

Centennial Research Digest:



Early Custead Era:
The World War I Years
Mid 1914 to 1921

(PML History in Summary Form, Part III)

by Mark Rothenberg



Brownie Dowd Valentine
Library basement kindergarten teacher, 1915-1924

PATCHOGUE
SAYVILLE
AND
BELLPORT
LONG ISLAND



AND THEIR ATTRACTIONS

NEW YORK
GEO. W. RICHARDSON
1917

1914 Changing of the Guard

On *July 1st*, promising *New York Public Library School* student, *Alma D. Custead*, was hired as Librarian (i.e., director) of the Patchogue Library, launching an influential career and a new library era. Her popular predecessor, *Claire Sumner*, Librarian 1910-1914 (daughter of retired Rear Admiral & Mrs. George Sumner, of Patchogue) was married in *mid-July* to Samuel P. Hagerman, and moved to Lakewood, NJ. As the “guns of August” thundered across Europe, even as the Battle of Tannenberg raged on the Eastern Front, in America an annotated booklist appeared in *August 28th*’s *Patchogue Advance*, featuring backyard farming, child-rearing, art-appreciation, *Mastery of Grief*, a Baedeker’s travel guide for *Norway, Sweden and Denmark* (politically neutral powers), and *Victoria Cross: Its Heroes and Valor* (“chilling accounts” of earlier British wartime deeds “against the odds”). On *September 29th*, the library’s 5-member Board of Trustees re-elected its officers: *James Canfield*, President, *Frank Overton*, Secretary and *Wellington E. Gordon*, Treasurer. The other two trustees were *H. Allen Tenney* (who in 1907-08, had chaired the Building and Grounds Committee when the Carnegie Library was constructed and dedicated) and *Elizabeth Mott Smith*, who had been the first President of the Board, 1900-06, and stayed on as Trustee for another decade, to 1916). The trustees then addressed current communications and coverage issues, approving a **bulletin board** for the upstairs, **blackboard** for the basement, and **signs to advertise the library** in other public places. *Mrs. Robert Valentine* was hired as **substitute librarian**, to cover when Miss Custead was in Manhattan, completing her library degree. Alma Custead’s recommendation of more shelving was approved. In four months, **July-October, 1914** (as the Europe’s Western Front descended towards trench warfare), **the library was marshaled into shape: Circulation** rose to **2,344 books**, 51 were added, 96 sent for rebinding, 98 mended in-house, and **102 new library registrations** were recorded.

1915 Statewide Recognition (A Dynamic Year & Librarian)

On **January 8th** the library announced a *duplicate pay collection*, then popular in other public libraries. Books in high demand (12 unnamed titles) would be duplicated (just how, is not said), patrons being charged 5 cents weekly to borrow a duplicate, the proceeds being used to pay for new copies from the publisher. [Today that idea would quickly dash on the rock of copyright law enforcement.] On **January 15th** music acquisitions were highlighted: a then popular periodical, *The Etude*, and two circulating copies of the *Family Music Book* containing "...two hundred fifty-two pieces of piano and vocal music of moderate difficulty." [Today's library has hundreds of similar books, containing thousands of classical and popular music scores and librettos (some also available in audio, or even in video formats). Most are indexed in the library's homegrown *Song Index*, *Classical Music Index*, and also listed in the library's online catalog, accessible from the library website. There is also a *Sheet Music Vertical File*, and a *Sara Courant CD Opera Collection*, named after the retired director (1984-90). With an endowment from an anonymous donor in 1991, Mrs. Courant selected 62 opera CDs, as its nucleus.] The same **January 15th** article showcases books and articles on "**The Great War**". It includes such provocative titles as "*Christianity and the War*," *What I Saw in Belgium While Under Arrest*, "*How You Can Help Feed and Clothe the Belgians*," and *What You and I Owe to England, Germany, Russia, and France* (Note: Only 3 of these countries were on the same side.) On **January 29th** the librarian was authorized to seek out second-hand reference works.

Early February witnessed two ladies' *Study Club* library entertainments on Scandinavian (mostly Norwegian) themes: lectures, a folk dance group, and a *radiopticon* travelogue by Mrs. Walter Rose. [Note: Her husband had recently been President of Patchogue Village, 1909-12.] On **February 26th**, the *Advance* carried a classified bibliography of current *WWI* books, reference, fiction, children's, works, and textbooks at the library. **March 5th's** *Advance* noted that Alma Custead gave "probationers" at St. Paul's parish house's Girls'

Friendly Society "...a very interesting address on '**Books and Reading**'". It was followed by "...a *splendid guessing contest*, twenty pictures of noted characters in fiction being shown, and a good idea of books was displayed by the girls guessing the names of books...". **March 12th's** *Advance* advertised **seed catalogs for loan** at the library, which were soon reported in much demand. On **March 19th**, an annotated "*Housekeeper's List*" of **new cookbooks** appeared (e.g., *Just for Two*, *Paper Bag Cookery*, *Fireless Cook Book*, *Housekeeper's Food Guide*). The list was preceded by a little flourish: "*This is the time of year when appetites are flagging; we're tired of winter foods, the summer vegetables are yet to come; the busy wife and mother is asking herself anxiously: 'What shall I have for dinner? What shall I have for tea? An omelet, a chop or two? Or a savory fricassee?'*" **Gardening books** followed, on **April 9th** (e.g., *Practical Floriculture*, *A Little Land and a Living*, *When Mother Lets Us Garden*, and *The Potato*, aptly by Grubb & Guilford), annotated and preceded by Biblical references and poetry. **April 15th** brought mostly **children's titles**. Alongside adult titles like *Personality Plus*, *Psychology of Salesmanship*, and *The Awakening of Woman*, *Bambi* made its first appearance. Meanwhile, within a week (**April 22nd**), the European war entered a more sinister phase, with German release of poison gas at 2nd Battle of Ypres, and 3 days after that the Allied landings at Gallipoli (**April 25th**). Everyone now had a little more to think and read about.

The Board, On **May 7th**, voted to retain Miss Custead and requested the school board hire her as district school librarian. **May 21st** brought the notable headline: "**Mrs. Alma Custead is Re-engaged...Patchogue Leads All State Villages in Point of Circulation - Work of Library Growing Yearly.**" Quite a record of achievement in less than one year. It extolled Miss Custead as having "*greatly improved the efficiency of the library....She has brought to the library work a culture and a training which has shown in the extended general use of the library, an increased circulation and a friendly spirit among the patrons....The entire charging system was changed to a quicker and more accurate system last year....The current magazines are now circulated by a system which results in no losses. A comprehensive inventory of all books has been started.*" Hired as

school librarian, she classified and cataloged school collections, visited classes and had them visit the public library. *"The idea would be to give every boy and girl before leaving school at least a rudimentary knowledge of the logical classification of books that is used now in nearly every library [the Dewey Decimal Classification System], so that using the library intelligently and being able to find material and books they wanted would be a part of their equipment for life and an aid to further self-development."* She said that the lists published in newspapers *"have greatly helped as they are often commented upon and many of the books are promptly asked for."* The new fiction duplicate pay collection was proving popular. **Reference books were receiving heavy use of late, "...and the librarian gives much time in securing the loan of special books from the city and State libraries."** [This is the first real mention of active interlibrary loans, and of the reference collection starting to move to a place of pre-eminence that it has in the library today.] *"In point of circulation, Patchogue leads the villages of the State. The figures for the year ending June 1 will be at least 32,000 and comparison of reports of other libraries show that the Patchogue Library is equal in quality of service to any library of its size in the State."*

Multi-lingual, ESL (English-as-a-Second-Language), & Citizenship collections trace their roots from June 25th, 1915. *"The Public Library has recently received from Albany a new supply of German and Italian books, which our foreign citizens are cordially invited to make use of. For those who are learning to speak English the following are particularly useful...": English for Foreigners, The Young Citizen, First Steps in the History of Our Country, English for Italians.* Then came *English for New Americans* *"This is a book for adults and contains vocabularies in Armenian, Greek, Italian, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Syriac (Arabic) and Yiddish."* These linguistic groupings reflected prime immigrant populations of 1915, a tide of refugees displaced to the U.S. by war or conditions of life in their countries of origin. **Factories in town attracted foreign workers**, so these books served a local purpose, and were far from frivolous. The **July 23rd Advance** carried the **school budget**, in which the **public library allocation (\$1,500)**, accounted for about 1/37th of the total, an amount identical to school district

"Incidentals". The **Advance (Aug. 6th)**, reviewing the library annual report, noted: **6,734 books, annual circulation of 32,115 items, two new book cases, new reference books, a seed catalog exhibit, and an assembly room "... used regularly for meetings of the Women's Study Club, Civic Club and Daughters of Israel, and occasionally for other purposes."** The library was referred to as *"this excellent institution."* **Aug. 13th's** issue featured 14 works, and an exhibit on **Dickens**. Another 13 new books appeared on **Aug. 27th**, including *Century of the Child, Contrary Mary, and Getting the Most Out of Business*. The **Sept. 2nd Board minutes** recorded the election of **James Canfield** as president, **Willis Reeve** as secretary, and **Wellington Gordon** as treasurer. *"Mrs. Valentine's letter to the board asking for privilege to hold Kindergarten class in basement for ensuing year was received, and on motion of Dr. Gordon, was granted."* **Mary L. Sutcliffe** was *"...invited to come, expenses paid, for purpose of giving her lectures on poetry and prose..."* On **Sept. 10th**, the **Advance** remarked, *"It is fortunate that the little kindergarten is maintained by Miss Valentine in the basement of the library here so that parents can appreciate the value of the training it gives...their children."* Statements by the U.S. Commissioner of Education and Superintendent of Schools, Stamford, CT, followed, in support of kindergarten education. On **Oct. 22nd**, a 26-item booklist appeared, with titles addressing the **current concerns** (e.g., *Through Europe on the Eve of War, One American's Opinion of the European War, The German Enigma, Mediaeval and Modern History*), while also providing needed **diversion and escape** as that war spread and got esp. nasty (e.g., *Natural Music Course, First Studies in Plant Life, Our Wonderful Bodies, Swiss Family Robinson, Club of Queer Trades, Around the World with Josiah Allen's Wife*). The **Dec. 3rd & 10th Advance** commented on **Miss Sutcliffe's popular reading series at the library**, adding: *"She holds that poetry should always be read aloud, and illustrates how much proper reading adds to verse."* **Dec. 10th**, brought **holiday season children's gift book ideas**, a list of 50 selected books in two groupings, *"For Little Children"* and *"For Boys and Girls"*. Then on **Dec. 24th**, came dastardly news of an **evergreen theft** from the library, *"...chopped down by a vandal"* on a dare. *"The boy [whose name was published in those days] on*

questioning admitted his guilt but was let off on his parents offer to pay for the tree and thrash the offending child." The year ended on a pleasanter note, with an ad for Miss Sutcliffe's *Jan. 7th* lecture on "The Celtic movement in literature" with readings from "...Synge, Yeats, Lady Gregory, and others."

1916 Year of the Child (and of Interesting Developments)

A booklist appeared on *Jan. 14th*, featuring *Spoon River Anthology*, *Chemistry of Familiar Things*, *The Law of Psychic Phenomena*, *Dear Enemy*, *Dead Souls*, and *Straight Down the Crooked Road*, followed by another on *Feb. 11th* on **business books**. *March 10th*'s *Advance* carried the current-interest item, "Library Notes: **Henry James Books in the Library**". The article began, "The death of Henry James the other day in London has revived an interest in his works." A literate, discerning description of his *Portrait of a Lady* preceded a list of other works in the library, by the author. *March 17th* brought a different note: "In spite of the wintry landscape, fore-handed people have been procuring **garden books** at the Public Library for the past three weeks. A collection of **seed catalogs** is now on display; many of them handsomely illustrated in colors and containing valuable hints for the progressive gardener. Go in and look at them before your spring planting." Attention shifted again on *Aug. 9th*, when the Board met. "Owing to the present **epidemic of infantile paralysis**, it was thought wise, as a precautionary measure, that the **library be closed** for the present. Accordingly, on motion of Dr. Gordon, it was **voted to close the library from Saturday, Aug. 12 to Sept. 1...**" The *Advance* carried the "**Provisional Quarantine of the Village of Patchogue**" on *Aug. 11th*, which read, in part, "All children coming from New York will be Provisionally Quarantined for Two Weeks...This is one of our ways of preventing infantile paralysis from coming into Patchogue. It protects your children as well as ours." In the same issue notice of the **2-week library closing** appeared. Alma Custead decided to use the time constructively, writing a reassuring **annual report** published in the *Advance* on *Aug. 18th*. In it, comparing adult and children's circulation figures, she mused: "These

figures seem to upset the common notion that children are all for reading fairy tales or adventure yarns, for the youngsters borrow more non-fiction works, proportionately, than the adults. Perhaps the rising generation is more serious than the passing one." She noted **poetry readings**, exhibits of children's books "suitable for gifts, just before the holiday period", seed catalogs, **poultry books**, school drawings and travel information exhibits. She also remarked on her organizing book collections in the public schools, training high school and 8th grade students in library use. (For 1916, that's quite some record.)

1917 Lighting the Way

The board met frequently in 1917. Special topics of concern were a **new lighting system**, broached initially on *July 19th*, and buying coal "from different dealers, in small lots, owing to shortage of coal...". It was decided to proceed with a new lighting system *Nov. 8th*, and that "a fee of **25 cents per night** be levied upon all people in organizations using the basement evenings, Ladies' Studies Club excepted, because of their giving [a] donation to the library...". Interestingly, in a local travel brochure published that year, authored by James A. Canfield, entitled *Patchogue, Sayville and Bellport, Long Island: and Their Attractions*, the Library was the sole illustration, on the front cover.

1918 Barraging the Blue Devils (Over Here & There)

April 5th's *Advance* carried the page 1 headline: "**Over 200 Fine Books Given: Librarian Reports a Book Drive for Soldiers in Camps and Abroad**." It indicated that 218 books had been raised by 30 area residents "for the use of our soldiers and sailors, and that more books are still coming in. It is hoped that week after week they will continue to come in steadily, for our men will need books as long as the war lasts, and the supply must be constantly replenished. The public is urged to form the habit of turning in their new books as soon as

they have read them, and this being done all over the country, a constant stream of fresh books into the camps will be assured and a most effective barrage established against the blue devils of loneliness and depression. All books received will be prepared for use in accordance with the simple rules laid down by the **Library War Service [Committee] of the American Library Association**, and will be shipped either to Camp Upton or to headquarters in New York, where they are shipped to France as rapidly as possible. At least half a million are needed there at once, and a continuous replacement must be maintained for the wastage will be very great...." April 12th brought a booklist featuring such titles as, *Fighting for Peace*, *Red Flower*, *Pan German Plot Unmasked*, *Utopia of Usurers*, *How to Make the Garden Pay*, *Meatless and Wheatless Menus*, *An Eskimo Robinson Crusoe*, *Secret of Typewriting Speed*, *Raven Patrol of Bob's Hill*, *Trail of Tecumseh*, *Tuck-Me-in-Stories*, and *Nursery Tales from Many Lands*. Note the emphasis on **military, conspiratorial, and escapist themes**, past and present. Oddly, the same page also held these headlines: "**Camp [Upton] Officials Now Ban Patchogue: Issue Order Forbidding Soldiers to Come to This Village or Nearby Villages: Claim Liquor is Sold Directly and Indirectly to Soldiers—Say Local Officials Must Secure Better Enforcement of Law Relating to Liquor and Disorderly Houses Before Ban Will Be Lifted**" and "**Eloquent Appeal by Hon. F.C. Hicks: Big Audience Braves Storm for Liberty Loan Meeting: Canadian Soldier from Front Gives Characteristic Talk and Sings. Boy Scouts Get Medals.**" (Strange interplay of liquor, patriotism, books, and carousing.) A blueprint entitled, "*Proposed Alterations and Additions to the Patchogue Library*", dated **June 8th**, was drawn up by **John V. Van Pelt**, apparently at the request of the Board. On the reverse is a note: "*Van Pelt—Plans for stack addition.*" Demand for books and other materials had outpaced shelf space. On **August 16th**, the **annual figures** showed **7,100 books** in the collection, **circulation at 30,752 volumes** (of which 13,298 were children's works), **417 new borrowers**, **2,004 borrowers registered since July 1, 1915**, and **10,443 visitors to the library reading room.** "People of the village and vicinity contributed 406 volumes for the soldiers' camp libraries, which have been prepared for circulation by the librarian and most of them sent to Camp Upton." On **December 18th** the

Trustees decided to institute, for the **1st time**, **regular quarterly meetings** (in Jan., Apr., July, and Oct.), and to accept a patron's offer of **gift** of a one-year subscription to the *Christian Science Monitor*. [By then, the WW I Armistice was in effect (**Nov. 11th**), though the U.S. would remain still technically at war, until 1921.]

1919 Mixed Fortunes (Or, Chicks & Ducks & Geese Better Scurry)

"*Was decided to take up question of vagrant chickens, ducks, & geese living in library yard, with village trustees and health officers.*" So reads an unfortunately-worded remark in the *Minutes* of **April 23rd**. Mrs. Custead was authorized to obtain needed "*additional [catalog] card cases*" on **July 15th**. Officers were re-elected on **August 8th**. The **July 25th Advance** carried the annual report, indicating that, "*In spite of the war engrossing public attention the library has demonstrated its value by the general and constant use made of it.*" "42 magazines and 5 newspapers" were received by the library. There were 7,199 bound volumes in the library. **Annual circulation was 30,050**, "*...an average of 100 books for every day the library was open.*" Children accounted for **42% of the total circulation**, "*...showing the astonishing number of books read by the 1,400 school children in the village....*" Mrs. Custead says one little chap was heard saying, 'Gee! We've got a peach of a library but I've read every book in it,' which was illuminating if slightly exaggerated." 700 new non-fiction titles were added. "*It is evident thus that more and more people are making use of the library's facilities for useful reading, in which line the library thus fulfills its purpose as a part of the educational system. The library cooperates with schools, supplying books that teachers ask for, and supplementing the local collection with books from the State library at Albany on request. A gift of 215 pedagogical books presented by Dr. W.E. Gordon form a special reserve collection for teachers.*" On **August 30th** President Canfield wrote to James Bertram, in hope of securing Carnegie funds for a library extension, for a book stack room. After stating the request, following the previous (1905-08) Carnegie ratio of 1/10 local annual maintenance to the grant fund amount, he added

that since 1908, the community had increased its contribution from \$1,500 per year to \$2,500 per year. The Trustees were apparently hoping for another \$10,000 Carnegie grant. He continued, "Our shelf room has about reached its limit and the business of the library is growing rapidly thanks to the efficient work of our trained Librarian.... This is not a wealthy community, and the School District faces the expense in the immediate future of a \$200,000 High School Building. Consequently it would be out of the question to ask for local funds for an extension of the library now. The Trustees believe that the proposition suggested will appeal to you and trust it is within the scope of the Carnegie Library Fund to take care of just such a situation. It seems reasonable to suppose that in administering the Fund, account would be taken of extending additional aid to a going proposition that is well established and doing good work. It is therefore with this thought in mind that we take the liberty to appeal to you. Awaiting a hoped for favorable reply...." The response came on **September 3rd**. "It is gratifying to know that the Patchogue Library has been so extensively used and so well supported that its work requires an extension of the building. I regret, however, that a favorable reply cannot be given to your request. The trustees of the Carnegie Corporation have decided that no applications for the erection of library buildings will be considered while the abnormal conditions prevail which have been created by the war. This ruling also applies to applications for additions to existing buildings." A further disappointment lay ahead. For it was reported on **October 31st**, that, "A few days ago there arrived here by express a plaster cast of the statue 'Winged Victory,' purchased as a memorial to the late Mrs. Jennie Gordon, wife of Dr. Gordon, with funds contributed by pupils and teachers of the schools. It was to be set up in the Public Library, but when the crate was opened by the librarian...the figure was found badly broken. The people who furnished the statue have promised to take express claim seeking to [i.e., they had agreed to] replace the ruined piece."

1920 Roaring into the 20's

Jan. 16th's Patchogue Advance recorded that New York Library Association's Awards Committee (according to *New York Libraries*), had given **Patchogue Library** "...the signal honor of being named...as one of the three libraries in the state operating in places of from 4,000 to 6,000 population showing the highest mark in standards, methods, quality and extent of service. For her part in this achievement its librarian, Mrs. Alma D. Custead, received a 'State Meeting Scholarship' covering her expenses in attending the State Library meeting in Richfield Springs." On **Jan. 22nd** "Dr. Gordon moved that Mrs. Custead be authorized to purchase a truck for conveying books about the library [first mention of a book truck for the library]...and "a request from Sorosis for the use of our basement while their rooms are being redecorated" was granted. As Sorosis, had been instrumental in creating the public library, and had housed and opened a demonstration library under their aegis, in 1899-1900, that had to have been one easy decision. **Jan. 23rd** brought news that the replacement statue of "Winged Victory" [the "Nike of Samothrace"] memorial to **Jennie Gordon**, had arrived intact. "Mrs. Custead, the librarian, says she has been besieged with questions by children as to the whereabouts of the missing head and arms of the figure, so she has posted near-by a little history of the statue, which connoisseurs consider one of the finest examples of Greek sculpture." Also then on exhibit were, "Some fine and unique aerial photographs...taken and presented by William Rate of Patchogue, who was in the army air service." Gifts of books by ten individuals were acknowledged, including *Facts and Fiction*, "a collection of stories and tales of Jewish life" by Patchogue author, **Rabbi Nachman Heller**. **Jan. 30th**'s Advance noted, "Many fine Recipes, shopping ideas and other household hints are included in a booklet distributed free at the Public Library. It was brought out by Mayor Mitchell's Food Supply committee in 1917 but is as useful now as ever." [It was recently pointed out that there is a parallel in today's library in the PML Staff Frugal Hints and Cookbook, recently distributed free to library patrons.] On **Feb. 27th**, it was reported that Sorosis had "...resumed its quarters after being exiled temporarily to the Public

Library." *April 9th* brought a new book list (28 titles), under the headline, "Psychic Books in the Library: Plenty of Literature on this Subject of the Hour—Also a Lot of New Fiction and Miscellaneous Volumes on the Shelves." It also indicated that "A collection of operas has been started by the library, led by *Faust and Bohemian Girl*. Others to be added." At the Board meeting of *April 21st* things were reported as "running smoothly." Then came the announcement on *May 7th*, that a **Sorosis benefit for the library** was to be held on "...Wednesday evening, *May 19*, consisting principally of costume recitations from *James Whitcomb Riley* by Mayme English-Lilliotte, who was a fellow townsman of Mrs. Riley and knew the poet well. The Sorosis is arranging for her appearance here, through the agency of the Harper's publishing house, which provides the entertainment with the condition that the net proceeds be invested in books of Harper print for the library." On *July 22nd* the Board discussed a new roof, and "...it was **agreed to raise the deposit of non-residents for the use of books from \$1.00 to 1.50.**" On *Aug. 4th*, "It was decided to get estimates from different contractors for various kinds of roofs, including slate and tile...." On *Aug. 16th* an estimate was received and the secretary and treasurer were empowered to sign a contract in the president's contemplated absence.

1921 Excelsior! (Onward & Upward), & One Busy Year

Jan. 26th's Board meeting shows \$137 spent for a **new roof**, and circulation climbing. That of *April 27th* took up repairs: "...The matter of preventing the spreading of the large porch pillars..." was considered, as was, "Removal of wooden and wire front fence..." it being "Decided to have it [i.e., the fence] repaired for another year. On complaint of janitor, Mr. Canfield had investigated and reported them both [i.e., both fences] in good condition, except one needed a little cement." Mrs. Custead reported January circulation at over 4,000 books. Estimates were to be obtained for additional shelf room. "The official from the State Library Department reported that Mrs.

Custead handled more books without an assistant than any librarian in the State, and pronounced the library most efficiently managed." The Board passed a resolution that the "...rate for reserving a book be **increased to five cents** and that the **penalty for failure to return books** be made the same rate for each day, this applying to fiction only.... Plans for the coming meeting of the library convention were discussed, and the matter was left in the hands of Mrs. Custead." (This was apparently the **Library's first convention, as host**. Forces had been set in motion that would, within a decade, render Patchogue the center of the library field in Suffolk County.) In addition, a request was made to the Board of Education for increased library funding for the coming year. The *Advance* reported on *May 13th*, "The annual Library Institute for the Central Long Island District is being held in the library room today, the building being closed to the public. The meeting consists of two sessions...in the nature of a 'round table', with provision for free discussion of library topics by all members. There is also a program with E.T. Stevens of Pratt Institute Library conducting. Other speakers are John A. Lowe of the Brooklyn Public Library, Lieut. Rejall, regional director of immigrant education, and Grant Overton [of Patchogue], the writer. The Women's Study Club is entertaining the members of the conference at luncheon in Sorosis rooms, use of which was donated for the occasion. Delegates are present from Bellport Memorial, Lake Ronkonkoma, Eastport School Library, Port Jefferson Free, Massapequa Free, Bay Shore Free, Westhampton Free, Smithtown Branch, Amityville Free, Setauket and Sayville libraries." On *July 20th*, Dr. Gordon reported progress in increasing available shelving, a good thing, as the librarian's annual report "...showed a **30% increase in books put out** [circulated]." Dr. Gordon "...also reported **two iron bands placed around a bulging** [wooden] **front porch pillar**. On motion, he was **authorized to have one iron band placed around each of the remaining pillars.**" Board of Education President Guttridge increased the library budget request to \$3500 (raising it by \$700). On *October 17th*, **James Canfield wrote to James Bertram:** "...I am again writing you in relation to the matter of funds for a much needed addition to our Carnegie Library as outlined in our previous request of August 30th 1919 and

as answered by yours of September 3rd, 1919. *Are you now taking up these matters? If a personal call would be of any advantage to us, I shall be pleased to go and see you at your convenience....*" At the *October 19th* library board meeting, it was announced that the Board of Education had declined a request to pay 1/3rd of the library's coal bill (the cost of heating the basement for the kindergarten class being conducted in the library's basement). So, the president and secretary of the library trustees were instructed to see Mr. Guttridge, pointedly *"...regarding the use of the basement by the school board."* Meanwhile, Mrs. Custead, the Librarian, reported circulation soaring and *"...asked for a railing in front of the desk, to prevent crowding in rush hours."* *November 9th* brought James Bertram's response: *"There has been no change in the position of the Carnegie Corporation with respect to the making of appropriations for the erection of library buildings. I am sorry that a favorable reply can not be sent."*

The year ended on two interesting biographical notes, both of *December 16th*, in the *Patchogue Advance*. One article concerned Arlington H. Carman's gift to the library, of his father's (i.e., George H. Carman's) 1862 federal commission as collector of taxes for the 1st District of New York, signed by Abraham Lincoln and Salmon P. Chase, and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. *"The first district included all of Long Island and Staten Island, the richest collection district in the State, not excepting New York City itself, as all the refineries and distilleries were in Brooklyn, Greenpoint, and Long Island City at that time. The appointment was a personal one by Mr. Lincoln, over the heads of all the prominent politicians of Brooklyn. Lincoln knew his man. Mr. Carman held the office until Grant became President and then resigned [to become general manager of the South Side Railroad]. I have the balance sheet from the Treasury Department showing that after handling vast sums of government funds there was a balance of a few cents in Mr. Carman's favor [wrote his son].... I thought that a document bearing the name of Abraham Lincoln would be in a safer place in the Library than in my office, and is of historical interest enough to be preserved in the Library.... The Library is glad to have a[n] histori-*

cal document of this character, and perhaps some day a room can be set aside for such things." The commission was mounted and framed, and was held by the library until at least 1949. We have only rumors as to its present disposition, and will follow up leads. [According to one source, no one knows exactly what happened to it. According to another, it was entrusted to a local historian, prior to the existence of an historical society. She retained it among her personal possessions, and on her decease, it is rumored to have been appropriated by unknown individual, from her estate. Perhaps it will re-surface in the future. Its precise present whereabouts are a bit of a mystery. Fortunately the *Patchogue Advance* published a facsimile in 1949.] The second article carried the obituary of John M. Price (1841-1921). He had been Vice-President of the Patchogue Library Association, 1883-1899, as well as founding President of the Incorporated Village of Patchogue, 1893-1899, a Brookhaven Town Supervisor, and member of the UFSD # 24 Board of Education. *"On his mother's side, Mr. Price was a direct descendent of General Nathaniel Woodhull, a Revolutionary hero, killed [i.e., severely wounded] at the Battle of Long Island, outside Brooklyn. His paternal great-grandfather, Elijah Price, was with Washington crossing the Delaware."* (The library had acquired some pretty historic ties.)

Next in this series will be the:

Early Custead Era: The Roaring 20s (1922 to 1929)

As Patchogue-Medford Library's Centennial of 2000 draws to a close, and the pace of publication slackens, it is important to offer special thanks to those who helped propel this *and many other Centennial publications* into print:

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Best wishes to you all for a good 2nd Century



**Hon. John M. Price, Vice President
Patchogue Library Association
1884-1899, died 1921**



Geo. F. Carman
**Hon. George F. Carman
1862-Lincoln Commission
Donated to library in 1921**



Carnegie Library as it appeared in the early 1920's

Note: Information contained herein is derived from sources
in a documentary history of the library, in progress.
The current draft is over 415 pages in length, plus portraits,
maps, charts, and other illustrations.
Research continues and copyright permissions are being sought.
The general work is arranged chronologically.
The text of that work was part of the basis of the
Patchogue-Medford Library Centennial Video,
and of a preliminary Power Point presentation on PML history.

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