



# THE TWENTIETH CENTURY VILLAGE

*A Series Not of Ideal Theories, But of Practical Suggestions Capable of Being Carried Out in the Smallest Community*



## Third Article—STARTING A VILLAGE LIBRARY

By Nellie Blanchan



IT WOULD seem to be only the natural outgrowth of the phenomenal activity of women's clubs all over the country, that it should be directed toward the establishment of permanent libraries. Women are never happy very long to be doing for themselves alone, and having enriched their own lives by reading and study, they have now come to realize that the opportunity for intellectual growth after the school age is past is more vitally necessary to the well-being of all the people in any community than most other matters to which their clubs have devoted so much time. But how to go to work to start a free library, a "people's university," is often an unstudied problem.

Let any half-dozen intelligent, energetic women decide that there must be a free library in their city or village, and the work is well started. If the women are members of a wide-awake club that will constitute itself a working committee the library secures at the outset an organized effort of experienced, like-minded workers that brings speedy and satisfactory results.

### THE OFFICERS THAT WILL BE NECESSARY

THE working committee requires a President, Treasurer, Recording and Corresponding Secretaries, an Honorary Librarian as chairman of a sub-committee to select books and see that they are distributed effectively; a chairman of a House Committee to look after the cleanliness, order, heating and lighting of whatever premises may be chosen, and a chairman of a Ways and Means Committee that shall attend to the collecting of funds. Half this number will do for a small, new organization; or, where only a traveling library finds its way, the Librarian is the one officer necessary, but it should always be remembered that a public library looks to the public for its support, and the greater the number of people that can be interested in it and put at work for it, the more solid will be its success.

Let the first work of the committee be to put itself in communication with the State or local authorities, if any, who distribute the public money, books or traveling libraries.

### A LIST OF THE STATES THAT GIVE AID

BELOW is a list of those Commonwealths that give aid to the library movement, with the names of the proper persons to whom correspondence should be addressed:

CONNECTICUT. Free Public Library Committee gives books to value of \$200 and annual help. Miss Caroline M. Hewins, Secretary, Public Library, Hartford.

GEORGIA. Library Commission. Law modeled after Wisconsin and Massachusetts. Governor has not yet appointed members. Information may be had from Miss Anne Wallace, Young Men's Library, Atlanta.

IOWA. Traveling Libraries. Mrs. L. H. Cope, State Librarian, Des Moines.

MAINE. Gives ten per cent. of amount expended for books to buy more books. Applications must be made to State Treasurer for money; Governor and Council for advice.

MASSACHUSETTS. Library Commission gives books to value of \$100. Such appropriations from town funds as people please. Miss E. P. Sohler, Secretary, Beverly.

MICHIGAN. Traveling libraries of fifty volumes. Mrs. Mary C. Spencer, Lansing.

NEW HAMPSHIRE. State Library Commission gives books to value of \$100. Law requires an assessment for maintenance of public library in every town. Josiah H. Whittier, Secretary, East Rochester.

NEW YORK. State University (Public Libraries Division) gives \$200 or less for books if same amount is raised at home. Traveling libraries. Melvil Dewey, Director, Albany.

OHIO. State Library Commission. Books loaned from State Library. Professor C. B. Galbreath, Secretary, Columbus.

RHODE ISLAND. State Board of Education (under certain conditions) authorized to give State money for purchase of books, the sum never to exceed \$500.

VERMONT. Library Commission gives books to value of \$100 to establish a public library, but the town must appropriate a sum annually for library expenses. Miss Mary L. Titcomb, Secretary, Rutland.

WISCONSIN. Free Library Commission. Traveling libraries available. Miss L. E. Stearns, Librarian, Madison.

### THE WORK OF THE LIBRARY COMMITTEE

SEVERAL other States are making strenuous efforts to secure library commissions, but those not mentioned on this list give no aid to libraries at present. Many have laws authorizing cities, towns, villages or school districts to levy special taxes for library use, which may be obtained through an appeal to the town officials. In any case it is well to interest some lawyer friend, who will give advice for the asking. Directions for procedure may also be obtained from any State that supports a Library Commission, or from the Secretary of the Board of Trustees of the largest library in the home State.

Having learned just what are the laws respecting the establishment and maintenance of a public library in the State and city or village where one is to be located, the new committee proceeds on its way by arousing and utilizing local interest in the enterprise. Enthusiasm counts for much in such a canvass among the people as is necessary to launch a library successfully, but tact and good judgment count for even more where all sorts and conditions of men are to be reached. To ignore any class implies indifference to it or contempt for it, an attitude surely calculated to arouse hostility. In a community where the opposition to a library is outspoken, as may be the case where increased taxes will result for the support of one, the committee does well to work quietly through such people only as are known to be sympathetic, and to be content with the most humble beginnings. The great majority of public libraries have had to be run several years as private charities before the local government became educated to the point of countenancing and supporting them.

### PERSONS WHOSE INTEREST SHOULD BE SOUGHT

THE local newspapers, always glad to give space to matters that concern all the people, may be relied upon to urge the appeal for a library and keep it well advertised, but their editors must be personally interested and kept supplied with the freshest news. It is safe to assume that the influential men and women in a community are the large-minded ones, who are always the first to appreciate the importance of a library, if not to lend their aid in supporting one, and the names of prominent patrons count for much. Teachers gladly cooperate, knowing the value of good supplementary reading and home culture to their work in the schoolroom. They are asked to interest the children, who, in turn, reach the parents more effectively than the most tactful canvasser could hope to do. These active young library missionaries, when set at some definite work, take hold of it with refreshing zeal. In many places they have earned the money for shelves full of juvenile books by giving magic lantern shows, tableaux, garden parties, athletic sports and other entertainments. They are propagandists by nature. Churches, with their various societies, Chautauqua circles, literary and debating clubs—in fact, all organized efforts, should be asked to contribute in one way or another to the library movement.

After much personal interviewing, letter-writing and newspaper notices the committee should be able to judge on what scale to adjust its plan. Interest may be only feeble; contributions of money and books small; the State or town officials powerless to help; but "the way to begin is to begin," and a public library rightly conducted wins friends for itself from the start with every book it circulates and every person whom it interests.

### PLANS FOR SECURING FINANCIAL SUPPORT

IF THE interest seems to warrant a public meeting, invitations should be given through the newspapers to all citizens, but the most important ones must be delivered personally or by note. A carefully arranged program will correctly inform the audience of the growth and importance of the library movement in the United States, point out the necessity for home effort, state the encouraging aspects of the new enterprise, unfold all plans so far as they have progressed, arrange for an election of trustees from among the most successful practical men of affairs in the town, who will manage whatever property may accrue, retaining as a cooperative board of lady managers the working committee to attend to the library details. Finally, it will impress upon the people their individual responsibility for the support of the library. A subscription paper should be in evidence at the close of the meeting. Secure the most enthusiastic speakers available. Men and women of more than local fame are often glad to speak in so good a cause when properly invited and entertained, and a celebrity on the platform is sure to draw a large audience. A good local band or orchestra may be invited to participate, and the florists to lend plants.

### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FAIRS AND FÊTES

IF, AFTER all effort to secure contributions of money; books and periodicals, there is not enough of the first to justify even a humble beginning, it becomes necessary to resort to some money-making enterprise. Except in those favored cases where an institution is endowed or wholly supported from the public funds, money-raising is apt to be an annual occupation for library workers; but for a philanthropy which benefits everybody, everybody may conscientiously be asked to lend a hand. The women in a certain town once held a market every Friday afternoon to support their library. Fresh fruits and vegetables from private gardens, home-made cakes, salads, etc., brought in about twenty dollars a week during the summer.

A fair where all the booths represent the titles of famous books is another successful plan. "Mistress and Maid" may be a table for useful household articles; "Great Expectations" are fulfilled in the grab-bag; "My Summer in a Garden" contains plants and flowers; "Pink and White Tyranny" is the candy-booth presided over by young girls dressed to look the title; and so on through a pretty group of booths that netted one library in a small town over \$1,300.

### A GARDEN FÊTE AND TABLEAUX

A GARDEN fête, while it generally yields a smaller return than an indoor fair, is a more acceptable means of raising money. The tickets of admission may have a coupon attached, whereon the purchaser may write a vote for the book he would like to have added to the library. A bulletin board for such requests at any fair brings in good returns, both in money and interest.

Private theatrical and musical clubs may often be persuaded to give a benefit. At a book reception guests are invited to come as they would to any private function, except that they leave books for the library instead of visiting-cards as they enter the house.

An evening of tableaux, showing the frontispiece, illustrated articles, stories and advertisements in a popular magazine, is a plan to raise funds from a class to whom lectures and authors' readings would not appeal. In addition to these efforts an appeal for money, with a report of the work accomplished during the year, should be sent through the mail to each householder annually.

### SELECTING A LOCATION FOR THE LIBRARY

THE home of the library should be chosen in a central location, near the public school if possible, or wherever it will do good to the greatest number. Part of a store, or a room in a private house may answer every purpose if the place be clean, well lighted and quiet. Men and women of wealth are coming to feel that a beautiful little library building is a more fitting monument to a well-spent life than a shaft in some neglected cemetery, and memorial libraries are abundant. Nevertheless, a structure that all the people have contributed to their town is more nearly ideal. The books' permanent home will come in good time.

The fact should ever be borne in mind that the success or failure of the library depends largely upon its librarian. Even at much sacrifice it is best to secure the services of one who is fitted by nature and training for the work. Save money in other ways, but not by employing an inefficient librarian. A graduate from the training schools may be employed for \$500 a year and upward. Where a library cannot be opened every day, as every library should be ultimately, and is very poor indeed, the best substitute for a trained librarian should be secured that the town offers. By correspondence with other libraries, and by studying modern library methods either at a summer school or through technical books, a young woman of intelligence will soon become alive to the great possibilities that this work offers.

### THE FIRST NECESSITY OF THE LIBRARY

CHILDREN'S books are the first necessity, because the fundamental idea of the library is educational, and children are more easily trained to enjoy good books than adults. The best fiction, biography, history, science and travel are alone worth buying. One good live book is worth a hundred dead ones discarded from the private library or garret of some townsman who was doubtless thankful to have a convenient dumping-ground for them. Excellent lists of popular books may be had from several State Library Commissions, which also lend traveling libraries at very small cost to such communities as cannot afford to own their books. A careful record of all books asked for should be kept by the librarian, and the best of these should be purchased as promptly as possible. It is well to spend small sums monthly, rather than larger ones more rarely, that the needs of the people may be supplied as they arise, and also that the shelves may contain what is newest and best. Discounts of from twenty to forty per cent. on books purchased in quantities for libraries are given by the large publishing houses.

Editor's Note—This is the third of a series of papers on "The Twentieth Century Village." Of these articles the following have been published:

"How to Have Good Country Roads," August

"A Practical Farmhouse," September

The fourth article, on "Manual Training Schools" in small communities, will appear in the next (the November) Journal.