

The E.M. Cooper Memorial Library

(A Brief History: 1918 to 2001)



Dana D. Peck

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Drawing of Library ... by June M. Clow [1989]

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Portrait of E. M. Cooper ... date unknown

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Photograph of E. M. Cooper ... date unknown

Photograph of the Portrait of Electa Hayes ... artist: Averil Conwell

Photograph of Elizabeth Cooper Urban ... circa 1960's

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Capozzio

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Original Library Charter, granted November 17, 1922

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Photograph of "Moving Day" ... May 14, 1983

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Photograph taken from behind Library ... circa 1930's

Photograph of front of Library ... 2003

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E. M. Cooper
1854 – 1920

“Kindly in disposition, ... honest in his convictions ..., loyal to his friends, ever ready and willing to cheerfully sacrifice himself to aid and instruct those seeking his assistance.”

Introduction

All libraries contain many stories in the assorted books that fill their shelves. The E.M. Cooper Memorial Library has an intriguing story independent of its many volumes ... the story of its past.

First and foremost, it is a story of dedicated citizens working unselfishly, with neither recognition nor compensation, to provide and to improve a valuable asset of the community.... to make available a place where the world of ideas can explode as broad as the universe.... a place for children to dream.

Interestingly, the history of Wilmington's library also embodies a twinkle of a reflection of the history of the Twentieth Century. Born in the excitement of the roaring twenties, struggling to survive the difficult years of the Great Depression and World War II, nearly forgotten during the turbulent 60's and 70's; yet, restored and expanded during the prosperous times at the end of the Century.

The library's history is, like life, a story of good times and difficult times, of mountains and valleys. It is the vision of a wealthy Philadelphia benefactor, who had not forgotten his childhood home, and who made generous gifts of books and money. But, it also the tale of stolen money, the arduous task of recouping the lost funds and recovering from financial difficulties. It is a town-wide effort to raise funds for a new building ... the excitement of accomplishing the goal ... the gradual loss of interest ... the closing of the building ... then, phoenix-like, a new town-wide effort to raise funds to restore and improve the structure. It is the account of prevailing over sundry obstacles through tenacity and ingenuity.

The pages that follow are but a quick glance at some of the high points and low points of the past 80-plus years. (No effort been made to list all the names of the numerous individuals responsible for the library's success. The people that are mentioned herein are all important, but certainly not exclusively so.)

Hopefully, readers of this brief history will see a sparkle of the library's interesting heritage and share in its vision for the future.

Dana D. Peck
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by
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1. The Formative Years (1918 – 1920)

The beginning of the E.M. Cooper Memorial Library can be traced to a small gathering of individuals in the Town of Wilmington on a late-summer Tuesday in 1918. Three men and three women from Wilmington congregated on August 20, 1918 together with a native of Wilmington who had since moved to Philadelphia. The Wilmington-born Philadelphian had been a very successful businessman and, as his health was declining, he desired that some of his wealth be used to provide a legacy of learning for his childhood town. E.M. Cooper was the benefactor. He had requested the meeting in August 1918 and he presided at it. Attending the meeting with E.M. Cooper were the following citizens of Wilmington: James C. Wolfe, Daniel Haselton, Mrs. S. R. Wood, Electa Hayes, Bessie Everest and Plinn Cooper.²

The first entry in the Secretary's Minutes of the E.M. Cooper Memorial Library states as follows: "At the request and under the direction of Mr. E.M. Cooper the first meeting of the Cooper Memorial Library Association was held at the library August 20th, 1918 for the purpose of forming a Library Association." It is noteworthy that, although this was the first meeting of the Library Association, an informal library already existed. Such a conclusion is apparent from the fact that the initial meeting was held "at the Library." Little is now known, however, of the history of the informal library that served as the progenitor to the Cooper Memorial Library. Perhaps the informal library was located at the Methodist Church. This conclusion can be gleaned from the absence of any indication that the library changed locations when it formally organized, and the written records indicate that the Cooper Memorial Library, during its early years, was located at the "south part of the M.E. [Methodist Episcopal] Church."³ It is also reasonable to conclude that the inventory of books that comprised the informal library came primarily from gifts already given by E.M. Cooper. Indeed, through the years he donated as many as 5000 to 6000 books to the library.⁴

After the formative meeting in August 1918, one of the first items of business for the new Cooper Memorial Library was to adopt rules. The rules of the library, adopted on September 17, 1918, provided that the

library opened 2:30 p.m. on Fridays for “the Red Cross Meeting and the loaning of books to the town’s people.”⁵ The rules do not state when the library closed, presumably that decision was left to the discretion of the librarian. Those individuals who did not qualify as “the town’s people” are referred to as “strangers desiring books.”⁶ Such “strangers” could take out books upon the condition that they left a refundable deposit of one dollar. Books were loaned for a period of two weeks, with a one-week renewal permitted. Failure to return a book in a timely fashion precipitated a fine of one cent per day. There was a loaning limit of two books per patron.⁷

Community interest in the library grew quickly. At the library meeting held in April 1919, less than a year after the library had been formed, twenty-one people attended.⁸ Plans were made to perk up the appearance of the facility, including cleaning the adjacent street, improving the lawn and planting trees.⁹

The library meeting of August 19, 1919 was noteworthy because E.M. Cooper was visiting from Philadelphia and addressed the meeting. The Secretary’s Minutes summarized his comments as follows:

“E.M. Cooper, Founder of the Library, gave a short address to the officers of the Association in which he stated that he was well pleased with the attendance of the officers and that their efforts to improve the lawn and method of loaning books and for better management of the Library in general, were very commendable.

“He advised that an auxiliary membership of young boys and girls be formed with the idea that they would later become competent to fill any vacancy occurring in the Association.

“Mr. Cooper intimated that this might be his last visit to Wilmington and explained that he had made provision in his will for the future needs of the Library so the people and Association should have a personal feeling of responsibility for the good care of the Library.”¹⁰

After the comments of E.M. Cooper, the library officers immediately adhered to his advice and appointed eight local young people as auxiliary members of the Association. The original eight auxiliary members were: Clyde Richardson, Hazel Thew, Jamie Wolfe, Gracie Haselton, Morris Wolfe, Lillian Hickok, Arthur Mihill and Olive Coolidge.¹¹

E.M. Cooper's prediction that the August 1919 meeting would be his last proved to be premature by one year. He was able to return to Wilmington the following summer and attended the meeting held on August 28, 1920. While the records reflect his presence at the August 1920 meeting, unlike the prior year there is no mention of any comments made by Mr. Cooper while he was at the meeting.¹² The next entry in the Secretary's Minutes, dated October 6, 1920, reflects that E.M. Cooper had died and a committee was appointed to draft a resolution regarding the death of Mr. Cooper.¹³

2. E.M. Cooper Contributions

E.M. Cooper's involvement with the library was both brief and long-lasting.

Born in Wilmington in 1854, E.M. Cooper¹⁴ had been a resident of the Philadelphia area since 1885.¹⁵ Despite his long absence as a north-country resident, he nevertheless maintained loyalty to the area and he was the crucial force in forming a public library in the Town of Wilmington.

E.M. Cooper died at his Philadelphia home in September 1920. He thus died only 25 months after the initial formal steps had been taken to give birth to the Cooper Library in Wilmington. He had, however, been instrumental in starting the library that, although some shaky days still laid ahead, would nevertheless still be loaning books and providing a valuable public service in Wilmington into the Twenty-first Century. Moreover, he backed his interest in the library with gifts of between 5000 and 6000 books¹⁶ and, additionally, a substantial monetary gift in his Last Will.

At the time of his death, E.M. Cooper was 66 years old and had been in poor health for two years.¹⁷ He was the Secretary and Treasurer of the Penn Reduction Company.¹⁸ He had been one of the founders of the Penn Reduction Company, which held all the garbage collection contracts in the City of Philadelphia for many years.¹⁹ E.M. Cooper was described as “a well-known figure in [Philadelphia] business circles, not only by reason of

his prominence as a contractor, but because of his great stature. He was six feet, four inches tall and weighed 310 pounds.”²⁰ The Adirondack Record article about E.M. Cooper continues by stating:

“Wilmington especially mourns the loss of this native son who has during his entire life time had the interest of the vicinity at heart. One of his hobbies, if such could be called, has resulted in Wilmington possessing without doubt, the most complete library of any hamlet of its size in New York, wholly due to Mr. Cooper’s generosity.”²¹

The sense of loss experienced by the citizens of Wilmington was summarized by a resolution adopted by the library officers, stating:

“RESOLVED, That [E.M. Cooper’s] career as a friend and citizen was such as to commend it to all men; that his strength of character, his sagacity, and his conscientiousness in the discharge of every duty won the friendship and high esteem of his associates. Impartial, kindly in disposition, painstaking, honest in his convictions and earnest and straightforward in speech, loyal to his friends, ever ready and willing to cheerfully sacrifice himself to aid and instruct those seeking his assistance, we feel that he well exhibited the traits of a devoted and faithful friend and citizen.

“Resolved, that his life was a proper one for emulation by those in private and official position, and, as a reward, he went to his grave followed by tender memories of all who learned to know him well, and to respect the virtues which contributed to the rounding out of an honorable career as a private and public citizen and as a man.”²²

Mr. Cooper’s astute business sense no doubt caused him to realize that merely giving books to a library would not ensure its endurance for

posterity. If the library was to long endure and, indeed, improve it needed financial backing. Hence, his Last Will provided:

“I do bequeath in trust to the Library in the Town of Wilmington, Essex County, New York, known as the E.M. Cooper Memorial Public Library, the sum of \$16,000.00; The income only of which shall be used for the keeping up and maintenance of said Public Library and I do appoint as one Trustee of said fund, the Bank of Au Sable Forks represented by its proper officer. The other Trustee to be elected by the Library committee, both to serve without any compensation.”²³

Perspective is added to the significance of the gift when the amount bequeathed is adjusted for inflation. Mr. Cooper’s gift to the library in 1920 was about the equivalent of a contribution in the year 2001 of ten times as much, or approximately \$160,000.²⁴ The Wilmington library was thus endowed with not only “the most complete library of any hamlet of its size in New York,”²⁵ but also a significant sum of money to maintain the library. While such a combination appeared as a recipe for smooth sailing, some rough seas stirred not too far over the horizon.

3. Making It Official – Obtaining a State Charter

Although the library now had books and would soon be receiving a substantial gift of money (once the Estate of E.M. Cooper distributed the funds), it had not yet officially organized as a State-recognized free library. Wading through the paperwork was undoubtedly a test of patience, but it was nevertheless a minor problem compared to the difficulties that arose once the money arrived. Before venturing into the money problem, the bureaucratic work necessary for the library to receive its charter and the moving of the library to its current site will be discussed.

At the meeting held on April 25, 1921, the Library Association passed a resolution that “Mrs. S.R. Wood be authorized to write to the State Library Association for information concerning incorporation.”²⁶ Mrs. Wood wasted no time in fulfilling her duty. By letter dated April 26, 1921, she wrote to the “State Librarian” in Albany. Relevant parts of the letter are as follows:

“Will you please send literature on the organization of Free Libraries?”

“We have a library of several thousand volumes, the gift of one man who recently died leaving an endowment fund to be paid to the trustees of said library, the income of which is to be used for the maintenance of library etc.

“We have never been incorporated; provided the association decides to place the library under the control of the State, just what steps would be necessary to secure a charter; how long a time would be necessary to obtain the charter and what would be the State’s attitude toward the bequest?”

“Would it be left in the hands of the trustees for investment as the testator evidently desired?”

A prompt response to the letter of inquiry was sent by State

Librarian William R. Watson, in a letter dated April 28, 1921, he replied:

“We are much interested to learn of the bequest of books and funds for the purpose of providing library facilities in the village of Wilmington. Before making definite suggestions as to the course which should be followed we should like to see a copy of the will or of that portion of the will relating to the gift for library purposes.

“The trustees should become incorporated in order that they may hold property and receive State aid. It is not likely that a charter could be granted until the June meeting of the Regents as it will be necessary some representative of the Division to go to Wilmington to make the necessary inspection to accompany the papers of application.

“All funds and property left for the use of the library would be left in the hands of the trustees for administration.”

Mrs. Wood, in a letter dated May 3, 1921, sets forth the terms of

E.M. Cooper’s will and then adds:

“You will observe that Mr. Cooper speaks of a Library Committee. This Com. was appointed by himself to hold office during life – unless found unfit. It consists of six members.

“Since 1916 he has been giving us books, mostly of his own selection, until time of his death, last Sept.

“The Ex. of estate has filed first and partial account and it will be audited this week. Funds, however, may not be available for some time.”

In another expeditious response, Mr. Watson advises Mrs. Wood as follows in a letter of May 10, 1921:

“We think it would be advisable for those interested in the library in Wilmington, to form a library association and make

application to the Regents for incorporation. We would suggest that the library be incorporated as E.M. Cooper Memorial Library.

“When the library has been incorporated it will be possible for the trustees of the fund left for its maintenance to turn over to the library trustees the income from the endowment.

“We are enclosing herewith the necessary forms on which to make application and in addition to the certificate of establishment and application for charter we shall need a copy of the by-laws of the organization.”

On May 14, 1921, a meeting of the E.M. Cooper Memorial Library occurred with the following individuals present: James C. Wolfe, Daniel Haselton, Electa M. Hayes, Minnie C. Wood, Plinn E. Cooper. They voted that “a free library be hereby established for the free use of inhabitants of this Town (Wilmington)” The five individuals who voted, plus Mrs. Bessie D. Everest, were elected the six trustees of the library, with James C. Wolfe acting as President. The E.M. Cooper Library trustees then prepared, and filed in June 1921, an “Application for Library Charter and Admission to the University.” The application reflects that, at such time, the library had 5000 books in “good condition” and 200 “needing repair,” with an estimated value of \$8000 and \$50, respectively. Property of the library included “stove - table - shelves,” with a worth of about \$75. The location of the library was “a large room in lower part of M.E. Church.” The total estimated value of the assets of the E.M. Cooper Memorial library was \$8,125.00. The application recites Wilmington as having 593 inhabitants.

Although the application was filed in early June 1921, the library trustees did not receive a prompt response this time from the State. Accordingly, by a letter dated July 4, 1921, Mrs. Wood inquired of Mr. Watson about the delay. She further noted in her letter that “the endowment fund of which I have previously written you is ready -- we are losing the interest on the money besides being handicapped for lack of funds to pay expenses while waiting for incorporation.” Mr. Watson immediately responded, stating that unfortunately the Cooper Library application had been received too late for consideration at the June meeting of the Regents. He further noted that, before the Regents would act on the application, it would be necessary for a representative of the State to travel to Wilmington and conduct an investigation of the library.²⁷

The investigation by the representative from the Library Division of the State Department of Education occurred on August 4, 1921. The investigator's name was Mr. A. Wynkoop. The location of the library is reiterated in the report as being in the “basement of Methodist church -- separate entrance direct on street.” Mr. Wynkoop relates the library as containing 6000 books, in a condition described as “good - mostly new - bought by late E.M. Cooper.” At the time of his visit, 110 books were in circulation. Mr. Wynkoop makes the following general remarks about the library and the town:

“Very fine & liberal stock of books.

“Liberal provision for support.

“Village is having a real revival of prosperity & public spirit.”

He concludes his report by recommending the “granting of charter at earliest possible date.”

On September 22, 1921, a Provisional Charter was granted by the Regents of the University of the State of New York to the E.M. Cooper Memorial Library. On November 17, 1922, the E.M. Cooper Memorial Library was granted a Certificate of Registration by the Regents.

4. Finding A Home

Having received a generous quantity of books and a substantial gift of money, the trustees of the library soon began to explore a place for a permanent home for the library. Indeed, as early as August 1921, while still awaiting approval from the State Regents, thoughts were turning to finding a permanent place for the library. When Mr. Wynkoop was conducting his investigation of the library, the local librarian, Mrs. S.R. Wood, asked him whether the trustees could use a portion of the bequest from E.M. Cooper to erect a library building. Mrs. Wood's query was passed by Mr. Wynkoop on to State Librarian William R. Watson. Mr. Watson informed Mrs. Wood, in a letter dated August 11, 1921, as follows:

“This is a matter which can not be decided by the Department as it is properly a matter for the decision of the Court.

“We have discussed the matter with the Law Division of the University and from the wording of the will it would appear to have been the intention that the income should be used merely for the maintenance of the library and not for purposes of construction. We doubt very much whether the trustees [of the E.M. Cooper trust funds] would be willing to turn over the income to be cumulated for the erection of a library building unless they were so authorized by action of the Court.”

The library board was not dissuaded from its goal by Mr. Watson's opinion that money from the Cooper Trust should not be used in constructing a library building. Other avenues for raising funds were pursued and, in August 1925, the first step was taken toward the purchase

of the property where the library currently stands. At a meeting of the Library Association held on August 26, 1925, the board voted that “a Library Building site be purchased from Michael Courtney, for the sum of Three Hundred and fifty dollars.”²⁸ Shortly thereafter, in September 1925, the E.M. Cooper Memorial Library purchased a parcel of land located adjacent to the street [Route 86] and near the bank of the West Branch of the AuSable River in the Town of Wilmington from Michael E. and Rachael Courtney for \$350.²⁹

Having purchased a suitable parcel of property, the next step was to raise the necessary funds to construct the new library building. Beginning in the mid-1920’s, methods used for raising funds included annual tag sales and the presentation of summer programs. The programs sponsored by the library included a potpourri of entertainment, such as an orchestra, instrumental solos, singing and readings.³⁰ The success of the tag sales and other fund-raising activities is reflected by the fact that, by August 1928, the library had accumulated “\$1500 toward the building.”³¹

In 1926, the library board authorized “re-leasing the present room in the M. E. Church, for 5 yrs.”³² By the end of the term of that lease, the library had moved to its present location. Interestingly, the Secretary’s Minutes do not specify the exact date when the library moved to the new facility. However, in July 1931, the Building Committee was directed to

“procure plans and estimate of a suitable building.”³³ In September 1931, the board agreed to obtain “a loan to finish the library” and a motion was adopted “to finish the Library building, grading the lawn and building walk. Plumbing to be omitted until next summer.”³⁴ The December 1931 meeting included a list of individuals and businesses that the library board voted to formally thank for their assistance in the construction of the library building.

The records thus point clearly to the completion of construction of the current library building during the second half of 1931. The building committee and all the volunteers who worked so hard on the new facility did a conscientious and quality job. Indeed, the building was subsequently described in a State review as “far superior to quarters found in most small communities.”³⁵

5. The Missing Money

By the 1930's the library was located in a brand new facility and community support was significant. The future looked bright. But, as sometimes happens when things appear to be going well, the twists and turns of difficulties loomed close at hand. One of the most troublesome crises to confront the library unfolded during the late 1930's when it was discovered that the E.M. Cooper Trust fund was missing. Indeed, the library closed for nearly two years while the crisis loomed.

At the June 1939 meeting of the trustees of the E.M. Cooper Memorial Library, the following was noted: "Matter pertaining endowment fund was discussed [and] voted Mr. Wolfe, W.G. Cooper [and] Mrs. Urban go to consult with the bank this coming week." The meeting of the library delegation with the bank resulted in a request by the bank for an affidavit from the library board regarding the Trust Fund. The library board prepared such an affidavit, which sets forth the nature of the pertinent developments as follows:

"TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: We, the undersigned, constituting the Board of Trustees of the E.M. Cooper Memorial Library, of Wilmington, N.Y., by virtue of a Will, made by E.M. Cooper, of Philadelphia, Pa., dated Jan. 10, 1919,³⁶ do attest as follows: That Mr. V.K. Moore, while on vacation in Orlando, on several occasions called on Mrs. S.R. Wood, Treasurer, (recently deceased) and stated that he was sent by the Bank of Au Sable Forks to Philadelphia to arrange for the payment of the Endowment Fund provided for in the above Will, amounting to \$16,000.

He further stated that he had already made one visit to Mr. H. D. Beston, Executor of the Will, had called on him on the way to Florida for a second time, and would go a third time for the money when notified that it was available. The above conversation was Feb. 1921. Mr. Moore went to, Philadelphia for the final settlement during the latter part of July, 1921, and returned to Au Sable Forks Aug. 1st, 1921. Upon his return he called Mrs. Wood, then in Wilmington, N.Y., by phone and requested her to come down and arrange for the Fund being placed to the credit of the Library account. Mrs. Wood, accompanied by her husband, (S.R. Wood,) now Treasurer, went to the bank and saw the check for \$15,200, being the net amount less 5% Inheritance Tax. This amount was placed to our credit at 4% interest, after consulting with Mr. Plinn E. Cooper, the other trustee for the fund, the date of credit being Aug. 2nd, 1921. The first installment of interest was credited on the Library Pass Book Jan. 31, 1922, but should have been dated Feb. 2nd.

“S.R. Wood attests as follows: That he has been conversant with the financial matters of the Library since its founding, several years before the Endowment was received. That he saw the check at the time above mentioned; that he has reported to the State of New York each year since the Library was placed under state control the amount of this Fund as an asset. Copies of these reports are on file in our office. Mr. Wood has on file several letters from Mr. Moore to Mrs. Wood, in which he states certain facts concerning this fund and the interest thereon. The rate of interest was changed in 1934, as per letter of Mr. Harold Torrance, acting in Mr. Moore's absence.”

Seeking guidance for the proper avenue of pursuing a remedy for the missing money, a letter was written by Mr. S.R. Wood, as Library Treasurer, to the State Library Extension Division. The letter, dated August 2, 1939, sheds further light on the unfortunate situation and the difficulties faced by the Library Board:

“In 1921 our Library was the recipient of an Endowment Fund, and was established under the name of E.M. Cooper Memorial Library, of Wilmington, N.Y., amount of the Fund being \$16,000. Two trustees of the Fund were provided for in the will of Mr. E.M. Cooper, who died in 1920. One of these trustees was the Bank of Au Sable Forks, (N.Y.), the other was Mr. Plinn E. Cooper, of Wilmington, N.Y. The Bank sent Mr. V.K. Moore after this Fund in July 1921, when the Estate was settled. Recently Mr. Moore committed suicide and the Bank's books were found to be in a very undesirable condition. The new cashier has been unable to find any account of the Fund although we have drawn interest on same since Aug. 2nd, 1921. We have a Pass Book on which the first installment of interest was endorsed, Jan. 31st, 1922. The Bank evidently expect us to prove that they had this money and we have written to the Orphan's Court of Philadelphia for a copy of the transaction when the Fund was paid over to the Trustees, and which is duly recorded. Have also written to the former Executor of the will for a copy of the cancelled check which ought to be conclusive evidence of the whole matter. Will you kindly advise us what to do in the matter, in case the Bank still refuses to acknowledge our claim?”

A quick response to Mr. Wood's letter came from Frank L. Tolman who, in a letter dated August 5, 1939, stated, in part:

“It is certainly unfortunate that the trust funds of the library should be involved in the affairs of the Bank of Au Sable Forks. To me it would seem that the matter was of such importance that the interests of the library should be put in the hands of an attorney.”

Mr. Wood followed up with a letter of September 11, 1939, in which he had a series of questions for Mr. Tolman:

“Does the State employ an attorney to follow up claims similar to ours? If so, is there a charge for such services?”

“If the State does not have such attorney, can you recommend a good and responsible man, (preferably in this section), who would work for our interest and make reasonable charges?”

Noting that it was “a little difficult to give a Yes or No answer to the inquiries,” Mr. Tolman responded to Mr. Wood in a letter of September 18, 1939. Mr. Tolman explained that the State had a large legal force in the Attorney-General's office, which intervened in certain cases where the State's interest were implicated. He was not sure, however, whether the Attorney-General's office would take a role on behalf of the Wilmington Library and he advised that “in practically every case the only way of assuring complete representation of your interests is by the direct employment of an attorney by your board.” With respect to the inquiry about local attorneys, he noted that “Mr. Daniel T. Manning, McDonald & Manning, Au Sable Forks, N.Y., was employed by the Keene Public Library” and “his conduct, as far as we could view the same, was entirely businesslike and satisfactory.”

The library board attempted to settle the matter directly with the bank, but the parties were unable to come to a satisfactory arrangement. Thus, at a meeting held in June 1940, the Board voted to retain attorney Daniel Manning to pursue the matter on behalf of the library. A lawsuit was commenced³⁷ and that case was headed for trial in October 1940. On September 26, 1940, however, the parties reached an out-of-court

settlement. There were several aspects to the settlement: (1) The Bank of Au Sable Forks paid \$10,000 to the Library to settle the claim for the missing \$15,200; (2) The Bank cancelled a note in the amount of approximately \$200 that it was owed by the Library; (3) The Bank paid the legal fees of Daniel Manning; and (4) The Bank paid an additional \$250 as a compromise for the estimated \$342 of past interest due to the Library.

With respect to the settlement, the minutes of the library board stated:

“A settlement with the Bank was effected Sept. 26, 1940 - The Library doors were open again to the public -- but the endowment being so reduced it becomes more difficult to operate.

“Mention should be made of the untiring efforts of S.K. Wood [and] Eliz. Urban -- who were appointed to try to get our money from the bank -- They went many times [and] had many stormy interviews with the bank officials -- record of which does not appear -- But doubtless if it had not been for their persistence [sic] the money would have been lost.”

While the library board members were relieved to have the return of enough money to continue operating the library, it is apparent that they were not happy with the reduction in the Trust principal. Not surprisingly, the Trust Fund was immediately removed from the Bank of Au Sable Forks. It was deposited with the Champlain Valley Federal and Loan Association in Plattsburgh, where it remained until October 1951, when it was moved to a bank in Orlando, Florida.

6. Depression, War and Decline

When the first State investigation was conducted of the E.M. Cooper Memorial Library, the report was permeated with positive comments about the library. The library had 6000 books that were in “good - mostly new” condition, the library had “liberal provision for support,” and Wilmington appeared to the State investigator as a village “having a real revival of prosperity and public spirit.”³⁸ Such optimism reflected the general good times prevailing in the country during the period sometimes referred to as “the roaring twenties.” Indeed, by 1928, the library had expended and even reported one branch, which was located at the “Forestdale Summer Colony.”³⁹

Years of great difficult, however, lurked around the next corner. In October 1929, the stock market went into a free-fall as the hope and optimism of the 1920's gave rise to the most difficult economic challenge in the history of the United States, the Great Depression. The stagnant economy, which resulted in years of intense struggle for survival for many Americans, did not fully revive until the world was engulfed in horrors of World War II.⁴⁰

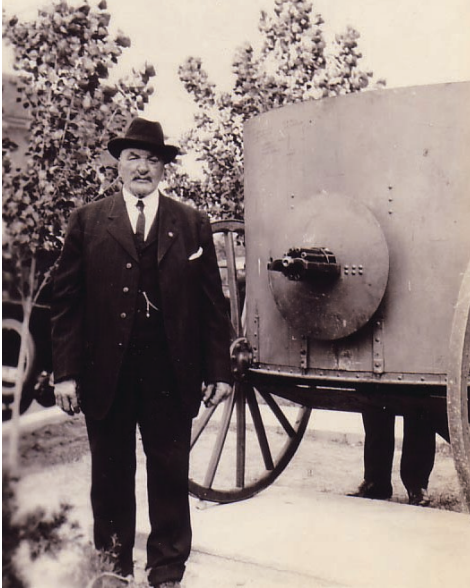
Whether it was only the difficulty of the times or whether other causes were also implicated is not now clear, but it is apparent from the

available records that the library slipped into hard times. The positive reports from State investigators of the 1920's gave way to dismal descriptions by the 1940's and 1950's. The reports no longer spoke of books in "like new" condition; instead, the books were characterized as being in "Poor" condition and the reference value was stated as "Weak."⁴¹ Gone were the assessments of a village in a "revival of prosperity." Instead, the area was described as a place where "one notices a few small stores, gas stations, etc. and there is some farming but on a very meager scale."⁴² The circulation of books in the community from the library was called "poor."⁴³ Under a heading entitled "Encouraging Features," the only positive comment articulated by the investigator was: "Building is very good for such a small community and the endowment fund is \$10,000."⁴⁴ The investigator, however, encountered no difficulty in finding "Discouraging Features." His comments are set forth in a lengthy paragraph, which states, in part:

"The library does not meet its library hours but is open only two hours a week when it should be open 12. The board indicates no interest in wanting to meet the difference of 10 hours. It is not interested in learning what can be done to increase library use in the community. There was some talk of giving up its charter. ... The librarian is there only during the summer months spending winter in Florida. The library has not been refurnished or decorated and is not particularly pleasant, though it could be made into a very nice library."⁴⁵

It merits reiterating that the discouraging report closed with a prediction of what could occur: “it could be made into a very nice library.” Someday, it would, in fact, become all that and more.

But, those days of renewal laid in the future. Indeed, during most of the 1960's and 1970's the doors to the library remained locked. A generation of children grew up in Wilmington with no local library.⁴⁶ Dust collected on unused old books. The only “visitors” to the library were the occasional vandals, who damaged and pilfered library property.



E. M. Cooper
photo – date unknown



Adeline Jacques
portrait in library
by
Steve Bowman Capozzio

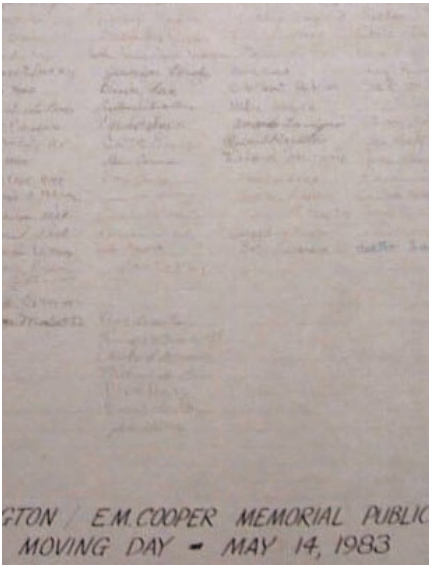
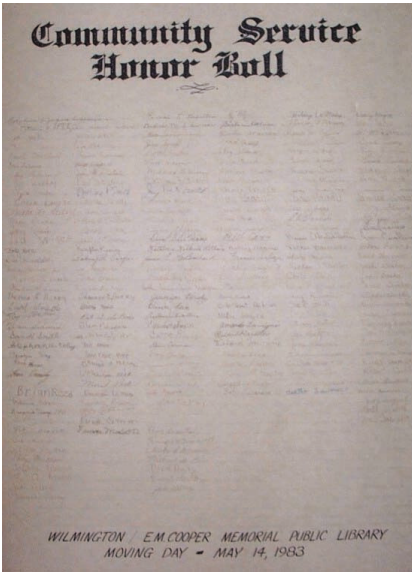


Electa Hayes
One of the original trustees
portrait in library
by Averil Conwell



Elizabeth Cooper Urban
Librarian for many years
photo – circa 1960's

Moving Day – May 14, 1983



View from entrance, looking toward left rear – 2003



Computer area
near entrance – 2003



Reading area
in rear – 2003



Library from the rear – 1930's



Library from the front – Autumn 2003

University of the

State of New York

Certificate of Registration

This instrument witnesses that *That the Regents of the University of the State of New York at their meeting of November 17, 1922* voted that

E. M. Cooper Memorial Library

located at Wilmington, New York

having been found on official inspection to be meeting the requirements of the Regents
be registered as maintaining a proper standard



Granted *November 17, 1922* by the Regents
of the University of the State of New York,
executed under their seal and recorded in their
office. Number 3206

Walter D. Lord.
Chancellor

Harold P. Fiske
President of the University and
Commissioner of Education

7. Renewal - The 1980's

Fortunately, following the depth of decline of the 1960's and 1970's, a renewed interest in the library led to a revival of a proud tradition, restoring the library as one of the integral parts of the community.

A schoolteacher returned from her career in California to the town of her youth for retirement in the late 1970's. Adeline Jacques' retirement in Wilmington would be marked by commendable community service. Her interest in the library was one of the key factors that stirred to action many concerned citizens who desired to establish a viable and vibrant library in the village.

At a meeting of the Wilmington Town Board on October 12, 1982, the Board voted to establish a free public library and appointed as Trustees of the library the following individuals: Sarah Adams, Nancy Gonyea, Erma Haselton, Hilary DeMacy and Patrick McIntyre. In May 1983, the Trustees of the library submitted an application for a library charter to The University of the State of New York / State Department of Education. Also, in May 1983, a dedication ceremony was held for the newly revitalized library. Among the many guests and dignitaries was William J. Carr, Secretary of the State Board of Regents. Mr. Carr had deep ties to Wilmington and the value of his work behind the scenes for the library would prove immeasurable. The ceremony was conducted on Saturday,

May 14, 1983, starting at 10:00 o'clock in the morning. Mr. Carr provided the keynote address and entire speech was subsequently printed in the Lake Placid.⁴⁷

May 14, 1983 additionally became known as “moving day.” Many of the library’s books had been stored at the former Town Hall (currently the Northern Lights School) while work was being done on revitalizing the library. The idea was conceived to form a human chain from that location to the library and to pass the books along the chain. In this way, the books were moved from their place of storage to the library. As reflected by names on the “Community Service Honor Roll” that was signed by those who helped on that day, over two hundred people turned out to make the day an incredible success both in terms of accomplishing the goal of moving books and demonstrating great community support for the library.

The excitement of first half of 1983 was unfortunately damped by events in late 1983. In November 1983, a consultant from the State Education Department visited Wilmington and prepared a report regarding the library’s application for a charter. The report was not supportive. Thus, the library faced yet more adversity in a history that had been frequently marked by difficulties. The application for a charter had been not received with favor in Albany. A memorandum prepared on December 1, 1983 sets forth the concerns of the State Education Department:

“As you will note from the regional consultant’s comments, Library Development staff have serious reservations in regard to the financial support available to this library and in regard to the service area for this library which is located in the area which the Lake Placid Library is already chartered to serve. There may not be justification for registration of the library due to the limited funding available as the library may not be able to afford to meet the Commissioner’s Regulation for the number of hours open. Library Development is acceding to a request for a charter and recommending a provisional charter because of the intense interest of members of the State Education Department and Legislature. *It is our opinion that it is a mistake to charter this library. ...*” (emphasis added).⁴⁸

Despite the opinion by some that it was a mistake to grant a charter to the library, the Board of Regents nevertheless granted a *provisional* charter to the library on January 17, 1984. It would now be up to the library to prove that it did, indeed, merit an absolute charter.

Local support for the library continued to grow and, in 1984, both the Au Sable Valley and Lake Placid School Districts voted to support the library in Wilmington.⁴⁹ The vote in Lake Placid was placed on the ballot for residents to decide the issue. On May 24, 1984, the Lake Placid News printed an editorial throwing the newspaper’s support behind the proposal, stating: “We strongly favor the passage of this proposal.” The voters concurred on June 6 as they overwhelmingly passed the measure by a vote of 340 to 58. The support of the two public school districts that drew students from the Town was yet another step toward an absolute charter for the library.

8. Name Controversy

Although minor when compared to other challenges faced by the library, nevertheless one more wave of controversy that merits brief mention washed over the library before the close of the 1980's. The decade of the 1980's had otherwise seen significant progress toward reestablishing a permanent public library in Wilmington. The decade would not, however, end problem-free. In 1989, some supporters of the library felt that a more appropriate name for the library would be the "Wilmington Public Library in the E.M. Cooper Memorial Building," rather than the "Wilmington E.M. Cooper Memorial Library." Many others, including some of the heirs of E.M. Cooper, believed the name was best left undisturbed. The issue grew, resulting in rumbles of litigation, involvement of the Town Board and even an effort to interject the State into the controversy. Not surprisingly, considerable local newspaper coverage of the issue ensued.⁵⁰ On June 12, 1989, the Town Board, by a vote of 4-0-1, directed the library trustees to retain the name of the library as "Wilmington / E.M. Cooper Memorial Public Library." Thus, the name remained unchanged; but, an otherwise primarily positive decade for the library unfortunately ended with some bruised feelings.

9. Absolute Charter Frustrations

Renewals of the 1984 provisional charter continued into the early 1990's, but frustration grew at the inability to convince Albany to bestow an Absolute Charter upon the library. Letters of inquiry to bureaucrats in Albany went unanswered. Protracted delays were common. While the library flourished, frustration grew at the slow responses of the State. The enthusiasm of the library's leaders is reflected in a letter of May 7, 1991 by Alison Follos, President of the Board of Trustees:

“Our current Library Board is secure and energetic. The Friends of the Library have been amazingly supportive and effective; fund raising, new glassed-in foyer, new floor covering, money for books, etc. We've really been fortunate to receive so much support.”

Similarly optimistic letters were sent by Ms. Follos to the State Education Department in February and March 1992. The letters also informed the State Education Department that the library trustees had marked obtaining an Absolute Charter as a major goal for 1992. Four letters were sent to the State Education Department. But, no responses were received from Albany.

The library board turned to William J. Carr. Although “Bill” had now retired from his position as Secretary of the Board of Regents, he still knew whom to contact in Albany. Working behind the scenes, Mr. Carr provided invaluable services in getting the process toward an Absolute

Charter moving in Albany.⁵¹ Nevertheless, two years after the goal was set (in 1992) to obtain an Absolute Charter, the library was still operating under a Provisional Charter. The Minutes from the meetings of the Board of Trustees from June and July 1994 reflect the board's resolve to continue pursuing an Absolute Charter. In addition to Bill Carr's assistance in Albany, library trustee Dr. Ernest Orsi undertook responsibility at the local level for the Absolute Charter push. The Provisional Charter was due for renewal in June 1995 and the board renewed its determination to receive an Absolute Charter by such time.

The January 26, 1995 meeting of the board brought reason for cautious optimism. The minutes of the meeting reflect that Dr. Orsi reported that "everything seems to be in order for the charter application." At that meeting, the board adopted the following resolution:

"RESOLVED, that the provisional charter granted to the Wilmington E.M. Cooper Memorial Public Library, Wilmington, New York on January 17, 1984 be amended to add the following clause, and that this resolution be forwarded to the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York petitioning such action.

"A. That the provisional charter of the Wilmington E.M. Cooper Memorial Public Library be replaced with an absolute charter."

After working so long and experiencing so many frustrations in attempting to obtain an Absolute Charter, relief and joy must have

accompanied the news reported at the April 6, 1995 meeting of the board that:

“There is a meeting on April 28th in Albany where charters will be approved. Representatives from Wilmington have been invited down for the meeting and lunch with Regent Dawson and Bill Carr.”

At the next meeting of the Board of Trustees, on June 1, 1995, the Trustees were finally able to officially report that the “library has received its charter,” and added that there was “a lot of good media coverage of the event.” Thus, by mid-1995, the Wilmington E.M. Cooper Memorial Library had received an Absolute Charter from the State of New York.⁵²

10. Antiques and Artifacts

Through the years, the library has served as a receptacle for numerous antiques and artifacts of historical significance to the Town of Wilmington. Indeed, at times, the library has acted analogous to a museum for the town.

For example, on September 3, 1928, a special meeting was held of the library board “for the purpose of accepting ... antique articles and curios pertaining to Wilmington, for the Library, from Mr. Lute E. Avery, of Brandon, Vt.”⁵³ The list of donated items is extraordinary and is set forth in the minutes as follows:

“Several Cannon Balls, dating from 1776; 1 Brick, from Richmond, Va., taken from the walk to Libby Prison; 1 pr. of Bellows; 1 Stone Moccasin Last, used by the Indians before 1775; 1 Sword, used at the Battle of Missionary Ridge, brought back by Charles Chamberlain, uncle of Lute Avery; 1 Lantern. used by Major Reuben Sanford before 1800; 1 Picture of Wilmington village, taken about 1878; 1 Foot Warmer; 1 Warming Pan; 1 Flint-Lock Gun; 1 Springfield Gun, bearing date of 1863; 1 Round Trunk, dating from 1630 to 1650; 1 piece of Old Wilmington Cannon; 1 Chronicles and Songs of the Gun or Cannon”⁵⁴

Despite the troubled times that the library experienced, including vandalism during the years it was closed, the integrity and safety of these items has been maintained and preserved.⁵⁵ Many of the antiques and

artifacts are locked in cabinets with glass doors and thus can currently be viewed by the public.

More recently, gifts from the descendants of the Avery/Sanford family included four antique chairs. An inscription written on the bottom of one of the chairs states:

“These chairs belonged to Loren Evans Avery’s great-great grandfather who was born in 1798 and died in 1892. He married Eliza Sanford, daughter of Major Reuben Sanford, Sept. 26, 1827. His name was Amos Avery. He lived in Wilmington, NY.”

All these antique chairs are on display in the library, hanging on the wall from specially constructed hangers.

Also, in recent years, the library has acted in cooperation with the current Town Historian, Merri Carol Peck, to frequently display on a temporary basis old photographs and other items of historical importance to the Town of Wilmington. The inclusion of the artifacts of the town’s history – some permanently and others on a temporary basis – complement the library’s role as a place where the past and the present come together, providing an exciting place of learning.

11. Friends, Finances and the Future

In 1990, a few concerned citizens formed a local chapter of the “Friends of the Library.” According to the library’s current President, Karen d’Avignon,⁵⁶ the formation of this group and their remarkable contribution to the library has been a significant positive development in the library’s recent history. The January 18, 1990 board meeting minutes note that Vivian Mendelsohn “would like to have [Jane] Peck set up a ‘Friends to the Library Group’.” The minutes of meeting further relate: “This group to act as a fund-raising group, to help out with the library....”

Responsibility for the group having been delegated to Jane Peck, she placed a phone call for assistance to her sister, Laura Trumbull. The essence of the call was that the library needed money and needed volunteers to engage in fund-raising activities. Some of the original members of the Friends group included: Laura Trumbull, Marles Railton and Dolores Forbes. That first year, the Friends raised nearly one thousand dollars through a variety of fund-raising ventures, and some of the money was used in 1991 to construct a much-needed glass enclosure at the library’s entrance.

During the ensuing years, the Friends provided custodial services and economic support to the library, enabling the library to undertake a variety of improvements. Examples of some of the projects funded by the

Friends' contributions include: new carpeting, computer furniture, a water heater, an air conditioning unit, a kitchen-utility area, regular purchase of books, a handicap accessibility ramp, and new windows.

Another important development was the complete remodeling of the basement of the library. This project was funded by a construction grant. Under the direction of a retired contractor who donated his expertise, the basement project was a major improvement that essentially doubled the usable space of the library. Before the project, the basement was a dark and dingy storage area. It was transformed into a Kid's Room, bursting with the excitement and energy of children. Basement space was also made available for community meetings, special functions and dry storage.

Funding for the library, while always a challenge, continued to improve at the turn of the century. Sources for funding, in addition to the work of the Friends, included: the Town of Wilmington funding, the Lake Placid Education Fund, various individual gifts, annual funding from the Clinton-Essex-Franklin Library system, as well as grants from the Adirondack Art's Council, the Gates Foundation and the New York State Public Library Construction fund.

The final few years of the Twentieth Century also saw the library move forward to join the technology and information revolutions. Computers and the internet made information from around the world

available in the little library in the Adirondack Mountains with the click of a computer's mouse. Summer programs for children exposed the youth of Wilmington to not only good literature and a love for reading, but also the wonders available from new technology.

While many people participated in these vital projects that renewed and transformed the library, special mention is merited for the person at the helm during this time, library board President Karen d'Avignon. Under her leadership the library had, by 2001, earned its place as a vibrant and important part of the Wilmington community. Library board members and volunteers were comprised of not only individuals who had deep roots in the Town, but also people who had recently been planted in this Adirondack hamlet. The dedication and work of numerous people -- most working behind the scenes with no special recognition -- has resulted in a beautiful and functional facility. The library clearly enhances the quality of life for residents and visitors to Wilmington. While some people often pine for "the good old days," it is apparent that the library is currently enjoying the best days in its 80-plus year history. With continued community support and the cooperative involvement of concerned citizens, it is reasonable to believe that even better days are ahead.

12. A View From Inside

This final chapter sets forth a few of the thoughts of the librarian of the E. M. Cooper Memorial Library at the beginning of the Twenty-first Century. A view from inside the library seems a fitting way to conclude this brief history. When someone with an inquisitive mind wanders into the library years from now and wonders what it was like to work in the library at the turn of this century, these thoughts of Meg Stone will provide a glimpse into the trenches of the library as the new millennium began. And thus, we close with a view from the inside:

“The daily duties and skills required of a Library Manager (the title is a recent change, I am technically a Library Manager because I have no degree in library science) of a small library where the paid work force consist of one, is varied and constantly challenging, especially with the introduction of the computers and the internet.”

“I find the Wilmington library to be a wonderful mix of the old and the new. We have four computers now, three with internet access, two of which are for public use. This is a free service and there are equally as many people coming in just to use the computers as there are people coming in to check out books. This has greatly increased the use of the library by people who would not of otherwise used the library, so much so that the time has to be limited on the computers and a sign-up sheet is essential.”

“At this time we still stamp the books out, no electronic scanner that flashes up your past history of overdue books which has the potential of scaring a lot of people from coming to the library, but would be wonderful from my point of view to keep track of the books (nobody ever remembers their card or number). This will probably be introduced soon along with the card catalogue on the computers which would make it so much easier helping people find what they are looking for, as well as helping us keep better track of our holdings. Having the computers being such a big part of the library has made it crucial that a library manager be computer literate and, even more important, able to figure out and fix the daily technical problems that arise.”

“Because of the size, I don’t think the library will ever become so high tech that I can’t take the time to discuss a book with a patron or maintain the flower garden or conduct the children’s story hour, all of which I find keeps it a personal and inviting place to come.”

“For the last couple of years the library has been a non-profit sponsor for various artist and storytellers to teach and perform. These programs have been funded by the Arts Council for the Northern Adirondacks and have been a great source of entertainment and learning.”

“The ‘Inter Library Loan,’ the system where we can borrow books from other libraries through a internet site, has made it possible for a patron

to get almost any book in print which is an amazing development especially for a library with limited space and money like ours.”

“One development I have noticed is the lack of interest of children ages 10 - 17 in reading. They are extremely knowledgeable about the computer and many times they have helped me with problems I couldn’t solve, but the books for that age group don’t go off the shelf much. I don’t know if that is just a passing phase or the way of the future.”

“I don’t know if it has always been so, but there is an amazing amount of support for the library from the people of Wilmington. Every project we have undertaken since I have been here has been completed due to contributions from the full and part time residents of the town. The volunteer support group, ‘The Friends of the Library,’ is a dedicated, productive group that gets things done. There seems to be a lot of appreciation and pride in the fact that there is a library here.”

Notes

¹ The author is a native of Wilmington, having spent most of his childhood growing up on a family farm in the town from 1960 to 1976. He is a graduate of Albany Law School, Union University, and has had many law-related matters published.

² Secretary's Minutes, E.M. Cooper Memorial Public Library, p. 3.

³ Application for Library Charter of E.M. Cooper Memorial Library, June 1921.

⁴ See, Letter of Mrs. S.R. Wood to State Librarian William Wood, dated May 3, 1921. See also, Application for Library Charter of E.M. Cooper Memorial Library, June 1921; and report of State inspection of the library of August 1, 1921.

⁵ Secretary's Minutes, *supra*, n. 2, at 5.

⁶ Id., at 6.

⁷ Id., at 6.

⁸ Id., at 13.

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ Id., at 20.

¹¹ Id., at 21.

¹² Id., at 25.

¹³ Id., at 27.

¹⁴ The "E" in E.M. Cooper was for "Ellison," but he is almost always referred to in the relevant records as "E.M."

¹⁵ Clow, June M., "E.M. Cooper, A Man For Wilmington." [undated].

¹⁶ Some of the original books given by E.M. Cooper are still available in the library.

¹⁷ Despite his declining health, he had remained active in his business until two days before his death. A letter sent by his friend, Dr. Frank Fisher of 1911 Arch St., Philadelphia, to Wilmington on October 7, 1920, reflects as follows on the final days of E.M. Cooper: "Very many things have intervened to keep my mind occupied since the sad loss of my warmest friend on the 15 of Sept. I know that many will feel the

bereavement just as severely as I do but it all seemed so painful so soon after the close of our pleasant journey together. E.M. phoned me early on the evening of the 13th that he had had a hard and trying day of business but was feeling good. About 10 o'clock I was notified of his seizure and was with him in fifteen minutes remaining until morning. It was hemorrhage of the brain. In spite of which he knew me at once and spoke intelligently several times during the night. On the 13th we had much hope of recovery but fresh hemorrhage on the morning of the 15th ended all such hope and the end came shortly after the noon hour."

¹⁸ Article from "Adirondack Record," Sept. 24, 1920.

¹⁹ Id.

²⁰ Id.

²¹ Id.

²² Secretary's Minutes, *supra*, n. 2, at 34 – 35.

²³ See, id., at 45. The gift of money presented to the library by E.M. Cooper was not the only estate gift the library received. In 1929, the Estate of Corwin M. Thayer bequeathed \$500 to the library in memory of Corwin's father, Charles Thayer. The money was to be held in trust with the income used for "general purposes of said Library" (Secretary's Minutes, *supra*, n. 2, at 115). This money probably was lost as part of the bank scandal of the 1930's, discussed *infra* under section entitled, "The Missing Money."

²⁴ See, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Consumer Price Index.

²⁵ See, *supra*, text accompanying n. 21.

²⁶ Secretary's Minutes, *supra*, n. 2, at 31.

²⁷ Letter from William R. Watson to Mrs. S.R. Wood, dated July 5, 1921.

²⁸ Secretary's Minutes, *supra*, n. 2, at 87.

²⁹ Thereafter, in 1931, F. E. Everest donated adjacent land to the library that made the library's parcel "equal width on front and back lines" (Secretary's Minutes, *supra*, n. 2, at 131). In 1937, a quitclaim deed was received for an additional portion of property from J & J Rogers Company.

³⁰ See, e.g., Secretary's Minutes, *supra*, n. 2, at 111 and 137 – 138.

³¹ Id., at 111.

³² Id., at 99.

³³ Id., at 127.

³⁴ Id., at 129.

³⁵ Inspection Report of the Bureau of Library Extension of the State Education Department, prepared April 25, 1947 by L. Marion Moshier.

³⁶ The month and day of the Will recited in the affidavit are very difficult to read and may be incorrect.

³⁷ In addition to the Bank of Au Sable Forks, G.W. Cooper was also named as a defendant because he was a Trustee, together with the Bank, of the Trust Fund. Mr. Cooper was probably a “friendly” defendant but had to be named in the lawsuit because of his position. It is clear that the entirety of the action was directed against the Bank.

³⁸ Report of the Library Extension Division of the State Department of Education, August 4, 1921, Mr. A. Wynkoop.

³⁹ Annual Library Report for the Year Ended December 31, 1928, report to the State Education Department.

⁴⁰ Hundreds of books are available upon the topics of the Great Depression and World War II. An excellent recent overview of the period is set forth in the Oxford series of United States History: David Kennedy, Freedom From Fear (The American People in Depression and War, 1929 – 1945), Oxford University Press, 1999.

⁴¹ Report of the Bureau of Library Extension of the State Education Department for the E.M. Cooper Memorial Library, dated April 25, 1947.

⁴² Report of the Bureau of Library Extension of the State Education Department for the E.M. Cooper Memorial Library, dated February 11, 1953.

⁴³ Id.

⁴⁴ Id.

⁴⁵ Id.

⁴⁶ The void was filled, in part, by the regional library system (Clinton-Essex-Franklin County), which had a “Book-mobile” that made regular visits to Wilmington.

⁴⁷ The paper reported Mr. Carr’s comments, in its May 23, 1983 edition, as follows:

“It is a special pleasure for me to come back to Wilmington for this occasion. In many ways, I consider myself a native son. Those of you who have known me for awhile know that a real native son of our family was George Smith, my grandfather whose family worked

the farm down in Haselton which is now a small airport. But, this occasion gives me a chance to mention George Smith and his love of the Town and his efforts in the establishment of the Town Park.

“I am pleased to be able to bring the special greetings of the Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education Gordon Ambach.

“I bring a special message of appreciation to the Cooper family for their generosity and assistance in making these facilities and support available to the Town for library services.

“When I looked through the records of the file in the Education Department on the E.M. Cooper Library, I learned that a library had been established as early as 1918 in the basement of the Methodist Church and that Mr. Cooper was very much involved in that effort.

“When Mr. Cooper died in 1920, his will provided a bequest which led to the purchase of books – some 6,000 in all – for the library, and for the construction of this building.

“You all should know that there are children and citizens yet unborn who will reap the generosity of the Cooper family and that of E.M. Cooper, Rod and Jennie and members of their families.

“In looking over the old records of the Cooper Library one is impressed with the work of so many who kept it going over the years by their services on the Board of Trustees. They are names which will be familiar to older residents – S.R. Wood, Electa Hayes, Burt Cooper (father of Rod and Jennie), Jim Wolfe.

“I would also like to note at this time the special work of a lady who left Wilmington to go to college and somehow ended up in Los Angeles, California as a teacher of history in the Los Angeles City schools. She came back to Wilmington in retirement from those duties to undertake another task – that of giving new life to the library effort in Wilmington.

“Actually, Adeline Jacques could be regarded as the Mother of library services in Wilmington in the 1980’s. With the help of a committed library Board of Trustees, an interested and cooperative Town Board and Supervisor Don DeMacy and Town Clerk Judy Bowen, and the assistance and generosity of the Cooper family, all of this happened.

“All of this proves one thing – nothing happens until somebody does something. I’ll say it again: nothing happens until somebody does something.

“We can make all of the policy in the world, but nothing happens until we do something or you do something.

“E.M. Cooper wanted his legacy to be a library for the citizens of Wilmington. His will provided for that.

“The members of the Cooper family – especially Rod and Jennie, wanted his memory preserved as he had expressed it in his will.

“Adeline Jacques served as the catalyst for renewed library interest in Wilmington.

“Don DeMacy and Judy Bowen, the Town Board – the Library Board brought these to reality.

“I thank you for the opportunity to be with you today, I leave you

with the suggestion voiced a bit earlier: Nothing happens until somebody does something.

“A lot of people did something and that is why we are all here today.

“This event brings back a lot of happy memories in my life: My work with Rod Cooper on top of Whiteface; My memories of Rod and Jennie’s father Burt Cooper; My memories of growing up in Wilmington.” I thank you all for your cordial welcome and I commend you for this effort on this occasion.”

⁴⁸ Memorandum from Roberta G. Cade to Joseph F. Shubert, dated December 1, 1983.

⁴⁹ Au Sable Valley approved \$200 for the library and Lake Placid approved \$3,300.

⁵⁰ See, “Library trustees squabble over name,” Lake Placid News, July 5, 1989; “Library decision in state’s hands,” The Independent [formerly Adirondack Record-Post], July 19, 1989.

⁵¹ In recognition for all his work and assistance, the Board designated Bill Carr an Honorary Trustee of the Cooper Memorial Library and a reception was held bestowing the honor on August 22, 1995.

⁵² Interestingly, one of the members of the Board of Regents stated that, while the library’s application was pending, he made an unannounced visit to the library. He found the library bustling with people. The librarian was working with an individual looking for resources on the internet; and that individual was writing a book that was later published. Needless to say, the Regent was favorably impressed by what he observed during his visit. (Information from interview with current library President, Karen d’Avignon, who was present at the ceremony in Albany.)

⁵³ Secretary’s Minutes, *supra*, n. 2, at 113.

⁵⁴ *Id.* The receipt of these items is further confirmed by the Secretary’s minutes of September 24, 1928 (page 117), wherein it is recorded that “the antiques contributed by L. E. Avery, and others, be boxed and stored at the home of S. R. Wood.”

⁵⁵ Unfortunately, it appears that one important artifact was lost during the years when the library was closed. In 1929, an event occurred that significantly shaped the future of Wilmington for the remainder of the twentieth century and beyond; i.e., the commencement of construction on the Whiteface Veterans Memorial Highway. Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was then Governor of New York, was on hand and turned the first ceremonial shovel of dirt for construction of the highway. The shovel and bucket used by Franklin D. Roosevelt on that festive occasion were reportedly donated to the library. Sadly, the shovel and bucket used by Franklin D. Roosevelt to turn that bit of soil for what would become one of the treasures and primary attractions of Wilmington has been lost. Whether the loss of the shovel and bucket was accidental, is attributable to vandalism, or resulted from some other cause remains a mystery. Parenthetically, it merits noting that Franklin D. Roosevelt returned on July 20, 1935, then as President of the United States, to participate in the

dedication of the Veterans Memorial Highway up Whiteface Mountain. President Roosevelt, who had been paralyzed by polio, reportedly stated on such occasion, "For the millions of people who have not the facilities or the possibilities of walking up to the top of our great mountains, we have provided one mountain where they can go to on four wheels."

⁵⁶ Much of the information provided in the section entitled "Friends, Finances and the Future" was provided by current library President Karen d'Avignon. Except, of course, the part that gives her credit for her leadership. She did not want her name to appear in this section. However, given her vital role, it was the judgment of the author that omitting recognition of her role would not properly reflect the library's history.