will ever become a slum.
4. It will be a strong stabilizer and enhancer of real estate values.
5. It will further focus attention on the area and increase its importance to its residents and to the community.
6. It will be a factor in assuring the authentic restoration of structures of historic or architectural importance.

I am looking forward to working with all of you in carrying out our duty to preserve our architectural heritage of proven worth for future generations. If we, as a Society, do not act, we are as guilty as though we had wittingly destroyed these buildings and relegated our history to the photograph and printed page.

A Story of the Port of Wilmington

(Continued from Page 1)

"Seaman's Friend Society" to afford decent, though dull, outlets for them. A reading room with a collection of books and foreign newspapers and rooms for sleeping were provided. Various clergymen volunteered to conduct services in a small chapel and benevolent ladies to lead the singing and play an organ. My father sometimes took me to these services and I still have a slight memory of their dreariness.

The Seaman's Friend Society had most active and enthusiastic competition by a group of "dive" keepers emulating the infamous "Barbary Coast" of San Francisco's harbor, and I am afraid they had the bulk of the business.



Waterfront, Cape Fear River, North of Market Street. Note Government Cutter, Old Custom House, and the Ferry. Rosin barrels in foreground. Around 1900.

The lot of the sailormen in those days was really deplorable: they were poorly fed, poorly paid, and absolutely subject to the dictates of their vessel's captain. The only reason for their calling must have been a love of adventure or no other opening. Making matters worse for them were the Hell Ships owned and operated by their captains. Powerful and brutal first mates were often hired whose job was to abuse the seamen to such a hateful degree that they would desert at the first port of call, thereby also deserting their pay to the enrichment of the captain and doubtless the chief mate. The only method of securing another crew was to enlist the services of a local dive keeper who would give prospects knockout drops (now called Mickey Finns) after they were too drunk to notice, then rifle their pockets of any leftover cash and dump them over to the Hell Ship where they lay in a stupor until the ship was underway. This process was known as "shanghaiing."

ALIFELONG FRIEND of my father, Mr. Gilbert Potter Kidder, on one of his regular Sunday dinners with us, told the following story:

The most notorious local purveyor of such unfortunate sailors was known as Foretop Smith, an ex-seafarer who plied his trade for some years, until nemesis caught up with him in the form of two high spirited young sailors whom he had shanghaied. Instead of considering the episode just a rub of

the game, they signed on for the next ship going to Wilmington with blood in their eyes and, on arrival, wended their way to Foretop's dive. With pretended joviality they ordered drinks, carefully poured out under the table when Foretop's back was turned. After calculating accurately when the knockout drops were presented they slumped over in pretended stupor and old Foretop approached with a wicked leer. As he felt in their pockets for their remaining cash they rose up and between them tore Foretop into shreds. And that was the end of him, but not of Mr. Kidder's story.

The reputable merchants of Wilmington, he continued, were so relieved and pleased with the demise of Mr. Smith that they prevailed upon their foremost lawyer, none other than the Hon. George Davis, to undertake the defense of these two young avengers. This eminent lawyer visited the sailormen in the jail, told them he had been engaged to defend them and required of them implicit obedience to his directions, which were to repent for their precipitous action and to request the services of a clergyman for divine guidance and comfort.

At first our heroes swore up and down that they would have none of it, but rapidly changed their minds when informed coldly that they would not be defended otherwise. Thereupon, the lawyer gentleman went to the most prominent divine of a leading religious denomination and informed him that the two young assassins were seeking religious consolation and here was a golden opportunity for him to lead two black sheep back into the fold. The minister accepted the mission forthwith and proceeded to the jail to commence his ministrations on two meek and respectful sinners. Then the lawyer proceeded to the editor of the newspaper and informed him of the human drama taking place in the jail with the eminent minister of the Gospel in mortal conflict with Satan for the souls of the unfortunate young sailormen. This was fine grist for the editor's mill and he entered into the publicity with enthusiasm. Between the efforts of the minister and the work of the editor, public interest soon reached the boiling point. When the young men were baptised in the river the day before the trial, an immense crowd was on hand to witness the triumph of good over evil. The result of the trial was almost an anti-climax, for the jurors gave a hearty "not guilty" in very short order.

Now *this* is not the end of the story, either, for years later, there appeared at the office of the eminent lawyer a dignified middle-aged man who said, "I see you do not recognize me, Mr. Davis."

"No, I do not, Sir; you have the advantage of me."

"Why, I am one of the young men you defended for the killing of Foretop Smith."

"I do not socialize with murderers. Be so good as to depart."

"But, Mr. Davis!" he protested. "Ever since that day of acquittal I have been a follower of the Lord and am now a Baptist minister."

The days of the sailing ships, the patient mule, the stern wheelers, and the tribulations of the sailormen have vanished into thin air, the Foretop Smiths gone from the scene never to return. But they make for an episode in the history of our section of considerable interest to those of us whose look must perforce be more backward than forward. Would that a pen ever so much more skillful than mine would commemorate it.

Development of Libraries in the Lower Cape Fear

By Barbara Beeland Rehder

VIII. The Controversy Over the Wilmington Library Association's Rooms

THE ROOMS to which the Wilmington Library Association moved in 1858 came about through an interweaving of affairs of the Association with the Thaliens. In 1854 the land on which stands the present City Hall was sold by the City at auction for \$13,000, of which half was allowed the Thalian Association because it was in possession of the Old Academy on the land at the time. The City, as agreed, bid back the land for the purpose of building City Hall and Thalian Theatre, to which the Thaliens were to give their share of the money. Not until August 1856 was final agreement reached, by which the City was to assume responsibility for building the Theatre and was to include "lecture rooms" for a Public Library and Reading Room, these apparently to be "in the vacant space above the stage of the theatre." The Thaliens in turn were to equip the Theatre and pay semi-annually a rent of seven per cent of its building cost.

In April, 1858, the Library Association requested the City Board to allow it the use of the unappropriated rooms in the new edifice, and the Commissioners authorized the "committee in charge" to designate some accommodations for the library. (Judge Cantwell later pointed out that this could be legal only while that board was in office, one year.) The two rooms designated were most likely above the stage in an area of thirty by sixty feet, since these are the dimensions of the stage.

The Theatre was completed August 1858, at the soaring cost of \$17,815.80. Two years later the Thaliens, completely out of range of their means, were in debt \$2578.46 to the City. They formally surrendered the Theatre in September 1860.

The Library Association meanwhile gained possession of its rooms and remained throughout the war, and apparently everyone involved had the impression that there was some legal basis for their possession.

Five weeks after the fall of Fort Fisher in January 1865, the Federals occupied Wilmington. That summer found the Freedmen's Bureau established in North Carolina. The first records we have of the Library after that time begin in December.

December 1865. "The Association met this evening at the Commissioner's room according to appointment. Our Library rooms having been taken possession of by the Freedmen's

Bureau . . . appointed W. L. Smith and T. B. Carr a committee to take charge of and box up the books until further action could be had by this body."

NORTH CAROLINA had lost forty thousand soldiers to war or disease. The land was bled white, every home mourned its dead, and all bore the burden of defeat. Yet there was hope of rebuilding. President Johnson had appointed W. W. Holden governor in May 1865, and some progress was made before the carpetbaggers, Negroes, and native scalawags ushered in the debauchery of the Reconstruction and Holden himself ran amuck. Peace itself was full of promise, and in the first days of 1866 literary interest was by no means dead.

March 1866. A group of men met at the home of O. G. Shaffer to form the Wilmington Lyceum. (A "lyceum" was quite similar to a debating society, as was a "chatauqua.") That same month the Lyceum, according to minutes most handsomely inscribed by Secretary James Sprunt, applied for admission in a body into the Wilmington Library Association. This was made possible by a provision in the Library's constitution which stated:

"The members may form themselves into a class or classes for the investigation or consideration of literary, scientific, or other subjects tending to improve the mind, elevate the moral or religious character, or to promote the interest of the Association, and the class or classes so formed shall have the privilege of holding their meetings in the Reading Room . . ."

The Wilmington Literary Association had been accepted under this provision December 1865; the Lyceum was admitted "as a class" March 1867. These provide us with some knowledge of the Library's operations in these dark times.

November 1866. Meeting held in the Library Rooms. Dr. W. G. Thomas, President, delivered the annual report: "that the books of the library had been collected together, and carefully rearranged and replaced upon the shelves and that a correct catalog had been taken of them which was submitted . . . The Library had been much injured and a very many of the books taken . . . It was impossible to find out how many were missing as all record books and papers had been destroyed by the Federals." There were 1300 volumes catalogued.

January 1867. The Library noted receipt of a "handsome donation" of books from Major W. P. Taylor and a gift of 227 volumes from Dr. Thomas B. Carr, including 106 calf-bound. The fee for the projected series of lectures was settled at fifty cents the lecture.

March 1867. Board Minutes. Colonel W. L. Smith from the Committee of Conferences for obtaining either possession of, or compensation for the Reading Room laid before the Board

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the last of three articles tracing the development of libraries in the Cape Fear area from Colonial times to the present day. The first article appeared in Vol. VII, No. 2 (February, 1964), the second in Vol. VIII, No. 2 (February, 1965).

the draft of an agreement by which the room was to be leased by the officers of the Freedmen's Bureau. This was executed as a two year lease by General Rutherford.

August 1867. The Librarian, then receiving a salary of twenty dollars per month, was instructed to complete the set of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and buy two dozen new chairs.

February 1868. A loan of books from S. A. Ashe was noted. The proceeds of a lecture by Mr. David Macrae were \$120, of which he refused any part but requested that half be given to the Ladies' Benevolent Society (later the Catherine Kennedy Home).

September 1868. "Mr. S. H. de Rosset of London, England, having purchased from Lord [Bulwer] Lytton the copyright for England and America of a new play just written by him, it is necessary, to secure the copyright, that the play be produced simultaneously in England and America. Saturday evening, the third of October has been set aside for its rendition and Dr. [A. J.] de Rosset offers the Association the privilege of having it produced here under its auspices. It was announced that the play would be read by the following gentlemen and in the following order: the First act to be read by Col. A. M. Waddell, the Second by J. T. James, the Third by Dr. Thomas F. Wood, the Fourth by Major Graham Daves, and the Fifth by General Robert Ransom." It was resolved thus to produce *The Rightful Heir*, provided Dr. de Rosset would guarantee the Association against loss on account of theatre rent and taxes, which he did.

November 1868. There were 129 members, 1894 bound volumes.

JANUARY 1869. A called meeting. The Board of Aldermen of the City had instructed its attorney to enquire into the terms by which the Association held the Reading Room and

Library Room and take steps for gaining possession of them. It was resolved to confer with the Hon. George Davis, attorney for the Association.

March 1869. Mr. Davis had replied to the city attorney and he in turn had advised the City to drop the matter. A motion passed to notify General Rutherford that his lease had expired and he was expected to deliver the keys promptly.

An application followed from Gen. Rutherford to remain at least until he could procure another office. The Board agreed this could not be complied with, resolved to take immediate possession.

April 1869. The Reading Room had been surrendered by Gen. Rutherford "in a very filthy condition."

June 1870. The City enquired about renting or purchasing both the Association's rooms.

August 1870. The Association in reply proposed to sell to the City the right to the rooms for "the sum of \$7000, City of Wilmington six per cent gold bearing bonds, at market value."

Mayor Silas N. Martin replied that Judge Edward Cantwell had pronounced the opinion that the City had the right to the rooms, and he was proceeding to gain possession.

October 1870. The Mayor was pressing for "the two north rooms in City Hall." President Will G. Thomas replied that no answer had been received to the Association's proposal and a response was invited.

The last entry for the day, under the hand of Secretary J. T. James, was: "Resolved: That the Library Committee be instructed to direct the Librarian to secure all the doors and windows entering into both the Reading and Library Rooms and permit no official to enter the rooms with the intention of forcibly taking possession of same."

The first Wilmington Public Library Opened in City Hall in 1906.



AS THIS controversy waxes hot, it is enlightening to remember that the tragic era of Reconstruction in North Carolina was coming to its worst. Almost every citizen of experience of affairs had been disfranchised and over the others hung the constant threat of confiscation. Elected to the Assembly in 1868 were 10 Democrats and 110 Republicans; of the latter thirteen were Negroes and eight strangers (or carpetbaggers).

Indicative of the situation was the testimony at the trial of Gov. W. W. Holden, the first impeachment of a governor in the United States and the only one in North Carolina. During his administration, writes Ashe: "They had wrecked the State. They had dissipated the State's assets, opened no schools, closed the University, and destroyed every hope of any early amelioration of the unfortunate condition of transportation facilities, and worse than all else, the Assembly was odorous with fraud, bribery, and corruption." When Holden was convicted in March 1871, Zebulon Vance remarked: "It was the longest hunt for the poorest hide I ever saw."

At this time half the population in the state over the age of ten years was unable to read and write, the per capita wealth was about \$350, the population of New Hanover County was 27,978, mostly in Wilmington.

April 1871. Dr. W. G. Thomas called a meeting and explained that the Association charter was not recorded, for reasons unknown. He was asked to act.

March 1872. A year later Dr. Thomas made a full report. He had written to the City repeating the offer to sell, stating the basis for the Association's right to the rooms: "Inasmuch as the Thalian Association, then represented by the Wilmington Library Association, contributed something more than seven thousand dollars toward the erection of the City Hall Building, and for and in consideration of this contribution the City guaranteed to the Thalian Association and its successors a full right and title to these rooms . . ."

The Mayor replied that Judge Cantwell had "carefully examined the Private Laws from 1844 down" and the Association had no corporate existence and no charter. It had, therefore, no legal rights.

The Mayor then, "in consideration of a quasi-right," offered to pay the Association \$1500 in Wilmington six per cent gold bearing bonds and the use of the Library Room for one year, July 1871-July 1872, for the sum of one dollar.

"This was accepted and the deed of release was recorded in the Register's office."

IX. The Struggle for Life

THE READER of the minutes borne along as he is on words of great dignity and good will, comes upon Dr. Thomas' report with no small sense of tragedy. In the whole panorama of the ravages of war, perhaps one loses sight most quickly of the lost hope of men such as these eminent Wilmingtonians who had laboured to keep the library alive. Miss Jane Dalziel Wood, daughter of the Dr. Thomas F. Wood who figures prominently in this history, wrote that they had "maintained the Wilmington Library Association out of their own pockets, kept it open until ten o'clock, acting as Librarian each in turn, and doing all the janitor work besides. It was an historic undertaking. After a long day at their work in bank or office it was not easy to spend the evening in an altruistic effort that promised so little . . ."

The struggle against debt recorded in bills, notes, sales of bonds, Cash Book accounts, attempted collections, legal actions, and assessment of members now begins to tell of a struggle for life. The constant search for suitable quarters tells the same tale. The next lease after removal from City Hall was noted April 1872, for rooms on the second story of a building on Front Street, owned by Dr. L. Frink. There were complaints. It was noted the Rev. Mr. Millburn would lecture before the Association, but at the Opera House. In November 1874, the Association leased Masonic Hall for ten years.

The Lee Literary Club
of the
Wilmington Library Association

Series of Entertainments
1882-83

each month upon the Second and Fourth Tuesday
at 8 o'clock P.M. Library Rooms.

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND.
LARGENT, PHILA.

The struggle against defeat and indifference is no less apparent. True, there were some developments: the Eclectic and the Philemantheon Societies were taken in as "classes," and the Lee Literary Society "under the contract of J. W. Hinton;" a "museum" was established and reported progress; the Y. M. C. A. members were all received into membership at the time of the move to Front Street, "in consideration of the donation of books made by them." Entries were kept regularly for some time, but more and more often there was no quorum. In 1872 the offices of Secretary, Treasurer, and Librarian could be combined. In 1878 the Librarian's salary was to be "fifty per cent of all fees and dues collected." In 1883 the Librarian was ordered to empty the "museum case" and pack the materials in a box. In 1886, the Library Room was ordered no longer open at night but "closed for the day at lamplight."

The following items are from the Cash Book for the months of January and February 1886:

Kerosene oil for lamps	\$.20
Commission for Collector	1.30
Boston Post to Oct. 4, '86	15.10
Postals and stamps	.50
Cyclopaedia	18.15
Coal	8.75
Putting up coal	.15
Gas Dec. to Jan.	3.25
Fixing stove pipe	.30
News and Observer Nov.-Jan.	1.40
New York Herald 1 year	7.50
Janitor for Jan.	3.00
Ice bill	.65
The Daily Review	1.00
Librarian's salary 1 month	20.00

FOR A BRIEF MOMENT in history the Wilmington Library Association bloomed again, this time under the direction of Captain W. H. Bixby of the U. S. Army, then living in Wilmington. In May 1889 there was recorded an agreement between the Board of Directors and Captain Bixby, also a director, whereby he was given "entire charge of finances and all details" of the Association. Captain Bixby donated over a thousand dollars to the Library, the largest private cash donation for library purposes in the history of Wilmington. The service he gave was even more remarkable. He insisted on the first trained librarian, a Miss A. L. Sargent of Lowell, Mass. This he called "the most important feature of the year's work." Other improvements were night opening, electric lights, and adequate periodicals.

A resolution adopted by the Board in November 1891, in view of the fact that he was soon to leave Wilmington, asks that Captain Bixby sit for his portrait "wherewith to adorn our walls" and states: "We owe it to you that in our library hall order and system prevail, that our books are properly indexed . . . that on our tables are displayed the largest number of periodicals to be found in cities of far greater population . . . our young people have been attracted to the best literature of our day . . ." Captain Bixby had reported 4,100 volumes.

But the moment of fresh vitality was short-lived. In 1893 the Association appealed to civic groups to help obtain a rent-free room for the Library. In July 1895, the Y. M. C. A. agreed to assume the care of the books and to pay the librarian, and meetings thereafter were held in the Y. M. C. A. building.

February 14, 1896. The last entry in the Board Minutes Book notes that Mr. Donald MacRae presented an Historical Cyclopaedia in five volumes. "On motion of Dr. [Robert] Strange the gift was accepted and the Board expressed its thanks for the gift. Adjourned. (Signed) Thos. C. Diggs, Secty."

December 2, 1899. The last entry in the Cash Book notes that L. S. Webb paid his yearly dues of \$4.00. Perhaps Mr. Webb took heart, knowing that the new phoenix was already stirring in the ashes of the old, for so it was.

X. N. C. Sorosis & The First Free Public Library

THE FOLLOWING PROCLAMATION hangs in our present library building:

At a meeting of the North Carolina Sorosis, held March 7, 1901, Miss Margaret Littlejohn Kingsbury introduced the subject of a free library for the City of Wilmington and suggested that the Sorosis take the initiative step in the matter.

April 2, 1906, the Sorosis presented the Board of Aldermen the following petition:

That the worthy Board of Aldermen vote an appropriation of twelve hundred dollars yearly for the support of a free public library; that they fit up the City Hall, or some other suitable place, for this purpose; and that they accept, as a gift from the Sorosis, the books which this club has collected with this object in view.

November 30th, 1906, in behalf of the City of Wilmington, I formally received the seventeen hundred books of the Sorosis Library.

(Signed) Alfred Moore Waddell, Mayor

In the five years Sorosis conducted its drive, the presidents were Miss Margaret Gibson, Mrs. A. J. Howell, Mrs. Walker Taylor, and again Miss Gibson. The ladies established a free reading room, first in the Masonic Temple then in the old Odd Fellows Building. They began five traveling libraries, the forerunners of bookmobiles. They were diligent, "all along continuing to raise funds for the library so close to our hearts."

According to the *Wilmington Messenger* of Dec. 1, 1906, the opening of Wilmington's first free public library was a gala event. The second story of City Hall was bedecked with chrysanthemums, ferns, and palms; the formalities were genial; and the ladies did not forget to place a large donation box in the center of the hall. "A violin solo by Miss Fannie Hines Johnson of Raleigh and several piano solos by Mrs. A. M. Waddell, Mrs. R. G. Grady, Mrs. J. M. Coin and others were rendered and all were heartily encored."

Young ladies dressed to represent different books served refreshments. These were Misses Julia Worth, *Lavender and Old Lace*; Jane Iredell Green, *The Princess*; Helen Clark, *Old Fashioned Girl*; Louise Beery, *Rose in Bloom*; Theo Cantwell *Lilac Sunbonnet*; Alice Davis, *Hearts and Masks*; Isabel Williams, *Queen of Hearts*. Also: Nannie Holladay, *First Violin*; Lottie Pleasants, *Fair Margaret*; Helen Pleasants, *The Gambler*; Ella Jacobs, *Cherry Blossoms From Tokyo*; Bessie Loder, *Blue Flower*; and Florrie Grant, *Violette*.

The Book of Accessions of the Wilmington Public Library begins listing the gift volumes in October 1906 and continues regular listings through October 1910, arriving at 5025 volumes. The following organizations gave collections, in order of size: the Wilmington Library Association; the North Carolina Sorosis, whose 1700 books included the Y. M. C. A.'s 620 volumes; the Merchant's Library Gift through Sorosis; Hemenway School; the Firemen's Library; the Chataqua Circle. Many individuals gave generously, some collections of over a hundred volumes.

WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED in this decade may be better understood in the light of some facts. In 1900, thirty-five years after the war, Wilmington, with a population of 20,976, was the largest city in North Carolina and the only one with over 20,000. Ninety-five per cent of the state's people lived in the country or in country towns of less than 5000, and the per capita wealth was \$360. There were only three public libraries, Asheville, Durham, and Ledger. By 1910 the Library Commission of North Carolina had been established and there were twenty free public libraries. Per capita wealth had doubled.

While in 1937 no public library in the state met the minimum requirements of the American Library Association and fifty-four per cent of the people had no service at all, there had been rapid growth, especially considering population and economic patterns. In the 1940's and 1950's there was great expansion throughout the state and by the end of that time ninety-five per cent of the people had access to library service, partly due to the wide use of the bookmobiles.

The present library building was deeded to the City in

BIBLIOGRAPHY

September 1951 by the Wilmington Light Infantry. Subsequently the voters approved a bond issue to renovate and enlarge the building. It was dedicated July 16, 1956. In 1963 the Wilmington Colored Library on Red Cross Street was designated a branch of the Wilmington Public Library and service was integrated. The 1965 report of Miss Katherine Howell, Chief Librarian, shows a staff of fourteen and a budget of \$85,096.10. There are 90,285 volumes and a growing film collection, and the New Hanover County Bookmobile alone has a circulation of 54,000 books.

One occasionally hears young natives of the South express shame or rueful humour over the slow development of our educational and cultural institutions. And slow it has been. Even in the last decade Wilmingtonians have had to go to the floor of the County Commission to argue for the very existence of the local bookmobile. But if this study of the development of our libraries excites in us any emotion, it should be one of deepest admiration for the leaders in every decade since the first settlement who have struggled for such institutions against overwhelming odds: a sparsely populated agricultural area; the scourge of recurrent war on their home lands; the resultant kind of poverty that nourishes meanness and ignorance. That even so much has been accomplished should cause every heart in the Lower Cape Fear to swell with pride.

- Book of Accessions, Wilmington Library Association, 1891.* This is apparently the listing of the Association's collection by its first and only trained librarian, Miss A. L. Sargent. It shows many government publications, gifts of the U. S. Government, and in all some 4000 listings.
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- Record of The Wilmington Lyceum, March 9, 1866-April 5, 1867.*
- Record of The Wilmington Public Library Board of Trustees.*
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- I wish to thank Miss Katherine Howell for her invaluable professional knowledge and service in helping me with these sources, and also the staff of the library.—B.B.R.

CHANGE IN BY-LAWS

Changes in the by-laws of the Society approved by the membership at the annual meeting May 28, 1965:

ARTICLE V. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 1. The Board of Directors shall consist of the officers, the immediate past president, and fifteen members of the Society.

Section 2. The term of office of the fifteen members elected as directors shall be for three years. Exception: At May Meeting, 1965, two directors shall be elected for one year and five directors shall be elected for two years.

The effect of the above is shown in the masthead of this issue of the Bulletin.

LOWER CAPE FEAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY
WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA

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