

Progressing Toward the Monroe Public Library

The library/reading room that had been established by the Young Men's Literary Association ended in 1868. John T. Etter announced on May 26, 1869 the possibility of establishing The People's Circulating Library here. That library consisted of "several thousand new and substantially bound volumes, divided into three classes." There were books for ladies, books for men, and a collection of juvenile books for boys and girls." The library was to give "every friend of healthy literature, by the payment of only \$1.50, the continued opportunity to peruse at his own house, the whole library." It could be enlarged as often as necessary. No more was seen in the newspapers about this endeavor.

In the literature put out by the Universalist Church in Monroe, it stated that they had the first library in Monroe. They did have a library, but it is unknown whether it was open to the public. An article on March 29, 1871 stated that the Young Folks had cleared \$75 to purchase additions to the library of the Universalist Sabbath School." By May it was announced that the Universalist library had "added 100 volumes of new books to their library." The old books had all been recovered or rebound; the library contained "nearly 600 volumes of good books, all in good condition." The Universalist Sunday School published a catalogue of the more than 700 books in their library in February 1873.

A meeting was finally scheduled for January 31, 1876 to "establish a free public library upon a permanent basis." The meeting was held at 7:30 p.m. in the office of A. S. Douglas. Advocates for this meeting included Mrs. E. S. Abbott, Mrs. C. S. Foster, Mrs. C. A. Booth, Helen, M. Bingham, and 34 men. J. T. Dodge was elected to chair the meeting and Miss Emma Van Wagenen acted as secretary. Remarks were made by Prof. Twining, J. T. Dodge, A. C. Dodge, Dr. Hall, C. A. Booth, A. S. Douglas, F. S. Parlin, and W. W. Chadwick. In addition J. T. Dodge, A. S. Douglas, H. W. Whitney, Helen Bingham, and Mrs. Chas. A. Booth were appointed to "draft a plan of procedure," and report at a meeting on February 11 in the office of Mr. Douglas.

Things moved quickly; another meeting was held on Friday evening, February 18 in P. J. Clawson's office where Rev. Gardner served as chair and C. A. Booth as secretary. The articles of association were adopted and J. T. Dodge "was instructed to procure a book, engross the articles of association therein, and proceeded to obtain subscribers, sufficient to meet the requirements of the law, and have the same recorded, which he consented to do."

The articles stated that funds would be raised by the payment of \$2 per year "as a condition of membership and the free use of the library" and by direct donations of money or desirable books. Expenses were to "be kept within the annual revenue from fees for membership, fees from non-members for the use of books, from fines and other contributions for this special purpose." The articles also stated that if the village board of trustees decided to establish and maintain a free public library, the association could transfer their library and other property to the village board.

It was believed "that from 390 to 500 volumes of really valuable and desirable books" could be obtained by donation. If they were able to purchase 500 more volumes, a great foundation would be laid. If they were able to raise an additional \$1,000, they would also be able to provide the necessary shelving. "To be successful, a library will always require the efforts of its friends, not merely for their money, but their time, their care, and oversight."

It was shared on April 19 that "the success in getting \$25 and \$50 subscriptions is so far encouraging." At a meeting on April 27 the chairman reported that more than "\$300 had been subscribed and promised, and it was thought \$600 could be raised within the next 10 days without doubt." J. T. Dodge, A. W. Goddard, Joseph Wood, and H.W. Whitney constituted a committee to procure subscribers.

A letter from J. T. Dodge was published in the Sentinel on November 4. "A library is needed to promote our progress in material wealth. It is needed to promote our general enlightenment. It is needed to elevate the public taste and draw our young people from frivolous and hurtful amusements, from

J B Treat	H W Whitney
Joseph Wood	B Chenoweth
J T Dodge	F S Parlin
Mrs. E S Abbott	W W Chadwick
" C A Booth	A W Goddard
" A S Douglas	J H Van Dyke
" M M Howe	Chas A Booth
" Joseph Wood	J M Chadwick
" M O Foster	P J Clawson
Helen M Bingham	D W Ball
A S Douglas	G Marty
A C Dodge	

This is a list of the Monroe residents who signed the Articles of Association for the Monroe Library Association as they were listed in the Monroe Sentinel on March 22, 1876. The Sentinel mentioned that it was happening during the Centennial year.

idleness and dissipation to those higher pursuits and enjoyment, which do honor to a people." He added, "We ought especially to signalize this centennial year by laying the foundation of an institution, which shall bless, not only the present but the future generations." He concluded his letter, "If this matter is acted on with reasonable promptness, we may have, before the end of this year, the beginning of a library, which will be the pride of Monroe and a blessing for all future time."

Unfortunately, that library association, with all of its well-known people, did not succeed in forming a library. An article in the November 20, 1878 issue of the Monroe Sentinel reported that the Board of Trustees for Union District No. 1 had decided "to fit up the room on the first floor, recently occupied for other purposes and to transfer the High School Library thereto and under the State Law organize a School District Library, for the use of all who live in this union district, which takes in the village and a portion of the township." At that time there were about 600 volumes "of well selected books." Several gentlemen were donating many more. It was decided to set aside \$100 to \$200 a year of the school tax for keeping up the library, solicit contributions of books, and "to make further additions by funds raised by exhibitions, donations, lectures, &c."

Find out next week where that library was later located.