



-- September 1940 --

The first movement towards a public library was in 1863 when the Mayflower Division of the Sons of Temperance donated to the town \$300 for the purchase of books. The building was erected in 1873 by Mr. Nathan Freeman and donated to the town. Following are two articles from the original agreement:

ARTICLE SIXTH: The first floor of the building, excepting the entrance hall, shall be used and occupied solely for the purposes of the Public Library. The second floor of the same except as aforesaid, for the sole use of the Young Men's Christian Association, and the third story may be occupied & rented for photograph rooms or for other reputable purposes.

ARTICLE EIGHTH: If at any time either the room assigned to be used for a Public Library, or the room assigned to the use of, and occupancy of, the Young Men's Christian Association, shall fail to be used for the several purposes herein named, for three consecutive years, then such rooms shall revert to my heirs at law, but such rooms shall never be used for any purpose whatever, that may be objectionable to the Board of Trustees, and if at any time, both objects for which this trust is instituted shall fail, the whole property shall revert to my lawful heirs.

.... From "Provincetown, or Odds and Ends from the Tip End,"
..... By Herman A. Jennings

November 19, 1873
The formal opening of Mr. Freeman's library building is to take place by and by.

Cape End Worked For Its Library

Opening 70 Years Ago
Heralded As Event Outshading All Others

How the Provincetown Public Library got its start was told in a paper read by Miss Frances Gifford at the 70th anniversary program held last Tuesday. The founding was largely a cooperative effort on the part of the townspeople, aided to a great extent by leading citizens. Miss Gifford's paper follows.

In 1863, the Mayflower Division of the Sons of Temperance gave to the Town about \$300, deposited in the Seamen's Savings Bank, to be the start of a fund to be raised for the purpose of founding a Public Library, the first movement made here with that aim in view.

At a Town Meeting in 1872, it was voted that the sum of \$25 and the dog tax refunded to the Town by the County for the preceding three years amounting to \$191.45 be appropriated for the purpose of establishing a Public Library.

At the annual meeting in 1873, \$58.58, the dog tax for the preceding year was added to the fund and in that year Nathan Freeman gave the present building to the Town.

Two years prior to this, the Board of Selectmen actually started the library, with the payment of \$25 for a subscription to the Boston Daily Advertiser, directing that it be kept on file in the Town Clerk's office for public use.

The Provincetown Advocate of December 17, 1873, describes the dedication of the Freeman Library building, which took place at the Center Methodist Church the previous Thursday evening and said:—

"At 7 p. m. precisely, Mr. Freeman with the Board of Trustees and other gentlemen walked into the church and took seats reserved for them. Hon. N. E. Atwood presided and Rev. Mr. Bray, senior, opened the service with prayer. Hon. Mr. Atwood spoke briefly and said he hoped books upon fishes with others upon natural history would be among those on the shelves.

A Never-Ending Book

"Mr. Nathan Freeman then addressed the assemblage and said, 'In this donation which I am about to make to you, I see only the commencement of a work almost without end.' He spoke to the Young Men's Christian Association and then said to the Trustees that he hoped their efforts, together with those of the entire community

FROM "THE HISTORY OF BARNSTABLE COUNTY", PUBLISHED IN 1890, BY H.W. BLAKE & CO., N.Y., AND EDITED BY SIMEON L. DEYO:

"...The first step toward the institution of a free public library in Provincetown was a vote passed at the last meeting of Mayflower Division of The Sons of Temperance of Provincetown in 1863, directing the treasurer of that organization to deposit in The Seaman's Savings Bank the funds in the treasury, amounting to nearly three hundred dollars, to be expended in the purchase of books for any free public library which, might thereafter, be established in Provincetown..."

would make the library a blessing to the town. The Y. M. C. A. was to have the use of the second floor.

"The deed of conveyance was then read by Nathan D. Freeman, son of the donor, and Mr. A. T. Williams made the speech of acceptance in a manner reflecting much credit upon himself."

There were several other speakers, among them "the venerable G. Ryder, Esq." who said that "one of the greatest curses of the town is the crowds that congregate upon our streets. A library would help to remedy this."

Rev. Mr. Blanchard pronounced the benediction. The Advocate continues, "The commodious church was filled with an audience of men, women and children. Most of the schools were present in a body, seated in the galleries. The choir furnished excellent music under the leadership of Mr. O. Snow."

In 1874 seven Trustees were chosen and the accumulated funds given into their hands. The Town appropriated \$2,000 for purchasing books, with the provision that \$1,000 should be raised by subscription. This was accomplished, Jenning's book on Provincetown says, through the efforts of James Gifford (grandfather of the author of this paper). The Trustees received the total amount of \$3,466.12.

Augustus Mitchell was chosen to select the books and the result was very satisfactory to all, with 2,202 volumes being purchased. The library was opened to the public on June 13, 1874 and The Advocate of June 17, 1874 has this to say:—

Important Event

"Provincetown has taken several steps in advance during the past year. The railroad, public lectures, speakers and conventions have con-

tributed to the good of the town. We deem the opening of the library an event which overshadows all the rest.

"Today any reasonable demand for information can be met by a call at the library. Of course, some will run to excess. Boys will read Oliver Optic, Cooper and Marryat when they should be studying or at work. Girls will read Miss Phelps and Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney when they ought to be washing dishes and sweeping the kitchen.

"Never mind, we say, they will come back to better food after they have tasted the sweets. The older ones will take care of themselves. We will risk that. One sermon made Darwin go out into a dozen different families last Saturday. We rejoice that the library bids fair to become a perfect success."

Librarians were Miss Salome Gifford, William Mitchell, Miss Mattie Bangs, Miss Hattie M. Dyer and Miss Abbie C. Putnam who served for 34 years. Mrs. G. Harland Crooker had charge during the period between the resignation of Miss Putnam and the election of Gilbert Rich who was succeeded by the present librarian, Miss Penelope V. Kern.

The Y. M. C. A. gave up its rooms after a time and they have been used by the J. C. Freeman Post 53, the G. A. R., the Women's Relief Corps and others. In 1889 Benjamin Small of Provincetown gave to the library the sum of \$5,000, the income to be used for the purchase of books with the principal remaining intact. This bequest, made possible through the interest of Moses N. Gifford (father of the author) has proven of much assistance through the years.