

Annisquam has changed a great deal over a long period of time---and it is difficult indeed for residents now, to picture what once was! The value of real estate has outstripped the wildest dreams of the old timers, who in their day used to pasture sheep and cattle on the hills where summer homes now stand. The quarries played no small part in the business of old Annisquam,---- but today only old pits are left. Such a quarry was situated on the hill, now Adams Hill, behind the present Village Hall. In the twentieth and thirtieth years of the last century Messrs Bent and Wood worked on the quarry on Walnut Street; they supplied the stone for the dry dock in the Charlestown Navy Yard. At about that time, Thomas Pulcifer bought out the only blacksmith in the Village, Charles Roberts, and forged the ironwork for the vessels built in Annisquam – even to the anchors, which in those days were all wrought by hand.

The center of Village life today is the Village Hall and the surrounding buildings, including the Annsquam Exchange, once the Leonard School, and the Historical House, which used to be the old Hose Eight Engine House. But let us go back to the late 1800's when the Village Hall was a country store serving the needs of the Community. John D. Davis was the proprietor, and along with the country store he had a pool room, and in the back, where now is our Village Library, was a sort of restaurant where Village folk came in to get a snack or two.

What we call the Reading Room of the Library was not in existence at this particular time. John Davis and his wife, Peryntha, two well known Village personalities, lived across the street at 35 Leonard in the house now owned

and occupied by Mrs. A. Clement Deering. And so John Davis's Village Store attracted the folks of the Village in many ways, but in the early 1900's it was showing signs of wear and was rapidly becoming dilapidated and most unattractive.

It was about this time in 1902 that an Annisquam summer resident, Miss Annette Perkins Rogers, who lived in the 'paint box' on Cambridge Avenue (now the home of Frank Barnes) took an interest in establishing a Village Center. With a group of like-minded folk, John Davis's store was purchased, and improvements and alterations were made to make it wholly adequate and attractive ----- and thus began the Village Association in 1902.

And so the little lunch room became a thing of the past, and along with the necessary restorations and renovations came another summer resident, Miss Annie Fisher who had always been interested in Village activities, but in no department of Village work has her personality and love been more strongly in evidence than in the Village Library. From the very beginning she was the foundation and the life of it, giving not only of her time and money, but passing judgment on each volume, and making and keeping a standard for good reading.

She was especially interested in the children's department and insisted that any child of school age not only be invited to the Library free of charge, but urged to come in and seek the assistance of the librarian in reference to their work.

Miss Fisher's gifts to the Library have been many and given in such a modest way that the Library Committee hardly knew the extent of them. When it became evident from requests from the children that something reliable and up to date was needed, she gladly presented the complete set of The Book of Knowledge. Our feeling today should be one of gratitude and thanksgiving for Miss Fisher's life in our little village.....

The Library grew in size and was a great addition to the Village Hall. In the early 1920's, through the thoughtfulness and generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Quincy Bent, an addition was added, now known as the Reading Room. The beautiful new room has been well used for many Village activities, and has proved to be an ideal place for community meetings and social gatherings. The fireplace--- the red carpeted floor, the many windows with attractive draperies--- all lend an air of warmth and friendship.

It is in the Reading Room that the Library holds its afternoon teas each Monday from November to April. Seated about the tea table, resplendent with silver service and tempting refreshments, are the Library subscribers who gather with friends and neighbors to spend a pleasant hour. Close by are the round children's table and its chairs, where little folk enjoy their small cups of cocoa and cookies.

Here in the Reading Room, for several years until her retirement, Mrs. Charles Pappas presented her Village Kindergarten Christmas Program, open to families and friends of the Kindergarten children. Santa Claus always made an appearance....seated by the fireplace in his armchair, he would greet the little folks and treat them to the contents of his pack. Another Christmas festivity that is held in the Library is the Village Open House on Christmas Eve. Following the carol singing, all are invited to come in for refreshments and mingle and exchange Christmas greetings with neighbors and friends.

For the past few years, the Sewing Circle has held their bi-monthly meeting in the Reading Room. Each meeting day some thirty members gather at one thirty to enjoy an afternoon of work and sociability.

The Village has been fortunate to have had so many dedicated people give of their time to serve as Librarians and as members of the Library Committee. One of the earliest Librarians was Miss Helen Lane, a River Road resident who lived with her brother, Arthur Lane, in the home which is now owned by Dr. Hamer Lacey. Then Mrs. George Ricker became librarian in 1918, shortly before the Reading Room was added. She served for twenty two years, and loved every minute that she was associated with Library work. Miss Mabel Hodgkins then presided at the desk. She lived with her brother Charles and his family on Sunset Hill.

Another faithful woman to take on this position was Doris Norwood, a native of Riverdale who married James Cunningham of Annisquam. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Cunnningham who lived in the old Annisquam Post Office on River Road. Then came Mrs. Wilder Smith, who took over the responsibilities, serving in this capacity for several years. The present Librarian, now in 1979, is Mrs. Henry Juncker, a long time resident of the Village, residing on River Road.

The many Librarians have always been grateful for the dedicated ladies who have assumed the position of Chairwoman of the Library Committee. One of the oldest of these, was Mrs. Eugene Howlett who served in the 1920's with Mrs. Ricker. She lived for many years with her family in the home on Leonard Street now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Russell. Upon the death of Mrs. Howlett, Mrs Irving R. Merriam, a Sunset Hill resident, carried on efficiently in this capacity, and then Mrs. R. Chandler Davis assumed the chair of the Library Committee. Following Mrs. Davis was Mrs. Earle R. Andrews who served for several years and gave much of her time improving the Library. When Mrs. Andrews found it necessary to give up her duties, the Library was fortunate to find Mrs. Robert Lundberg who willing contributed her time and effort to carry on the good work. Now in 1979, Mrs. Hollis French has assumed the chair of the Library Committee, and is carrying on with pride and devotion.

And so the Village Library has grown over the years, and has fulfilled all the hopes and dreams of the fine ladies who were initially the founders of this important part of our Village.

Ruth Ricker Pappas

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