



BOOKS AT THE LIBRARY

BY MARION B. HAYMAKER

We are all so proud of Donald MacMillan. . . . We like his name in print without all his honorary degrees. He is one of us, he belongs here. He lives out on our Commercial Street in that long, narrow white house with the pretty yard. . . . He has several big, hairy dogs that have come from the Far North where he made such fame for himself. He has a wife who accompanied him to the cold, cold countries to our farthest North, and who also has written fascinating books about their expeditions. . . . It won't be long until the whole world will be a traveling place. People will be taking hot day treks to the North Pole . . . but there are a few who still recall Admiral Perry, the discoverer of the North Pole. . . . We even remember as a very young girl, sitting in the office of the editor of the New York World, and the editor saying: "Excuse me! The North Pole has really been discovered," and his hurrying off to contradict a man named Cook.

On our shelves we have ARCTIC ODYSSEY, The Life of Rear Admiral Donald MacMillan, by Everett S. Allen, of New Bedford. Also near home! We have bought this from Harriet Adams who sells the book, in behalf of our local Rescue Squad which works for the protection of our injured, hurt and suffering. This humane squad has been laboring for years with such small monetary help. We can not forget Joseph Dutra who went with us to the Cape Cod Hospital when we fell on the sidewalks of Provincetown and broke a knee in so many places that we were on traction for nine weeks in a nice room with plenty of sunshine

and kindness a-plenty. We remember an article we wrote years ago for this squad, when we visited with Joseph Dutra the then old conveyance which they used to carry the injured and the sick to hospitals all over the Cape. Since then their conveyances have grown to more comfortable quarters, there are ambulances to carry the injured, the ill and even the dying. . . . They roll over the roads with more ease, a prayer on the lips of those in charge, while the incumbent lies we hope, calm in the enclosure. God bless such men who give their year-in and year-out service all but free, and let us be humble that our small contribution may cheer them.

- July 10, 1969 -

PROVINCETOWN, MASS.

Bound Newspaper Was First Library

First official action of Provincetown, in its corporate capacity, toward establishing a Public Library, was taken at the Town Meeting of February, 1872. Twenty-five dollars voted for "the establishment of a free Public Library" was expended by the Town Clerk for "the purchase and binding of a copy of the Boston Daily Advertiser for one year, to be kept in the Town Clerk's office for the use of the public."

Proceeds of the dog tax, refunded to the town by the county in 1869,

1870 and 1871, were also appropriated "for the purchase of books for the town library." (Dog owners were taxed to pay farmers for livestock killed by dogs; any surplus was distributed as county aid to libraries.)

Early in 1873 the Hon. Nathan D. Freeman of Provincetown built the present Public Library building and deeded it to trustees. One condition of the gift was that the first floor except the entrance hall, should be occupied solely for the purpose of a public library. Rental fees from upper floors were to be paid to library officials. The second floor became the YMCA quarters; now the library reading room and reference room occupies it.

At the annual town meeting in 1874, the first seven trustees were chosen. They received library funds already accumulated plus a \$2000 appropriation for books and necessary furniture. This appropriation was contingent on private contributions of at least \$1000. Through the efforts of James Gifford the money was raised. By the end of 1873 the library fund exceeded \$3465.

Books for the new library were selected early in 1874 by Trustee Augustus Mitchell. The library was opened for public use on Saturday, June 13, 1874.

First librarian, Miss Salome A. Gifford (1874-81) was followed by William R. Mitchell (1881-88); then came Miss Mattie W. Bangs (1888-91) and Miss Harriet M. Dyer (1891-1901).

Miss Abbie C. Putnam, a strong-minded woman active in Provincetown cultural affairs, held the post for 34 years. She was followed by Gilbert C. Rich, second and last man to be librarian. Miss Penelope V. Kern (1939-48) was the last to command absolute silence except for necessary whispering — even her reprimands were given sotto voice.

Eleanor Burch (1949-56), Mrs. Marion B. Haymaker (1956-65) and Mrs. Natalie Patrick, the present librarian, made the library a sociable place. Discipline is limited to preventing disturbances among youthful visitors and seeing that conversations (in normal tones) concern themselves with library activities. Upstairs, on guard over non-circulating rare books and reference volumes, Assistant Librarian Alice Joseph presides over the reading room and help researchers.

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When was this picture taken of the Provincetown library? When the towering linden in the front yard was the sapling you see above, when kerosene lanterns like the one at left were the only street lighting. Built in 1873 and donated to the town by banker Nathan D. Freeman, the building housed a library on the ground floor, YMCA rooms on the second, and the photography studio of George Nickerson on the third floor. The photo, however, is the work of Irving Rosenthal, father of the late Jack Rosenthal.