

The History of
The Shaw Memorial Library
and
The Hallock Memorial School

The Plainfield Public Library owes its beginning to the interest and efforts of Mrs. Julia Gurney Sears, who solicited books and gave the use of a room in her house on Central Street, near the upper crossroads in Plainfield, Mass.,-- the present residence of Gaetan Beaudoin. Plainfield was one of the first towns in the state to take advantage of an act establishing public libraries and allowing state aid. In 1891, one year after the act was passed, the local library was established and given \$100 worth of books from the state-- the first of annual gifts from that source.

The first date on which the library was mentioned in Plainfield town reports was 1892 and the first statement in town reports of \$25 being voted annually for library use was in 1896. In 1901 this amount was increased to \$35. Mrs. Sears' death occurred in 1902.

For about twenty years the library was housed in a room in the ell of the parsonage on Main Street. During this period the librarians were; Miss Anna King (later Mrs. Anna Tirrell), Miss Bessie Holden, Miss Hattie Parker (later Mrs. Newton Lincoln), Mrs. Martha Stowell Smith, and Miss Florence Bliss.

In 1904 there were 1279 volumes in the library. A card catalogue was made in 1911. The books are marked by the Dewey system. As Miss Clara Hudson remembers that she and her mother, Mrs. Laura Shaw Hudson, had written over a thousand cards for the card catalogue file, the collection of books must have greatly exceeded that number. By 1925 the number had increased to 3087 books. Mrs. Smith not only gave devoted service as librarian but, at her death in 1922, left the proceeds from her estate to the library.

In a large house on Main Street the Reverend Moses Hallock, Yale Graduate--1788, and first pastor of the Plainfield Congregational Church (1792--1837) had had a famous "Classical School". He furnished tuition and board for a dollar a week. For some time Williams College was largely dependent for its Freshman class on the graduates of Parson Hallock's School. Among his pupils were;

James Richards, Missionary to Ceylon and one of those who prayed the American Board of Missions into being under a hay stack in Williamstown

Jonas King, first missionary to Greece.

William Richards, Missionary to the Hawaiian (formerly Sandwich) Islands.

Pliny Fisk, Missionary to Palestine.

Levi Parsons, Missionary to Palestine.

Homan Hallock, Missionary to Smyrna, who made the Arabic type for printing of the Bible in that language.

William Ferry, Missionary to the Indians.

Marcus Whitman, who saved Oregon for the United States.

John Brown of Harper's Ferry fame.

William Cullen Bryant, famous poet of Cummington and later editor of the New York Evening Post.

Gerard Hallock, who established the Journal of Commerce in New York City. Mr. Hallock had also been a newspaper editor of the Boston Telegraph and Recorder and later of the New York Observer.

Over 300 students--including 30 girls--attended this school between 1793 and 1824 and Plainfield claims to have sent out more men of eminence than any other town of its size in the Western Hemisphere. An inscribed stone, in memory of this famous old school, given in 1925 by one of the Parson's descendants, Mr. Charles Hallock, stands on the lawn in front of the site of this famous dwelling. After Reverend Moses Hallock's death, July 17, 1837, various families occupied the house until it was destroyed by fire on August 10, 1916.

Mrs. Laura Shaw Hudson had been approached some years before by the school committee with a request to sell or give the Shaw pasture on Central Street for the site of a school to replace the Centre School held in a room in the Town Hall, a location undesirable especially because of the danger to children at the crossroads by the Town Hall. The location of the Shaw pasture proved to be undesirable.

When the old Hallock house burned Mrs. Hudson bought the land and deeded it to her daughter Clara, who in turn later deeded it to the town. After learning from the "Town Fathers" that public opinion would favor the town's accepting and maintaining a school and library building on this site, if funds for such could be obtained from private sources, Mrs. and Miss Hudson began the work of soliciting money for this cause. After her mother's death in 1921, Miss Hudson continued the raising of all funds. The final result was about \$22,000 of which Mrs. Ethel Hallock du Pont, a descendant of Reverend Moses Hallock, gave \$10,000 for the two rooms of the Hallock Memorial School. The Shaw descendants raised \$5,000 for the

Shaw Memorial Library, in memory of Mrs. Hudson's father,
Dr. Samuel Shaw, Plainfield's first physician, and a graduate
of Parson Hallock's School.

Seven thousand dollars in gifts of varying size from \$5
up, including \$1,000 from the town of Plainfield, were contributed
by many donors. The school building committee consisted of
Reverend George E. Allen, who gave long and untiring service
as chairman, Mr. Ezra P. Billings and Mr. Bertram S. Longley.
The Architect was Mr. Karl S. Putnam of Northampton, the con-
tractor Mr. E. C. Connelly.

The building was dedicated September 26, 1925. At this
time the library had increased to 6,000 volumes. The fur-
nishings of the library were given by Mrs. Hudson's two children
Harwin Shaw Hudson and Clara Elizabeth Hudson in memory of
their mother.

Written by
Clara E. Hudson
July 28, 1951