

## SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN NORTH CAROLINA

By MARY PEACOCK DOUGLAS\*

When one begins to delve into the records on any subject, fascinating information appears—and so it is with school libraries in North Carolina. As early as July 1, 1857, at a meeting of teachers in Warrenton, W. W. Holden, then editor of a Raleigh newspaper and later Governor of the State, advised the establishment of school libraries and in 1858, Calvin H. Wiley, the first State Superintendent of Public Instruction, who served from 1852 to 1865, further emphasized in a written report the idea of school libraries. How long this idea had been germinating does not appear, but it is known that the students of the Raleigh Academy, chartered in 1801 and a forerunner of the Raleigh Public Schools, presented a play in 1809 to raise funds for the benefit of its school library. Wiley's idea evidently took root and, although it was handicapped in almost every conceivable way during the Civil War and its aftermath, the idea did not die. Following Dr. Wiley's term the office of State Superintendent was abolished for a three year period. There was no stability in the office until 1877 when John C. Scarborough took office.

Dr. Scarborough must have been a very energetic and able administrator, for during his term of office growth in many educational facets appeared and a semblance of state unity in an educational program emerged. His printed report of 1898 shows how well he had cultivated Dr. Wiley's recommendation for school libraries. A new course of study for the public schools was issued in 1898 which included the following statement: "It is suggested that teachers may render great service to the communities in which they teach by leading in the formation of School Libraries . . . A school can do nothing better for a child than the implanting of such a thirst for knowledge as will lead to the formation of a habit of reading. Books are cheap, yet wisdom is needed in their selection." There then follows a list of 38 titles recommended for purchase for school libraries, of which 20 or more still appear in standard lists. These include such titles as Hans Andersen's *Tales*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and "Miss Alcott's *Little Women*." The list appearing in the 1898 course of study seems to be the first list of books for school libraries issued by the State Department of Public Instruction. Dr. Scarborough's philosophy of school libraries is still adhered to today.

The report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction for 1898 includes reports from many school systems in the State. Since actual information on school libraries almost dates from this report, quotations from specific school systems merit inclusion here.

In Statesville a new building for white pupils was erected in 1892 which "is heated by furnaces and contains classrooms, office, library, and an excellent auditorium. The course of study extends through eight grades." Could this, perchance, be the first exclusively elementary school library built?

Greensboro reported: "In the Lindsay Street School there is a growing library of about five thousand volumes. It has a regular income and is one of the United States depositories for the publications of Congress. The books circulate among the children and are used largely with their class work."

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Of Goldsboro the superintendent stated: "In connection with the school there is a good library of 2,000 well selected volumes. A librarian is employed whose sole duty is to care for the library. The books are selected with reference to their adaptability to children and hence the library is used to strengthen and give interest to the work throughout the whole school." Reference to earlier employment of a full time school librarian—with or without library training—has not been found, and the name of this one remains unknown.

From its inception as a school system, beginning on September 20, 1897, High Point has had a school library program and its first annual report states, "An excellent beginning has been made on a school library."

Rural schools—largely one, two, or three teacher schools—were for the most part without school library facilities, although in a few counties some books could be borrowed from the school superintendent's office. Buncombe County was an exception, for the 1898 report includes the statement "Raised this year money enough to place a working library in nearly every public school in the County."

The dearth of library material in the rural schools was of such concern to Dr. J. Y. Joyner when he became State Superintendent that he besought funds from the Legislature to remedy this lack. The first State appropriation for school libraries was in 1901 when the North Carolina General Assembly appropriated \$2,500 to aid in the purchase of books on a matching basis of ten dollars from the community, ten dollars from the county board of education, and ten dollars from the State fund. The \$2,500 amounted to about one-half cent per pupil enrolled in the public schools at that time. By the fall of 1903 every one of the 500 rural libraries made possible by the Legislature of 1901 had been established. In 1903 the Legislature granted an additional \$1,250 to the yearly appropriation of \$2,500 to be spent supplementing the originally established libraries. The supplementary fund was allotted in units of \$5.00 in the same manner as the original grant. A list of books from which purchases must be selected was issued in 1902. The list of books was arranged by the following subjects: Science stories; myths, legends, and history stories; biography and travel; poetry; essays; pedagogy; and fiction. Participating schools were required to select some titles from every section to guarantee variety in the books which would be available to the pupils.

That same year, (1902) Dr. Joyner issued Education Bulletin No. 4 entitled *The Librarian and the Books*. It was published in accordance with a law directing the State Superintendent to issue rules and regulations for proper use and preservation of books. Two items in these rules deserve comment. Item 1 states "The librarian shall be authorized to loan the books, free of charge, to any member of the school over twelve years of age . . ." This requirement evidently elicited objection from the "young fry," the teachers, or both, because in the revision of the rules, published in 1904, item 1 reads that the librarian may lend to "any member of the school over ten years of age, and to any member of the school under ten years of age whose parents will agree in writing to be responsible for the books." Item 5 in the 1902 bulletin reads that the librarian "shall report (to the Superintendent about June 1) the number of volumes taken out during the year, making mention by name of the three children of school age who have shown the greatest interest in the library and improvement made from the use of it." Thus began the policy of an annual statistical report on school libraries to the State Department of Public Instruction.

The recommendation that teachers enrich classroom instruction by using library materials on related subjects is not new. Dr. Joyner, in his 1904 library bulletin included a section called "Suggestions as to the use of the Library in the School." It is amazing that even the specific topics cited are apropos today. He said: "If in the daily reading lesson, the teacher should have a chapter on Indians, it would be very appropriate to read selections from *Story of Indian Children*. . . While there is much interest

centered in Russia, Japan, and China just at this time, these stories (*Big People and Little People of Other Lands*) would be a helpful means by which the teacher could arouse the interest of the children to read about . . . these countries. . . . Whenever the school work can be improved by supplementing with a library book it will always pay to do this."

Along with this exhortation to use library materials came the General Assembly's stern admonition to protect and care for them. Section 3 of the 1903 school law reads ". . . The County Boards of Education shall furnish, at the expense of the general county school fund, a neat book-case with lock and key to each library. . . ."

In 1904, in his own report, Dr. Joyner included narrative reports from teachers in widely scattered geographic sections of the state. It is significant that every report printed included enthusiastic reference to the school library and its use. This same state report carried a picture of the library at Bobbitt's School in Vance County. This is the first picture of a school library to appear in a report from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. It was replete with a reproduction of the Stuart painting of George Washington still found in many school libraries today.

Much had been done for school libraries prior to 1904 and little that had been done needed to be undone. The vision that had set the pattern for school library service began nearly a hundred years ago, but it took half a century of slow growth before the idea was widespread. And another half century has passed and still there is much room for growth. But 1904 was a high water mark because it was then apparent what school libraries could do in furthering educational aims and the idea of State financial aid had been established.

In 1906 Charles L. Coon reported that there were 117,900 volumes in the rural school libraries and that \$11,176 had been spent for them during the year, of which \$3,750 came from State funds. In 1953, Charles F. Carroll reported that there were 4,699,784 volumes in the school libraries and that \$1,398,109 had been spent of which \$441,155 was from State funds. The road up has been long and hard. The years from 1901 to 1923 mark a distinctive period of this story. This was a period of very small state aid to, for the most part, many small schools. The number of original libraries aided by the State during this period was 4,995 and the number of supplementary additions 2,344. In many places these small libraries constitute the entire community reading resources other than the Bible and textbooks secured for school age children. While no statistics are available showing the use of these books, local residents say they were read to shreds by young and old alike. In 1923 the basis of distribution of State aid was changed to a \$50.00 matching fund, rather than the earlier \$10.00. This new plan continued in effect through the school year 1931. The annual State appropriation which was established in 1901 at \$2,500, was increased to \$3,750 in 1903, continuing at this figure through 1927, and was then increased to \$10,000 where it remained through 1931. The amount appropriated in 1931 constituted 1.2 cents per pupil then enrolled. Expenditures for school libraries were way beyond the State appropriation, however, as it served only as a stimulating fund. The expenditure in 1923 was \$30,300 and in 1931, it was \$139,793.

In 1931 the Legislature enacted legislation for State support of a minimum school program. The upkeep of the school library was recognized as a necessary expenditure and funds were allotted for the purchase of library supplies, periodicals, and, to a limited extent, replacement of worn-out and out-of-date books. State aid the first year of this program was \$25,308 (about 5c per pupil). The total expenditure for school libraries was \$91,437. It will be recalled that this was a depression year. The appropriation for the current year is about 50c per pupil from State funds. State funds have at all times been available to both white and colored schools.

As the book collections became larger there was a growing awareness of the need for some type of library organization. In 1911, Educational Bulletin XVI, prepared by Miss Minnie W. Leatherman, Secretary of the North Carolina Library Commission, and entitled *The School Library and How to Use It*, was issued by State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. J. Y. Joyner. This appears to have been not only the first North Carolina school library handbook, but also the first printed school library handbook issued by a state department of education. Printed helps on school libraries have remained in demand. In addition to book lists issued from the State Department of Public Instruction, other publications which have continued to be requested are *North Carolina School Library Handbook*, first printed in 1937 and now in its 4th edition; *Book Displays—January to December*; and *Planning and Equipping the School Library*.

As the calls for help in organizing school libraries became more persistent, the North Carolina Library Commission shared its field worker, then called an "organizer" with the schools. Miss Mary Flournoy and later Miss Frieda Heller, serving in this capacity, gave invaluable service to the schools in helping them become aware of what libraries can do in the lives of people as well as in making book collections more effective. It was not until July 1930 that the State Department of Public Instruction employed a trained school librarian as a member of its own staff—through funds set up for the purpose by the General Education Board of the Rockefeller Foundation, Southern States were helped to inaugurate positions of state supervisors of school libraries in their state departments of education with a five year grant. Mrs. Mary Peacock Douglas was selected for the position in North Carolina and served as State School Library Adviser from 1930 until July 1947. Mrs. Eloise Camp Melton served from July 1947 until September 1950. The position was vacant until the summer of 1951 when Miss Cora Paul Bomar became State School Library Adviser. In September 1953 the position of Assistant State School Library Adviser was created and Miss Celeste Johnston was appointed to fill it.

One of the strongest advocates of school libraries in the State during the period of 1920 to 1953 was Dr. J. Henry Highsmith, Director of Instruction in the State Department of Public Instruction. Through his leadership, library standards for accredited high schools in the State were set up in 1921. These standards were materially expanded in 1935 and were again improved in 1947. The first standards for elementary school libraries were established in 1924 and have also been expanded and improved with subsequent revisions. Dr. Highsmith was also active as a member of the library committee of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, whose library standards had marked effect in school library development in this and other States.

As school libraries developed, the need for trained personnel became more and more apparent. The University of North Carolina under Dr. Louis R. Wilson's leadership led the way with summer programs offering six semester hours in library science to meet minimum requirements for librarians in accredited schools. Of major significance, however, was the full year of library training offered at the Woman's College in Greensboro 1928-1933, for graduates of this program demonstrated, more than any other single group, what school library service under trained personnel could really mean. The later program for a degree in library science offered during the summer at the University of North Carolina did much to provide the schools with trained librarians, but only a limited number of school librarians have been recruited from the regular session classes. The library science program at Appalachian State Teachers College has also had marked effect in providing school library personnel in the State. In 1925-26 there were four full-time trained librarians in the state; in 1932-33 there were 58; in 1940-41 there were 95. For 1952-53, the number was 375.

In America, no matter how small the group interested in any movement, there is the urge to organize. In 1927 the school librarians met in Raleigh and organized as a section of the North Carolina Education Association. Miss Mary Flournoy and Mrs. Frank



H. Koos, librarian at R. J. Reynolds High School, Winston-Salem, and later school library supervisor there, were especially active in formulating this section. In 1954, a school librarian, Mrs. Effie Meekins was elected president of the N. C. E. A., the first to hold this important position.

School libraries also felt their responsibility to the North Carolina Library Association. An informal group met in Charlotte in 1927 to discuss the desirability of forming a section, but experienced some discouragement and did not actually organize until 1933 at a meeting in Greensboro. This does not mean, however, that the North Carolina Library Association was not aware of the need for library service in schools. Indeed, with rare exception, every program of the association from its inception included a talk related to school library service. Since the topic was so consistent from year to year, it seems appropriate to indicate here something about it. The North Carolina Library Association had its organizational meeting in Charlotte in 1904 and at a general session there Mr. J. A. Bivens of the Trinity High School spoke on "The Public Library and the Public School." In 1906, the Superintendent of the Raleigh Public Schools appeared on the program with his subject "The Library and the School." The same topic was used in 1908 by another speaker. In 1909 in Goldsboro, a Round Table group really got down to work and discussed "Teaching the Public School Children How to Use the Library." The following year the topic was "Work with Children and Schools." A very full resumé of this program which was concerned with the use of books in classroom learning appears in the January 1911 issue of *N. C. Education*. Finally in 1923 at an N. C. L. A. convention held in Winston-Salem at the new R. J. Reynolds High School a "High School Libraries Section" is listed in the agenda with a very pretentious program with four speakers, covering topics which remain in the limelight today—the physical facilities of the library, cooperation between teachers and librarians, simplification of the classification scheme, and the importance of the school library. After this impressive beginning, a program for a school libraries section does not appear in a convention program again until 1933, at which time officers for it were elected. The school librarians came into their own as a strong and vital part of N. C. L. A. at its meeting in Southern Pines in 1939 at which time Althea Currin of national recognition was the guest speaker for the group which numbered about 80 school librarians. A school librarian was first elected president of N. C. L. A. for the biennium 1939-41.

The youngest of the school library organizations in the State is the North Carolina High School Library Association, organized in 1947 and composed of student assistants in high school libraries. This group is dedicated to the improvement of school library service and is serving as a means of recruitment to the library profession. The first president was Frank Driscoll, a student of the R. J. Reynolds High School, Winston-Salem.

It is perhaps strange to learn that the most rapid period of development in school libraries came during the depression. Through a well-organized W. P. A. program, some 1200 persons were placed in nearly a thousand schools to serve as library aids. Under plans formulated and sponsored by the State Department of Public Instruction and the N. C. Library Commission, trained librarians served as district supervisors and vigorously carried out a program which resulted in book collections being put in good physical condition; in books being classified, marked, and properly shelved; in shelf lists being prepared; in adequate circulation systems being installed; and in helping teachers to understand what organized library service could mean. This program reached large and small, elementary and high, rural and city schools. Having tasted this service and found it satisfying, many schools modified and adopted it so that it has been continued since the Federal project closed. The state appropriation to school libraries had made a project of this kind possible on a Statewide basis.

Little has been said here of the program carried on by the State Department of

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Public Instruction during the past 25 years, but the history of the school library movement in the State would be incomplete without some summary of the activities of the office of the State School Library Adviser. Annual lists of books recommended for school libraries have been prepared—not restrictive lists, but helps to those in areas where books are not readily available for examination. A plan whereby library books can be bought in the state through a textbook rental service was inaugurated, to the end that even the most remote rural school might have some new books each year. A newsletter sent at regular intervals, has kept school library personnel throughout the state uniformly aware of problems and practices and has welded the group into a coordinated force. Visits from school to school extended end to end would show mileage sufficient to circle the globe at the equator at least ten times; every county has been visited many times. Workshops have been carried on from time to time. Activity as a liaison person with many various groups has been frequent. Service in planning, exhorting, extending, and interpreting has been constant.

Statistics show how great has been the progress since Calvin H. Wiley introduced educators in North Carolina to the desirability of school libraries, since John C. Scarborough made them a part of the schools' program, since J. Y. Joyner exhorted the Legislature to include funds for them in the State's school fund. School libraries like the North Carolina Library Association can celebrate a golden anniversary of progress.