

for this work and must remember that there are certain qualities which she seeks to develop in girls.

The leader or adviser belongs to the entire group and not to a few girls only. She must work with each and every one. It is always a pleasure for her to watch a girl grow physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually, and to know that she has helped her. It must be remembered that the direction of a girl's life God-ward is the aim of all true leadership.

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### THE WM. R. MCKENNEY FREE LIBRARY, PET- ERSBURG, VA.

IF THIS were an audience composed of those outside our Southern States, it would seem desirable to launch first into careful explanation of the conditions responsible for the fact that a city of 33,000 has only just now established a public library (for we are not willing to accept the explanation they usually find of themselves), but to an audience of Virginia librarians who so well understand the situation, it will not be necessary to go into the "whys and wherefores" of the tardy movement toward a public library in Petersburg. But I should mention, in the beginning, I think, that the movement, just now brought to fruition, is not a new one.

Some years ago, when the opportunity came for a Carnegie building, and later, when a woman of philanthropy offered to build a memorial library contingent upon city support, there were strong gestures to-

ward the establishment of a free public library in Petersburg—but these failed because of the snags (to use library terminology) of the negro question, lack of city funds, and the inability of some in authority to absorb the idea of the democratic necessity of public library service. But with the coming of the city manager form of local government in 1920, followed bigger and broader ideas of the functions and responsibilities of city government, and when Mrs. Clara J. McKenney proposed to the city the gift of a suitable building for use as a public library, it was not so difficult to get the consent of the city fathers to guarantee support of the institution. This gift was accepted in the autumn of 1923, and the deed to the building was given over to the city of Petersburg on January 1, 1924. The deed of transfer carried these definite stipulations: first, that the city should appropriate at least \$10,000 for the remodeling, equipment, and preparation of the building for library use; second, that the city appropriate not less than \$7,500 annually for maintenance of the library; third, that the first floor (or rather, basement) be equipped and used for a library branch for negroes; and fourth, that the library be known as the Wm. R. McKenney Free Library.

On April 15, the appointed librarian reported for duty, and the work of effecting an organization began. To you who so well understand the numerous problems of library administration, it will not be necessary to detail the many difficulties of adapting for library purposes a building not originally designed for library use; of equipping it with library furniture and fixtures and installing them. The building, which is a dignified dwelling of brown stucco of excellent construction containing ten large rooms, two large halls, three smaller rooms, and a semi-basement covering an entire floor, lends itself to library use much more easily than most dwellings, yet it presented its problems—all of which are not satisfactorily solved yet, I regret to say. We did succeed, however, in establishing the following divisions or units: an adult reading room of fair enough proportions, shelving capacity for 4,000 volumes; a reference room large enough for ten years' growth; a children's room, which, judging from present indications, we will outgrow in two years; a delivery hall, where books

A paper read before the annual meeting of the Virginia Library Association, in session at the Jefferson Hotel, Richmond, November 25, 1924.

are charged and returned; two stack rooms of 6,500 volume capacity; a history and genealogy room (which you may agree is necessary in our Virginia, where many are "head-hunters," as one of our staff terms the genealogists); a club assembly room, seating about fifty people; a museum room—yet to be furnished; an office of small proportions, two catalog work rooms, and a storage for supplies; and last, but not least, we have an attractive summer reading room. A large back porch, originally enclosed by stationary blinds, which not only darkened the main reading room but made it useless as it was, was converted by means of screens and large casement windows and the arrangement of stairs, into a bright cheery reading nook, accessible to the main reading room by door-windows. This is fitted up with comfortable reed arm-chairs, rockers, tables, and ferns. The basement also has been made ready for the negro library—the opening of which is deferred until the main library is on a sounder footing.

As to books—of course, the real heart of a library—perhaps our new library had a situation unusual enough for a new institution, to justify my including an explanation of the situation. Many years ago—seventy, to be exact—the Mechanics Association (which was an organization of local architects, civil engineers, and others whose vocations broadly come under the term technical) had established a library for use of their members and families, and this had grown to about 8,000 or 9,000 volumes. On the breaking up of the organization in 1920 or 1921, the books were given into the keeping of the Petersburg High School, and when it was known that the city would establish a library, the Board of Education agreed to turn over the collection to the city, together with fixtures consisting of excellent steel stacks and steel roller-shelving for bound newspapers. This collection of books was not catalogued nor even listed in any fashion. It was impossible to go ahead with book-ordering with any degree of satisfaction as to possible duplication, until this Mechanics Library was moved and catalogued or at least gone over carefully to determine the range of material included. This did not hinder, however, from going ahead with orders for representative books published since 1920—except as we were hindered by the multiplicity of duties con-

nected with the moving of the 9,000 books and fixtures, the appointment of assistants, and classifying and cataloging of these volumes. We were faced, too, with the necessity of spending \$3,000 on books before July 1 (end of fiscal year), or have it go back to the Treasury—lost forever to the library, because of the city law prohibiting any funds being carried over to the following year. We were reminded forcibly of that Latin phrase which in my teaching years I had difficulty in getting Young America to parse "Omnia agenda erant uno tempore"—everything had to be done at once. Cæsar and the humble librarian had at least one thing in common. I am going to confide in you here—none of that money reverted to the Treasury although at least one person burned the midnight oil often working over book-orders, because the day was too full of a "number of things" to permit of that particular work then.

But I promised to make a long story short—so, let me hasten. On August 6th we were able to open the library doors for public service—not because we were absolutely ready, but because for special local reasons we were pressed to do so. We had 3,600 books on the shelves, fully catalogued, with about 5,000 more in the building, not catalogued but available for reference. We were also able to announce two most generous gifts to the library that promised much for the immediate future. Mrs. Gilbert, of Harrisburg, Pa., but a native of Petersburg, agreed to give \$1,000 annually for the next five years for the purchase of adult books; and Mrs. George Cameron, Sr., of our city, agreed to give the same amount in the same divisions for the purchase of books for children. The selection of the books was left to the librarian.

At first, only afternoon service was attempted because of the tremendous amount of cataloguing still to be done. On October 1st, however, hours were extended, so that the library is open continuously from 10 a. m. to 9 p. m. The use of the library by the citizens of Petersburg has grown rapidly. Our borrowers now number over 1600; the average number of books circulated daily is 200, although the usual number is between 225 and 260, the total circulation for October being 4331. November will reach a much higher figure. This is without any advertising on our part, for we

have purposely delayed advertising until our collection has grown somewhat.

I shouldn't like to end this story without enumerating some of the things which we have which seem a little unusual for a new library. In the collection of books inherited from the Mechanics Library we have a very good collection of Virginiana—at least a good beginning, with some few volumes which are not obtainable now at any price, a file of bound newspapers among which are:

Richmond *Times Dispatch* 1870-1911  
 Petersburg *Index Appeal* 1868-1913  
 Richmond *Enquirer* 1801 for several years

*National Intelligencer* 1850-1870  
 and miscellaneous dates of *Aurora* (Philadelphia), *Richmond Whig* (1850), etc., etc. The file of bound magazines numbers about 3,000, among which should be noted:

*Atlantic Monthly*, 1880 to date  
*Fortnightly Review*, 1882-1900  
*Harper's*, complete to 1911  
*Living Age*, since 1874  
*North American Review*, since 1876  
*Scribner's*, from the beginning  
*Southern Literary Messenger*, v. 1—1858,  
 and the old *Scot's Magazine*, 1764 to 1813

There is one point as to the administration in which you may be interested. I am aware of the fact that there are several other Virginia cities operating under city manager plan, but I understand that in several cases library boards have been retained from the former city system. The city manager of Petersburg, when the library project was decided upon, concluded that he would operate the library as other city departments are operated—that is, without any board or committee or what not. Under this arrangement, the librarian has the standing of a head of a city department and works directly under the city manager—is responsible only to him. The details of the administration are entirely within the librarian's hands and only in the matter of decision as to important general policies does the city manager expect to be consulted. The appointment of assistants is left to the judgment of the librarian, the appointments, of course, being confirmed by the city manager. There is room for argument as to the usefulness of a board, and we can foresee occasions when a library commission would make things easier for the li-

brarian—a board is convenient both as a buffer between librarian and the public and as an agency for promoting general financial welfare of the library. We shouldn't attempt to discuss that in detail now. We are happy to report, however, that so far this "boardless" plan is working beautifully in Petersburg. We might not be able to so report, if it were not that our city manager is a gentleman of unusual breadth of vision and of large common sense. The matter of opening has been greatly expedited, I am sure, by having no board, and, so far as we know, our people do not feel that they need to be represented by a board.

Fortunately we haven't the idea that one of our patrons recently voiced in this remark: "Now that your building is all finished, your books are catalogued and on the shelves, there really isn't enough for you to do every day, is there?" We feel that all the things that have been done so far are only preliminaries, and we know that we have made only a very, very small beginning—our greatest work is ahead of us. To build up a book collection of wide enough range and make it so accessible that we will be able to convince our people that the library is a very important and definite part of public education (and that is no small task where the prevailing idea of a public library is that it is a distributing station for light fiction); to make the institution count in a business sense; to extend its service to sections of the population where it is badly needed; to make the library a socialized institution in every sense of the word—these are the aims that we all share. The field is before us in Petersburg and we rejoice in the opportunity therein.

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#### SAFETY INSTRUCTION REDUCES NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS

Thirty-six fewer persons were killed by vehicles in the New York City during the first eight months of 1924 than for the same period in 1923. This is attributed to safety instruction in the schools. Essays, debates, singing safety songs, drawing posters, and the composition of safety slogans constitute some of the safety activities in the public schools. A safety banner will be awarded to the winning school in each district for the best safety work performed during the school year ending in June, 1925.