

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VERMONT SQUARE BRANCH LIBRARY.

(First seven years).

On March 1, 1913, the Vermont Square Branch, the first of the Carnegie branch libraries built in Los Angeles, was opened to the public.

The librarian, Miss Caroline Brittain and her assistant, with two or three helpers from the central library spent a busy day unpacking boxes of books, filing cards and, in short, putting the library in order.

At six o'clock the doors were opened and hundreds of enthusiastic men, women and children crowded in. It had been planned to have the program in the auditorium but since the crowd made this impossible, the speakers sought refuge within the charging desk where they spoke from an improvised platform. Speeches were made by Mr. H. H. McCallum, the President of the Vermont Square ~~■~~ Improvement Association (?); Mr. Henry Newmark, President of the Library Board; and Mr. Everett R. Perry, the Librarian. All members of the board were present as well as many members of the library staff.

It was a strenuous day for all of us and we were glad the next day was Sunday so we could have a day of rest before the library opened for business. ^{Monday, ~~March 1~~,} Promptly at nine, the public began to come in. Little Romaine Jacobs, daughter of a prominent doctor living across the street, was the first to register; then followed others in rapid succession all day. Over seven hundred registered the first month.

Although a generous amount of money was spent for books, they made little impression on the shelves. Non-fiction was especially well represented. Rev. Tyler Dennett, now well known for his books on political and social conditions in the orient, but at that time Pastor of the Pilgrim Congregational Church, selected the books on philosophy and religion. Sociology books were selected by Prof.

Emory S. Bogardus (?). Philology, literature, travel, biography and history were chosen by Miss Gertrude Darlow, then Principal of the General Literature Department, and art books were ordered by Miss Anna Beckley, who had recently resigned from her position as Principal of the Reference Department. The A. L. A. Catalogue for 1904 with the 1911-12 Supplement ^{was used} for these subjects as well as for fiction. The children's books were ordered from a selected list of children's books compiled by Miss Helen T. Kennedy when she was an instructor in the Wisconsin State Library School.

There was also purchased a complete file of the following bound Magazines: Atlantic Monthly, Harper's, Century, Scribner's and World's Work. These proved to be of great help in reference work on literary subjects. Poole's index, as well as Readers' Guide to date were ^{included} published in the first purchase. Firkin's Index to short stories proved a joy to use ~~la~~ when it appeared later. There were many other excellent reference books, including the Century Dictionary, Grove's Dictionary of Music besides those which are ^{listed} purchased for first purchase for the the small branches today.

The newness of the library, furniture and books were ~~at~~ a real luxury to us who had been used to gloomy, rented store buildings ~~but~~ but there was one ^{crumpled} rose leaf which marred our serenity of spirit. There was no cork carpet on the floors and the noise of the steel tipped chairs on the cement was terrific. In a few weeks, ~~this~~ was laid, ^{and} also walks about the building, ^{curtains} ~~to~~ the office windows and numerous other additions which made the building more comfortable and attractive.

With the increase of circulation, other activities of the branch increased. Story hours were conducted almost from the start, ^{with help} coming from the Cumnoek School of Expression and U. S. C. School of Oratory. A number of small clubs for children flourished and died.

As the staff for more than a year consisted of only two persons to cover ^{the school} all the time from nine to nine, not much could be accomplished besides the circulation of books, but classes were invited to the library for instruction even at this time.

The first club of importance was the West Ebell Club which was organized in February 1917. In a few years they outgrew the library quarters and built a clubhouse of their own.

Perhaps activities, (other than library work), had their climax during the war. The exemption board for ^{the} that district occupied a room in the basement for more than a year. Thousands of physical examinations were given during that time; in fact, all the business they had to perform was conducted in the basement of the library with the exception of a few days ^{they were} when ~~they~~ ^{they were} their busiest, days they demanded more room and had at least ten stenographers pounding their machines in the reading room! A detailed report ~~was~~ made after the ~~work~~ war by the principal then in charge. Three Red Cross auxiliaries conducted their business also in the library. A colored janitor, transferred from the central library when the days in the branch were more tranquil, confided to one member of the staff that he liked the branch because there were not ~~many~~ so many "Bosses" out there. But when organizations increased at a rapid rate and the library became a hive of industry the patient janitor found himself besieged with "bosses". Sewing machines, chairs and tables had to be moved about daily to suit the various dispositions of nervous women.

The auditorium ^{was} ~~has been~~ used for several recitals, etc. during the ^{early} history of the branch and there were such unusual ^{affairs} affairs as a chrysanthemum exhibit, ~~and~~ rose exhibit and wildflower exhibit ~~which~~ all in the reading room all of which proved to be too much of a "success" to bear repeating.

The success of the Vermont Square Branch is due to many important causes. First, the community is composed largely of property owners

who naturally have a pride in their community. Second, they are a reading public with cultured tastes. Three, there are many children who acquired the reading habit early and were no doubt encouraged by their parents. ^{Moreover,} Also, this branch has been fortunate in always having throughout its history, strong enthusiastic children's librarians. ^{And finally,} (These points with) a good selection) of books (to begin with) and systematic buying through the years (although the books fund was for a long time inadequate) are conducive to its steady progress.