

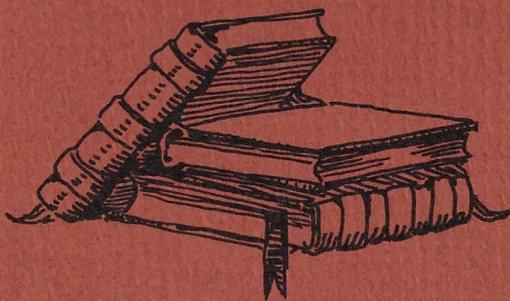


A · HISTORY
OF · AMERICA'S
FIRST · PUBLIC
LIBRARY

· at ·

FRANKLIN
MASSACHUSETTS

1790-1990



“*S*ENSE BEING
PREFERABLE TO SOUND”

• BICENTENNIAL COMMEMORATIVE EDITION •

BY JOHN A. PETERS
NINA C. SANTORO

"Had I the power, I would
scatter libraries over the
whole land, as the sower
sows his wheat field."

- Horace Mann in *The Life
of Horace Mann* by Mary Peabody



*F*ranklin, Massachusetts Town Meeting, November 26, 1790 – "Voted: Article II – That the Rev. Nathaniel Emmons be Directed to lend the Books presented to this town by the late Dr. Franklin to the Inhabitants of this town at large, and until the town shall order other ways, they being accountable to him for the use and improvement of said Books."

With that vote a long struggle between the strong-willed, overbearing Dr. Emmons and the citizens of Franklin came to an end, or more correctly, *nearly* to an end, for just a month later, on Christmas Eve, Dr. Emmons was to have the last word on *all* the books owned by the parish.

Four years earlier the Franklin Public Library had its origins in the donation of 116 books given by one of America's foremost patriots, Benjamin Franklin. That gift in turn had a strong influence on the life of the town's most famous son, Horace Mann, the father of American public education. Therefore, not only does Franklin have the first public library in America, it also can lay claim to being the only town whose fortunate choice of a name brought with it the *establishment* of a library for its citizens.



Books Instead of a Bell

*I*n 1778 when Franklin was incorporated as a town separate from Wrentham, the first name chosen was Exeter. Before the final act of incorporation, however, someone (who it was is not known) changed the name in order to honor Benjamin Franklin. (News that Franklin had successfully negotiated an alliance with the French had recently reached the rebellious colonies. The defeat of Burgoyne at the Battle of Saratoga and the diplomatic efforts of Benjamin Franklin had convinced the French to ally with the colonists.)





"I have written Dr. Price of London, requesting him to make a choice of proper Books to commence a Library for the use of the Inhabitants of Franklin."

Seven years later someone in the town (who it was is not documented) approached Benjamin Franklin reminding him of the great honor a small town of farmers in Massachusetts had bestowed upon him. It seems that the citizens of Franklin felt it was time for Benjamin Franklin to respond to that honor. He could, they thought, donate a bell for a steeple the town intended to build on its new meeting house. In a letter he wrote to Dr. Richard Price, Benjamin Franklin responded that the "country people" of Franklin should spare ". . . themselves the Expense of a Steeple at present, and that they would accept a gift of Books instead of a Bell, Sense being preferable to Sound." (A copy of the letter is included in this booklet.)

Further mention of the donation is made in several letters written in 1785. In April Franklin wrote to Jonathan Williams, Jr., his grandnephew, concluding his letter with these words, "I have written Dr. Price of London, requesting him to make a choice of proper Books to commence a Library for the use of the Inhabitants of Franklin. They will be sent directly from thence." (Blake, p. 70) On May 3rd Williams wrote to Franklin's son William, "Remember me most dutifully and affectionately to the Doctor, tell him I have seen Dr. Price, who will in a few days give me The List of Books for Franklin Township." (Historical Book, p. 17)*

On June 3, 1785, Richard Price wrote to Franklin, "Mr. Williams has given me much pleasure by calling upon me and bringing me a letter from you. I have, according to your desire, furnished him with a list of such books on government as I think some of the best, and added a present to the parish that is to bear your name, of such of my own publications as I think may not be suitable. Should this be the commencement of parochial libraries in the States, it would do great good." (Historical Book, p. 17)

And on June 12, 1785, Jonathan Williams, Jr., gives us another insight into the donation, "I find by your letter to your Sister I, did not do what you expected viz. advise whether the People of Franklin

*References indicate the sources listed in the bibliography. We will use the author's last name or the first words of the title and page numbers.



The letter from
Benjamin Franklin to
Doctor Richard Price,
March 18, 1785.

My dear Friend,

Safely, Mar. 18. 1785.

My Nephew, M^r Williams, will have the
honour of delivering you this Line. It is to re-
quest from you a List of a few good Books to
the Value of about Twenty-five Pounds, such as
are most proper to inculcate Principles of sound
Religion & just Government. A new Town in
the State of Massachusetts, having done me the hon-
our of naming itself after me, and proposing to build
a Steeple to their Meeting House if I would give them
a Bell, I have advis'd them sparing themselves the Expence
of a Steeple at present, and that they would accept of
Books instead of a Bell, Sense being preferable to Sound.
These are therefore intended as the Commencement of a
little Parochial Library, for the Use of a Society of
intelligent respectable Farmers, such as our Country
People generally consist of. Besides your own Works
I would only mention, on the Recommendation of my Sister,
Stennet's Discourses on personal Religion, which may be
one Book of the Number, if you know it and approve of
it. — With the highest Esteem & Respect, I am ever, my

Dear Friend

Yours most affectionately

Benjamin Franklin

Richard Price



"I believe Books will be much more acceptable, for they are poore, & in my Opinion, don't need a bell any more than a toad needs a tail, if they should have a Bell they must have a ringer & yt would be a living expence."

Town preferd Sound to Sence if so they ought not to judge for themselves however I, avoided giving them any expectations of a Bell or Books I knew they had no right to either, it must & ought, depend on your pleasure I, believe Books will be much more acceptable, for they are poore, & in my Opinion, don't need a bell any more than a toad needs a tail, if they should have a Bell they must have a ringer & yt would be a living expence.' " Franklin's sister Jane Mecom also makes reference to the books in a letter written to him. It seems she wanted a copy of the list of books so that she might use it to direct her own reading. In a letter in December, 1785, Williams complained to Franklin that the books had not arrived. (Historical Book, p. 17)

The Great Controversy

The books finally arrived some time before June 22, 1786, for on that date Nathaniel Emmons and Hezekiah Fisher wrote a thank you letter to Franklin; and in 1787 Emmons's sermon delivered on the occasion of the arrival of the books was published in Providence. (Historical Book, p. 17.)

By 1787, however, the great controversy over who should be allowed to use the books had begun. By a September 26, 1788, vote, the town reconsidered an earlier decision "confining the donation of books sent by Benjamin Franklin to the parish." (Peirce, unnumbered page in manuscript). Earlier, in a September 8, 1788, letter to Benjamin Franklin, five citizens of the town wrote asking him if it had been his intention that only those who attended and supported the Congregational Church in the town (Emmons's church) could use the Franklin library. The Congregational Church was, of course, the only church in town at the time. It seems that some people in town had interpreted a letter that may have accompanied the donation in that way. The citizens writing to Benjamin Franklin indicated that several families lived so far from the Franklin church in the center of the town, that it was more convenient for them to attend other Congregational churches located in nearby communities, closer to their homes. In fact, they state that the town meeting had granted them permission to do so.





*The bookcase, located in
the new wing of the library,
containing the original books
given by Benjamin Franklin.*





Whether Franklin ever replied to this letter or what he said if he did reply, we do not know. In his *History of the Town of Franklin*, Arthur W. Peirce, Headmaster of Dean Academy from 1897 until 1934 and husband of Lydia Ray, one of the donors of the 1904 building, reports that in June, 1789, the town meeting voted, "That the Rev. Nathaniel Emmons be Directed to lend the Books presented to this town by the late Dr. Franklin to the Inhabitants of the town at large, and until this town shall order other ways, they (the town) being accountable to him (Dr. Franklin) for the use and improvement of said Books.' " (Historical Book, p. 20.)

Peirce tells us that despite the June, 1789, vote, Emmons would not surrender his own position easily. Indeed, Emmons believed that the books should be part of the parochial library which had existed in Franklin for at least thirty years prior to the arrival of the donation. (Emmons described the earlier library in the sermon given when the books arrived.) And on December 24, 1790, according to Peirce, at a town meeting Emmons was again directed to allow all inhabitants to use the books. (Records of all the town meetings where use of the books was discussed no longer exist. Neither the Franklin town officers nor the Franklin Public Library has them. It is obvious, however, that Peirce did have access to the original documents, for the wording is precise and in keeping with town meeting warrants.) In all, Peirce says that between September, 1788, and December, 1790, the question of the books appeared on the warrants of the meetings *ten* times.*

Members of the December 24 town meeting acquiesced, however, in the maintenance of two separate groups of books; those given by Franklin to be used by all and those in the parochial library to be used by subscribers only. In any case, by the 1789 and 1790 votes, Franklin had its first public library and the first public library in America.

Unfortunately, the town meeting did not act upon an idea which was suggested in discussion during the 1790 meeting. According to Peirce, the question of adding to the library by taxes was proposed, but it was doubted "whether the town, without the aid of the General

*See pages 20, 21, and 22 for Peirce's discussion of all the votes.



Mr Joseph Lawrence.
 Mr Daniel Fisher.
 Mr Joseph Hills.
 Mr Amos Harding.
 Mr Thomas Bacon.
 Mr Thomas Gay.
 Mr James Harding.
 Mr Chloe Ware.
 Mr Henry Daniels.
 Mr Jonathan Hawes.
 Mr Asa Aldridge.
 Nathaniel Miller.
 Mr Abner Legg.
 Mr Timothy Ellis.
 Mr John Allen.
 Mr Billy Ware.
 Miss Chloe Ware.

Mr Ebenezer Partridge.
 Mr Samuel Rockwood.
 Mr Daniel Richardson.
 Mrs Mary Thunflow.
 Mr Daniel Thunflow.
 Mr Levi Hawes.
 Mr Ebenezer Partridge.
 Mr John Richardson.
 Miss Petronella Blake.
 Mr Jabez Ware.
 Mr Ebenezer Lawrence.
 Mr Phalah Whiting.
 Mr Joseph Goulde.
 Mr Schabod Ford.
 Mr Amariah Ware.

Court can vote a Legal Tax to raise money for the purpose of additional books.' " As Peirce notes ". . . A desire to its so doing (voting a tax for library books) being here implied for the first time in library history." (Peirce, p. 20) There is no doubt, however, that there were two separate collections, for evidence of the two libraries exists in the 1791 catalogue of proprietors, written in Emmons's own hand.

The Names of Proprietors, who have a Right in that part of Franklin Library which was given by Dr Franklin, but not in the Addition made to it, by those who are called Subscribers.

Mr Joshua Daniels.
 Mr Joseph Bacon.
 Mr Eli Darling.
 Mrs Unity Daniels.
 Mr Jason Fisher.
 Mr Samuel Heaton.
 Mr David Hartsorn.
 Miss Melly Lincoln.
 Mr Cephas Lawrence.
 Dr Paul Metcalf.

On the first page, prefacing the list of names, Emmons wrote, "The Names of Proprietors, who have a Right in that part of Franklin Library which was given by Dr. Franklin, but not in the Addition made to it, by those who are called Subscribers."

Sept.
en
A Catalogue of those Books
in Franklin Library,
which belong to the Subscribers.
Robertson's History of Charles V. 1 Vol.
Robertson's History of America. 2 Vol.
Rollin's Roman History. 10 Vol.
Pamphlet's History of the War. 1 Vol.
Brydson's Tour thro' Sicily & Malta. 2 Vol.
Luther's Geography. 1 Vol.
Morse's Geography. 1 Vol.
Deane's New England Farmer. 1 Vol.

Edwards's History of Redemption. 1 Vol.
Edwards on Original Sin. 1 Vol.
Ogilvie on Infidelity & Scepticism. 1 Vol.
Burlamaqui's Principles. 2 Vol.
Baccaria on Crimes & Punishments. 1 Vol.
Anson's Voyage. 1 Vol.
Vicar of Wakefield. 1 Vol.
Dodgley's Exop. 1 Vol.
The Child's Friend. 4 Vol.
Richardson on Shakspeare. 1 Vol.
Lavater's Aphorisms. 1 Vol.
Stevenson's Lectures. 1 Vol.

*A Book of Record.
Franklin Library.
February 20th 1794*



A second document, "A Book of Record, Franklin Library February 20th, 1794" includes a record of the loan of books, their condition, fines assessed and other information Dr. Emmons felt it necessary to note. It also lists the subscribers for 1793 and includes a notice requesting that the library's treasurer collect the annual "library tax" (dues), six pence. Two members were also charged an additional eight pence each "for not returning a Book."

Feb^r 20th 1794

To Mr James Adams Collector of the Library Taxen, You are directed to Collect of the

Perform hereafter named the sum set against their names and pay the whole, or send Collected to Lewis Fisher Treasurer of the Library as soon as may be after Collection.

Also make return to the Librarian of what you cannot Collect, before the next Quarterly meeting.

| | | | |
|----------------|---|----------------|---|
| Jesse Ware | 6 | Calven Metcalf | 6 |
| Moses Spragg | 6 | Harmon Metcalf | 6 |
| John Whiting | 6 | Joseph Bacon | 6 |
| Amos Hauser | 6 | Benjamin Bond | 6 |
| Slipha Harding | 6 | Joseph Harding | 6 |
| Seth Bacon | 6 | Asa Metcalf | 6 |
| Peter Whiting | 6 | Abraham Blake | 6 |
| King Wood Mann | 6 | Joseph Hauser | 6 |

Seth Whiting
 Nicholas Ware
 Joseph Daniels
 James Tabor
 Levi Hauser
 Calven Metcalf
 John Clark
 Ephraim Allen
 Benjamin Bond
 Daniel Fisher
 Timothy Schofield

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| to Mr Lewis Fisher | 6 |
| to Joseph Hauser | 6 |
| to Ebenezer Allen | 6 |
| to James Adams | 6 |
| to Asa Fairbanks | 6 |
| to Asa Fairbanks | 6 |
| to David Wood | 6 |
| to Mervin Bond | 6 |
| to Elias Gardner | 6 |

Mr. Mervin Bond for not a Book } 6 8
 September 10th 1793 }
 Mr. Timothy Fisher for not a Book } 6 8
 a Book returned August 1793 }
 Reuben Fisher
 Nathan Woodward
 Stephen Kingsbury
 King Bond } Committee





16)

| Rollin's Roman, H. | | Names | Year | Months | Days | Damage | Page | Maps | Binding | Year | Months | Days | Damage | Page | Maps | Binding | Year |
|----------------------|---------------|-------|------|--------|------|--------|------|------|---------|------|--------|------|--------|------|------|---------|------|
| No. 2. | | | | | | 268 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 3. | | | | | | 237-8 | 336 | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 4. | | | | | | | 16d. | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 5. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 6. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 7. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 8. | | | | | | 7-8 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 9. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 10. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rollin's Antient, H. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 1 | Daniel Fisher | 1794 | 10 | | | 22 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 2 | Daniel Fisher | 1794 | 10 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 3 | | | | | | 38 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 5 | | | | | | 25 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 6 | Nathan Hays | 1794 | 10 | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 7 | Nathan Hays | 1794 | 10 | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 8 | | | | | | 26 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 9 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No. 10 | | | | | | 27 | | | | | | | | | | | |

The next mention of a library in Franklin in any record still available to us appears in 1811 when a committee of seven incorporated a social library. A book of this group's records indicates that the Franklin books would continue to be available under the old rules; one needed, however, to pay dues to borrow all additional books. In 1812 "A catalogue of those Books in Franklin Library, which belong to the Town" was printed and is the first printed list we have.



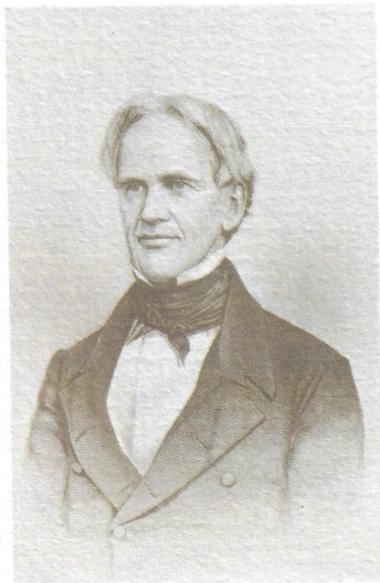
During the time that Dr. Emmons was the minister of the Congregational Church (1773-1827), it appears that the library was kept in the front entry of the Emmons home. A letter (quoted by Arthur Peirce) written in 1858 by M. M. Fisher, a Medway resident born in Franklin, states, "Some of my earliest associations are connected with the old Franklin Library. I have a very vivid recollection of the Old Book case in the front entry of the Old Emmons' Mansion." None of the titles he mentions, however, was in the original donation. Later in the letter, Fisher writes, "I think I may surely attribute much of my little success in life to the influence of the Old Franklin Library and the sage counsels of the venerable librarian [Emmons]." (Peirce, p. 20).



Residence of Dr. Emmons, Franklin.

"I think I may surely attribute much of my little success in life to the influence of the Old Franklin Library and the sage counsels of the venerable librarian."

What was called the love of knowledge, was in my time, necessarily cramped into a love of books; because there was no such thing as oral instruction.



Horace Mann

The Power of Reading

Though Horace Mann, the father of American public education, may not have attributed his success to the “venerable librarian,” he was influenced by his reading of some of the Franklin books. In her biography of Horace and Mary Mann, *Until Victory*, Louise Hall Tharp describes Horace Mann at Brown University, “Foremost in Mann’s mind and the delight of his heart was oratory. He had loved it ever since Gordon’s *Tacitus* had captured his imagination – all five volumes of it in the Franklin Library.” (Tharp p. 35) Tharp tells us that later in his life when he met Elizabeth Peabody, who was to become his sister-in-law, “Horace Mann was astonished to find that Miss Peabody rekindled his own boyish enthusiasm for the Greeks. Somehow, she made him feel again the thrill of his first discovery of the Classical world in those books in the Franklin library!” (Tharp p. 102) Tharp gives as her source a letter written by Mary Peabody to Sophia Peabody, dated February 17, 1833.

Horace Mann’s own words on books and the Franklin library corroborate Tharp’s characterization:

What was called the love of knowledge, was in my time, necessarily cramped into a love of books; because there was no such thing as oral instruction. Books designed for children were few and their contents meagre and miserable.

(Mann p. 11)

I said we had but a few books. The town, however, owned a small library. When incorporated, it was named after Dr. Franklin, whose reputation was then not only at its zenith, but like the sun over Gibeon, was standing still there. As an acknowledgment of the compliment, he offered them a bell for their church; but afterwards, saying that, from what he had learned of the character of the people, he thought they would prefer sense to sound, he changed the gift into a library. Though this library consisted of old histories and theologies, suited, perhaps, to the taste of the “conscript fathers” of the town, but miserably adapted to the



“proscript” children, yet I wasted my youthful ardor upon its martial pages, and learned to glory in war, which both reason and conscience have since taught me to consider almost universally a crime. (Mann, p. 13)

Horace Mann’s recitation of the story of the founding of the library misstates the reason why Franklin’s gift was books rather than a bell. This perhaps explains why Tharp and other writers have made the same mistake. The March 18, 1785, letter from Benjamin Franklin discussed previously shows that the Franklinites suggested a bell, and Franklin responded with an offer of books for a library.

Mann’s father was treasurer of the library between 1802 and 1806. As treasurer Thomas Mann would have been in charge of collecting taxes and fines from the subscribers to the private part of the library. It would appear, then, that there was a strong family interest in reading.

In 1839 in his *Third Annual Report* as Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, Horace Mann presented his ideas about public libraries. He saw the public libraries as necessary “adjuncts to public schools,” a phrase bound to irritate today’s public librarians who necessarily have a broader vision for public libraries. Public libraries were necessary Mann said “. . . for with no books to read, the power of reading will be useless. . .” Mann proposed the “. . . establishment of a free circulating library in every school district of the state.”

(Cremin p. 4)

A year after Horace Mann made this third annual report, Franklin’s town meeting contained this article in the warrant: “To see if it be the minds of the town to take any measures to improve their library so that it may be of some benefit to the citizens as it was intended by the illustrious donor, or act or do anything respecting said library the town may think proper.”

Two years later the committee reported to the town that the library “remained in pretty good condition” with the exception that about sixty volumes were missing. The total of sixty probably referred to both the Franklin books and the social library. There is no evidence that the town meeting decided to “take any measures to improve the library. . . or act or do anything respecting said library. . . .”

“with no books to read, the power of reading will be useless. . .”





"If some towns possessed it, they would rear a beautiful edifice in which the books might be preserved, and make it the nucleus of a large collection of works."

It must have been at about the time of this committee's report that the library was kept in a home opposite the Union Street Cemetery. For in an address given at the Franklin Centennial, the Rev. Albert M. Richardson stated, "That library was kept, in my boyhood in my father's house, and to its perusal I was indebted for a taste for reading and a thirst for knowledge." (Blake, p. 217) (According to Blake, Richardson was born in 1822, and town records indicate that his family lived across from the Union Street Cemetery.)

The next time the library appears in any town records is 1856. At the town meeting of that year, a committee which had been appointed to check into the Franklin Library found that the library was in "considerable disorder." Apparently during some time between 1842 and 1856, the library had been stored in a barn. Ella C. Campbell, director of the Franklin Public Library in the 1880s and 1890s, said that the Benjamin Franklin books had been kept in her father's barn at one time, according to Peirce. (Peirce, p. 30) In addition, in *Looking Backward 1909*, Laura Matilda (Blake) Rockwood wrote that the books were stored in her father's barn when the Congregational minister's house was being renovated.

Measures to Improve the Library

In 1858 at the instigation of the Rev. William Makepeace Thayer, the Franklin Library Association was organized. Thayer was most concerned about the preservation of the Franklin books. In a February 8, 1858, letter to the *Boston Traveller*, Thayer says that he has just examined the library, ". . . which is now among the almost forgotten things of this town. . ." And he ends the letter with the statement, "For some years past the library has been neglected to a degree that is really dishonorable to the town. Some of the volumes are missing, and very few people appear to set much value upon it . . . It is lamentable that it is so. If some towns possessed it, they would rear a beautiful edifice in which the books might be preserved, and make it the nucleus of a large collections of works." In 1859, the town





voted to give custody of the Franklin Library to the new association. This action occurred after the association petitioned the town for the books. Until 1861, members only could borrow books, but in that year the association voted to allow anyone who paid six cents per week per volume to take books from the library.

The association was active for several years, but the town report for the year ending February 28, 1873, notes that “. . . in time the amount of the annual assessment (\$1.00 per year or one payment of \$20.00 for life membership) being insufficient to pay necessary expenses and suitably replenish the library with such books as were required for full success of the association, a want of interest was manifest.” In other words, without enough money the library could not operate successfully.

As a result, the case of the Franklin Library was again brought before town meeting, and in November, 1871, the town voted to resume care of the library. It also voted for a board of trustees and for a sum of money for the selection and purchase of books. The 1872 town report indicated the first town expenditures for the library. In December, 1871, the Franklin Library Association voted to turn its books over to the use of the town “subject to be returned to the Association whenever they should desire.”

The following year several events came together to make the establishment of a partnership between the town and the Franklin Library Association possible. Dr. Oliver Dean, first president of the Franklin Library Association (F.L.A.), died and left twenty-five shares in the Boston and Albany Railroad to the association, “The income thereof only to be expended for books for the Association. . .” (Franklin Town Report, 1873, p. 35.) With a renewed interest in a public library in the town evident in the town meeting vote of 1871, together with the F.L.A.’s newly found wealth (\$250 income per year at the time), Franklin’s public library could be established on firmer ground. The next year the life members of the F.L.A. reorganized under a new Massachusetts law which had been passed at their instigation. The law allowed a town to appropriate money to a library corporation so long as the corporation permitted inhabitants of the town free access to and use of the library. (Franklin Town Report, 1873, pp. 32-35.)



Oliver Dean.



In February of the following year, the Franklin Library Association proposed that the town appoint the F.L.A. manager of the town library, and the March 4, 1873, town meeting, members voted the new role for the group. The report of this meeting also helps us locate the library: "For some years past [the library] has been kept in one of the school rooms on School Street. . ." That report also noted the need for more space for the library. In 1875 the library was moved from the William Makepeace Thayer High School to the "bank building" (the Ray Block). The town report for that year indicated that, as per the agreed to arrangement, the town paid the library expenses, and the association purchased the books.



RAY'S BLOCK, MAIN STREET.

In 1891 the library was moved again, this time to Dean Avenue to "Joseph G. Ray's new block." The 1883 report of the Franklin Library Association had indicated that the library was running out of space. So the move eight years later is no surprise.

“ . . . can we not reasonably hope that in the near future some son of our town. . . may gladly furnish for our Public Library a permanent building. . .?”



With the move the library was able to add a reading room, a place where patrons could work with the library's materials, something we take as commonplace in libraries today. In 1893 the directors of the library raised \$200 by subscription for that purpose. Before this time the library was merely a warehouse for books, where patrons could sign out and return books. The library hours were also increased – from two evenings and one afternoon each week to every weekday afternoon from 2 until 5, and evenings from 6:30 until 9.

Two conveniences we have come to expect in public libraries did not appear in Franklin until 1899 when “some shelves open to the public” were set up for the first time. Another common feature of public libraries, now obsolete with the invention of the computer, was purchased in 1899 and put into use in 1900 – the card catalogue.

At about this time, William F. Ray, one of the Directors of the Franklin Library Association, suggested in his report to the town, “. . . can we not reasonably hope that in the near future some son of our town. . . may gladly furnish for our Public Library a permanent building. . .?”

For Our Public Library a Permanent Building

Six years later on October 4, 1904, the Ray Memorial building was dedicated. A gift of Mrs. Lydia Ray Peirce and Mrs. Annie Ray Thayer, the library was built to honor the memory of their parents, Joseph Gordon Ray and Emily Rockwood Ray. Joseph Gordon Ray was an extremely successful 19th century industrialist whose family established the textile industry in Franklin. It is, of course, this Ray building, together with the new wing, that now houses the Franklin books and the Franklin Public Library.

The original building was designed by Henry Hammond Gallison, a former resident of Franklin, and the design was executed by the architectural firm of Rand and Skinner. Gallison painted the murals in the room which houses the catalogue and used to house the circulation desk. In 1904 this room was called the “delivery room.”





Gallison was known as an important American landscape painter in his time, and three of his landscapes are in the foyer and on the wall going downstairs from the foyer to the lecture room.

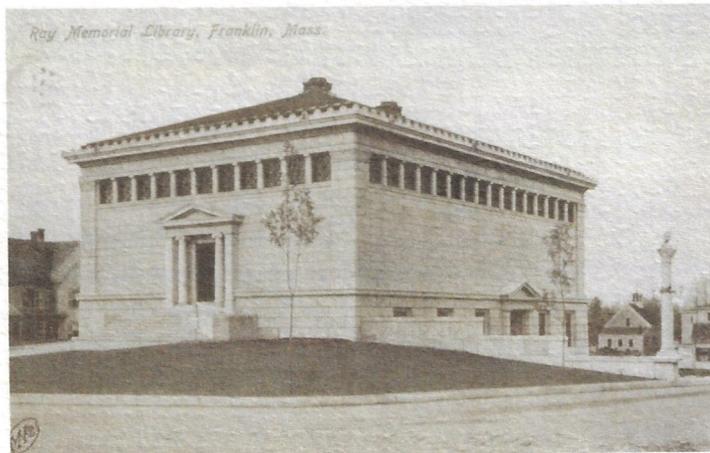
A second artist, Tommaso Juglaris, painted the murals in the reading room. Juglaris was an Italian citizen and, in fact, did much of the work on the murals in Italy. He completed the work on the murals in this country at Gallison's studio in Annisquam, Massachusetts. The murals were done on canvas which was then attached to the reading room walls.

In 1904 the Ray family also established the Ray Memorial Association to provide for and maintain the Ray building. This association was responsible for the building until 1982 when the Franklin Public Library became a department of the town.

From 1987 until 1989 the town of Franklin spent over three million dollars restoring and adding on to the building. The changes made then expanded the structure to give the town space for library services well into the 21st century. That project, designed by Robert C. Abrahamson, Jr., President of Architect Design Group II, Inc., Wellesley, also made major updates to the 1904 building. Thanks to the generosity of earlier citizens of Franklin, those expenditures, together with \$25,000 spent repairing the roof in 1982, were the first the town had ever had to make on a library building. The costs involved in maintaining, furnishing, staffing, and stocking of a modern library now require the support of an entire community.

In 1916 on the 50th anniversary of Dean Academy, former President William H. Taft gave the main address. In a letter to his hosts written after his appearance at Dean he wrote, "I have never seen a town Library equal to that of Franklin. It is a work of art and yet admirably adapted to the real uses of such an institution."

(Franklin Town Report, 1916, p.26)





Further Milestones in the History of the F.P.L. (Excerpted from town reports)

- 1907 – “Mrs. Peirce and Mrs. Thayer have fitted up, for lecture purposes, the hall opposite the Children’s room. It has been furnished with a platform, a table, comfortable chairs and electric lights. Wall-cases have been added which already contain valuable historical books, manuscripts and autography; also the bronze medal struck by Congress to commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Benjamin Franklin; this was sent to the Library by Secretary Elihu Root at the request of President Theodore Roosevelt.”
- 1918 – World War I – “On account of shortage in coal, the Library was open to the public on Wednesdays and Saturdays only, from January 1 to May 15. . . . In behalf of the Soldiers and Sailors, an appeal was made to the public by posters and notices in the local papers; in response to which 109 volumes were brought to the Franklin Library and forwarded to the War Library headquarters.”
- The flu epidemic – “On account of the influenza epidemic in town, the Board of Health closed the Library from September 26 until November 1.”
- 1937 – The Children’s Room – “For the coming year the (Franklin Library Association) has been asked to assume the management of the Children’s Library. Inasmuch as the Town has previously had the service of a library for its children at no expense whatever, the Association felt it was only right to accede to the request of the Ray Memorial Association and take over for a time the care of the Children’s Library.
- 1938 – The Great Depression – “Since June, the Library has had the help of W.P.A. workers who have contributed somewhat to the need for assistance.”
- 1942 – World War II – “The Library has served as collection center for books in the Victory Book Campaign, and 604 books have been sent to the New Bedford U.S.O. Club. The need for books for the boys in the service still exists and contributions are welcome.”
- 1949 – Classes in practical arts for adults were held in the Lecture Room, sponsored by the school department.
- 1952 – Books were distributed to the public schools by volunteers.
- 1965 – The library made its first purchase of large print books.
- 1967 – Service to shut-ins began.
- 1968 – A special reference section was set up in the reading room.
- 1972 – Library opened 50 hours a week, as per state mandate in order to receive state funding.

1907 –

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The flu epidemic - "On account of the influenza epidemic in town, the Board of Health closed the Library from September 26 until November 1."

- 1973 – Great Books program was instituted by the library director, Arthur Olson.
- 1975 – The Ray Memorial Building was named part of the Dean Historical District and put on the National Register of Historical Places.
- 1979 – *The Franklin Sentinel*, published from 1883-1978, was microfilmed and added to the collection.
- 1982 – The Franklin Public Library became a department of the town for the first time. The Ray Memorial Association signed the library over to the town and the Association was dissolved. An advisory board was appointed by the town council.

Votes in the controversy over who could use the Franklin Books – according to Peirce

Sept. 26, 1788 – **Article:** To see if it be the mind of the town to take Effectual Measures for the right improvement of the Donation of Books by his Excellency Benjamin Franklin Esquire and to prescribe such Rules and Regulations as may best answer the true Interest and Design of the Doner, act or do any matter or thing Relative thereto that the town thinks proper. On this article voted: – to reconsider the vote passed. November 3rd, 1788? [Sic. Peirce naturally questions the 1788 date in his source. It must have been a 1787 vote.] of confining the donation of Books sent by Dr. Benjamin Franklin to the parish.

Dec. 3, 1788 – **Article IV:** To see if it be the minds of the town to take any Measures to settle the Unhappy Dispute that hath arisen in this town Respecting the Library lately presented to the town by His Excellency Benjamin Franklin Esquire and to take any Measures for the right improvement of said Library and also to see if the town see cause to Reconsider any former Votes passed Respecting said Library and to act or do any matter or thing Relative thereto the town thinks proper.

Voted. Not to Record the Articles of Regulation respecting the Library at present but to refer them to April meeting.

April 6, 1789 – The same article as before referred to May meeting.

May 4, 1789 – **Article X:** Same as above, referred to next meeting.

June 8, 1789 – **Article VII:** Same as above.

Voted. That Mr. Emmons Lend out the books belonging to the Library sent to this town by Dr. Franklin according to the directions in the Letters accompanying said Library until the next March meeting, to which town meeting the seventh article was again referred. (Letter of Dr. Franklin to town unfortunately lost, but undoubtedly from the whole controversy favored the broader lending of books.)





1938 —

*The Great Depression -
"Since June, the Library
has had the help of
W.P.A. workers who have
contributed somewhat to
the need for assistance."*

March 5, 1790 — Article VIII — Same as above.

Voted. That Nathan Daniels, Jr., Jabez Fisher, Esquire, John Richardson, Peter Whiting, and Deacon Joseph Whiting be a committee to report to the town at May meeting in what way and manner the Library that was sent to this town by Dr. Franklin shall be improved. Voted to refer the eighth article to May meeting.

May 15, 1790 — Article XII — Same as above.

Voted. For some future meeting.

Oct. 4, 1790 — Article IV — To take the most proper and Effectual Measures to decide to whom the property of the Books belong that were sent into this town by the Late Dr. Franklin as a donation that so they may become Usefull agreeable to the Dr.'s expressed Design. Referred to a future meeting.

Nov. 26, 1790 — Article II — Same as above.

Voted. That the Rev. Nathaniel Emmons be Directed to lend the Books presented to this town by the Late Dr. Franklin to the Inhabitants of this Town at large, and until the town shall order other ways, they being accountable to him for the use and improvement of said Books.

Dec. 24, 1790 — Article III — To dispose of the late Dr. Franklin's Donation of Books in Manner as he has expressed in his Letters and to hear and Act on any Proposal that may be made Respecting the Disposition of said Donation.

Voted. Whereas, it appears to this town that the principal design of the late Dr. Franklin in making a donation of Books as the foundation of a Parish Library in this place was to furnish this People with the Means of attaining to greater degrees of Useful Knowledge & to improve their minds to the best purpose, Especially if they should agree to second his views and build on the foundation he has laid by purchasing a Number of Valuable Books in addition, that so the Whole may contain a sufficient Number to accommodate each proprietor so often as he may incline to apply for a Book. But by reason of Disputes Respecting the property of the Donation and doubts whether the town without the aid of the General Court can vote a Legal Tax to raise Money for the purpose of purchasing an additional Number of Books the Generous design of the Doctor has hitherto failed of its desired Effect, — therefore to end disputes Concerning the property of the Donation and to render a tax Needless for raising Money to purchase an additional Number of books as aforesaid — Voted that every person of the age of twenty-one years of age being a legal Inhabitant of this town, a Man and His Wife to be Recond but one, shall have a single share in the said Donation and Such other donations which have been made and also in all the Books that may hereafter be purchased in addition provided, and it is to be understood that no person is to have a share in the additional Numbers

1942 —

*World War II - "The
Library has served as
collection center for books
in the Victory Book Cam-
paign, and 604 books have
been sent to the New Bed-
ford U.S.O. Club.*

1949 —

*Classes in practical arts for
adults were held in the
Lecture Room, sponsored by
the school department.*





of Books Purchased as aforesaid except by Heirship or purchase but such persons as shall subscribe to an Obligation of the following form and make payment Viz. We, whose names are underwritten do severally promise to pay to A.B. – the Librarian of Franklin Library the sum of six shillings in three months from this date of subscribing, which Money shall be applied to the sole purpose of purchasing Books in addition to Doctor Franklin's Donation for the use of the subscribers their heirs and assigns and it is further voted that the Library shall be named Franklin Library and the major part of the subscribers with the Librarian at any meeting appointed for that purpose shall have full power to make rules and regulations with penalties annexed for the preservation of the Library and to render it usefull, and every subscriber that shall pay double the sum that intitles to one share shall have two shares, so in proportion for three shares or more, excepting the Donation made to the town by Dr. Franklin, every subscriber shall have one share in said donation and no more and every person that does not subscribe, being 21 yrs of age and a Legal Inhabitant of this town shall not be Debarred from making use of his single share in said Donations they severally conforming to the Rules and Regulations of this Library, and the subscribers with the Librarian, shall at all times hereafter have full Power at their Discretion to take in Subscriptions from any Persons Either Male or Female being of the age of Discretion, belonging to this town shall have Equal Privileges in the Library with other Subscribers in proportion to the Money thay shall pay and these votes shall begin to operate and be in force so soon as ten Persons shall have subscribed to an Obligation in form as aforesaid. (Peirce, p. 17-19).

1967 –

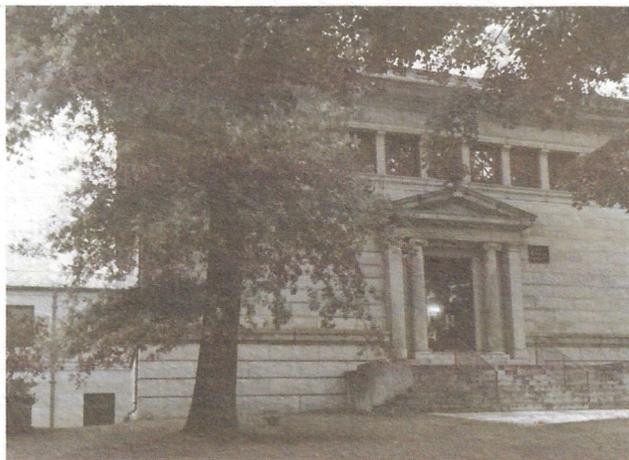
Service to shut-ins began.

1975 –

The Ray Memorial Building was named part of the Dean Historical District and put on the National Register of Historical Places.

1982 –

The Franklin Public Library became a department of the town for the first time.





The Benjamin Franklin Donation

- Clark's Works, 4 vols., folio
Hoadley's Works, 3 vols., folio
Barrows' Works, 2 vols., folio
Ridgeley's Works, 2 vols., folio
Locke's Works, 4 vols., octavo
Sydney's Works, 1 vol., octavo
Priestley's Corruptions, 2 vols.
Price and Priestley, 1 vol.
Lyndsey's Apology and Sequel,
2 vols.
Abernethy's Sermons, 2 vols.
Duchal's Sermons, 3 vols.
Price's Morals, 1 vol.
Price on Providence, 1 vol.
Price on Liberty, 1 vol.
Price on the Christian Scheme,
1 vol.
Price's Sermons, 1 vol.
Needham's Free State, 1 vol.
West and Littleton on the
Resurrection, 1 vol.
Stenner's Sermons, 2 vols.
Addison's Evidences, 1 vol.
Gordon's Tacitus, 5 vols.
Backus' History, 1 vol.
Lardner on the Logus, 1 vol.,
8 vo.
Watts' Orthodoxy and Charity,
1 vol.
Brainerd's Life, 1 vol.
Bellamy's True Religion, 1 vol.
Doddridge's Life, 1 vol.
Bellamy's Permission of Sin,
1 vol.
Fordyce's Sermons, 1 vol.
Hemminway against Hopkins,
1 vol.
Hopkins on Holness, 1 vol.
Fulfilling the Scriptures, 1 vol.
Montesquien's Spirit of Laws,
2 vols.
Blackstone's Commentaries,
4 vols.
- Watson's Tracts, 6 vols.
Newton on the Propheesies,
3 vols.
Law on Religion, 1 vol.
Priestley's Institutes, 2 vols.
Watts on the Passions, 1 vol.
Watts' Logic, 1 vol.
Edwards on Religion, 1 vol.
Dickinson on the Five Points,
1 vol.
Christian History, 2 vols.
Prideaux's Connections, 4 vols.
Cooper on Predestination,
1 vol.
Cambridge Platform, 1 vol.
Stoddard's Safety of Appearing,
1 vol.
Burkett on Personal Reformation,
1 vol.
Barnard's Sermons, 1 vol.
Shepard's Sound Believer, 1 vol.
History of the Rebellion, 1 vol.
Janeway's Life, 1 vol.
Hopkin's System, 2 vols.
American Preacher, 4 vols.
Emmon's Sermons, 1 vol. [We
doubt this was part of the
original donation]
Thomas' Laws of Massachusetts,
1 vol.
American Constitutions, 1 vol.
Young's Night Thoughts, 1 vol.
Pilgrim's Progress, 1 vol.
Ames' Oration, 1 vol.
Spectators, 8 vols.
Life of Baron Trenk, 1 vol.
Cheap Repository, 2 vols.
Moral Repository, 1 vol.
Fitch's Poem, 1 vol.
Erskine's Sermons, 1 vol.
Life of Cromwell, 1 vol.



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In addition to these resources, we used appropriate Franklin Town Reports, where available.



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