

MEMORIAL GENEALOGICAL LIBRARY, DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

*By Josephine Sperry Hickam**

We are celebrating the twenty-fifth year, the silver anniversary, of the founding of the Genealogical Library of the Oklahoma Daughters of the American Revolution. This beautiful and valuable library is another exemplification of the old adage "Great oaks from little acorns grow."

During the early activities of the writer with Oklahoma City Chapter and as State Regent, she was continually impressed with the fact that Oklahoma had very meager facilities for genealogical research and a consciousness of the large number of women who were seeking membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution. Many of these women were eligible but lacked means of verifying their family records. A solution to this problem would be a library of genealogical books owned by the Daughters of the American Revolution in Oklahoma, to make available the lineage file of members in Oklahoma. Steps were taken to make this dream a reality.

At the State Board meeting held in Ponca City, November 11, 1925, the State Regent presented the need for a library and asked the approval of the Board to launch the project. After a general discussion the Board voted unanimously to endorse the suggestion and approve the creation of a State Genealogical Library. The recommendation that the office of Librarian be added to the list of elective State Officers was made at that Board meeting. It was also voted to contribute \$50.00 from the State Treasury, to be the nucleus of a fund for the State Library, and to invite donations of genealogical books and money. Thus our library was created.

Immediate action was taken to place this information before the State membership. On December 3, 1925 the following resolutions

* A note of appreciation has been received by the Editorial Department from Mrs. Virgil Browne, Honorary State Regent for Oklahoma and Vice President General, National Society of D.A.R., for the publication of the history of the D.A.R. Genealogical Library, in *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*. Mrs. Browne also gave tribute to the writer of this article, Josephine Sperry Hickam (Mrs. Andrew R.), Past Regent of Oklahoma City Chapter and Past State Regent for Oklahoma: "The State Society will ever be indebted to her for her vision in establishing the Genealogical Library and for having published the first lineage records of Oklahoma members. She was also one of the members responsible for securing the Annette Hume Library. One of our first members in years of service, Mrs. Hickam began her work in D.A.R. as Treasurer of Oklahoma City Chapter in 1916. During my term as State Regent she served as State Chairman of the National Building Fund. She loves the work of the D.A.R., and every daughter in Oklahoma loves her."—Ed.

were mailed to all State Chapters, so that final action could be taken at the State Conference to be held at Okmulgee March 18 and 19, 1926:

The executive Board of the Daughters of the American Revolution of Oklahoma present the following resolution and amendments to the By-Laws. (1) That in order to be of more service to our members, we create a State Genealogical Circulating Library and elect a Librarian. (2) We further recommend that Article four, Section one (a) of the By-Laws be changed by striking out the word "and" before the word "Parliamentation" and inserting after the same word the words "and a Librarian" making Section one (a) of Article five to read: The officers of the Oklahoma State Conference shall be a State Regent, a State Vice-Regent, a recording Secretary, a Corresponding Secretary, a Treasurer, a Registrar, an Historian, a Chaplain, a Parliamentarian and a Librarian. (3) We further recommend that Article Five, Section Eight read as follows: The Librarian shall have charge of the Genealogical Circulating Library and other books and shall perform all other duties pertaining to her office.

In the State Regents' *Bulletin* for January 1926, sent to all State Officers, Chapter Regents and Chairman of Committees, was this paragraph: "You will note the suggested change in the State by-laws concerning the creation of the office of Librarian and making it an elective office. Will every Chapter have a part in the successful launching of our State Genealogical Library by donating a book on genealogy?"

In the *Bulletin* for February 1926 telling of the arrangements for the State Conference at Okmulgee, March 18 and 19, 1926 is this paragraph: "Friday morning at 10:30 the book shower for the Circulating Genealogical Library will be held. Either a book on genealogy or a check to pay for one will be most acceptable from both Chapters and members. Two sets of books which have been most highly recommended are Savages *General Dictionary* at \$17.50 per volume and American Ancestry at \$5.00 per volume."

The State Regent made every effort to keep our new project before the Chapters hoping to make a great success of the coming book shower. The State Conference was held in the Hall of Warriors in the old Creek Council House in Okmulgee. It was in this historic room that the hour approached for the announcement of the Book Shower. The splendid response was a great thrill of joy and satisfaction. Those who had gifts of books or money marched down the aisle and deposited them on the table in front of the State Officers. This was the beginning, the inauguration of our book showers which was an annual event at our State Conferences for many years.

The idea of the Circulating Library was to have the books assembled in charge of the Librarian and upon the request of Chapter Regents or Organizing Regents send them out over the state for use in research work. With the acceptance of the Library Resolutions

by the State Conference the Librarian was elected for the first time and her duties were assigned. Also, rules for lending the books were adopted. Up to this time the Librarian had been appointed by the State Regent and her duties had been chiefly to find and send acceptable books to Memorial Continental Hall Library in Washington. Mrs. J. F. Johnston of Muskogee was the Librarian by appointment and gave her first report on the Genealogical Circulating Library at the Okmulgee Conference. Her report follows:

Madam State Regent, Officers and Members of the State Conference: Because your State Regent was so gracious and your Executive Board so generous we have a report to make to you to-day. A letter to each Chapter telling about the Library was sent out with the Regents Bulletin. I want to thank each one of you for your hearty cooperation. Many Chapters wrote sending the name of the book or amount of money to be given. In beginning our Library we have tried to select those books which meet the needs of those interested in genealogical research, particularly those Chapters remote from genealogical libraries. Mr. Frank Wilder of Boston donated the State eleven books on genealogy and he offers to give \$100.00 cash if we will raise \$1,000.00 for this work. These books will arouse interest in family history and what is the history of our nation but the history of its families. We owe it to those who have gone before, who made possible this great nation to record their deeds, that future generations may realize and appreciate.

Mrs. J. F. Johnston, Librarian.

A resolution of thanks was sent from the Conference to Mr. Wilder for his generous gift of books and a letter of regret that we were financially unable to accept the terms of the cash gift.

We have had many interested and capable women to serve as State D. A. R. librarians since the beginning. Each librarian has done her part well adding books and enlarging the Library from year to year. Books have been donated and cash has been contributed by members, chapters and the Oklahoma State Daughters of the American Revolution. The Library was passed from one librarian to the next and kept in the home of the current librarian.

The year 1938 marked a milestone in interest in our State D.A.R. Library. Mrs. Lester B. Gum, of Oklahoma City was elected State Librarian. When she received from Mrs. F. S. Etter of Bartlesville the large number of boxes of books, all numbered with D.A.R. bookplates applied, and insured for \$1250.00 she appealed to her new State Regent, Mrs. Luther Eugene Tomm of Tulsa for help. Mrs. Tomm was deeply interested in the Library, and approved the purchase of a bookcase to house the state books in her home. As the allowance from the board was only \$60.00 she had a bookcase built for the purpose. About this time Oklahoma City Chapter purchased a bookcase to house their books. Mrs. John M. Hill, Chapter Regent, appointed Mrs. John P. Cook, Mrs. Virgil Browne and Mrs. Andrew R. Hickam to make the selection and purchase. Tulsa Chapter, Okemah Chapter, and Bartlesville made a like provision for their chapter books.

At the 1948 Annual State D.A.R. Conference in Enid, Mrs. Virgil Browne, State Chairman of Genealogical Records, presented a resolution that was endorsed by the conference, requesting all chapters of the State Society to write the records of the achievements and history of their chapters from the beginning and "to gather and edit for preservation family records such as wills, Bible Records, Family Histories, Old Cemetery Records, Church Registers of early dates, vital statistics of early county records all to be copied by chapter members, and sent to the State Chairman of Genealogical Records to be placed" in the Library of the Oklahoma Historical Society. At this time Mrs. Virgil Browne organized The State Coalition of Patriotic Societies, whose object was to find and file all source material possible with the Oklahoma Historical Society and to celebrate annually, February 22nd. The State D.A.R. was one of the twenty Societies in membership. Five members from the board represented the Oklahoma Historical Society.

As the D.A.R. library grew and expanded, keeping the library books in the home became an unsatisfactory and increasingly burdensome method of caring for the volumes, so when the State Historical Society offered us space for our several bookcases, Mrs. Gum accepted the opportunity and in her report for 1938, very modestly states, "The State Historical Society has given space to the Daughters of the American Revolution to place the State Library in the Historical Building." Mrs. Gum further stated, "The many requests for many books by members and prospective members indicate that the interest for acquiring a greater knowledge of their ancestry is increasing."¹

The Library continued to enlarge and soon more space was needed. The State D.A.R. Board provided a bookcase to take care of the great increase of books. Mrs. John P. Cook, of Oklahoma City was State D.A.R. Librarian, 1943-46 she enthusiastically assumed her duties sending out the request to all chapters, "Let us have one of the best genealogical libraries in the Southwest." The response was most gratifying. The first year, chapters subscribed \$144.50 in books. The two following years, \$425.50 and \$264.59. The Oklahoma City Chapter valued its library at \$365.59; this was added as a section to the State Library, making for this administration an increase of \$1200.09, approximately doubling the value of the library. Many volumes were secured and again there was no space for added books and no bookcases available.

When Mrs. Cook called upon Mrs. Virgil Browne, Regent of Oklahoma City Chapter to secure a new bookcase, they faced a problem for we could not continue adding small bookcases and placing them

¹ The lineage papers were compiled and published in book form in 1926, and can be found in the library. Looking back through the years this project has proven well worth while.

around the walls of the Library reading room in the Oklahoma Historical Society. It was at this point that Mrs. Browne conceived the idea of building permanent bookcases for the D.A.R. collections. She consulted with Judge Robert L. Williams, President of the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Historical Society, to learn if he would approve the plan whereby the Daughters of the American Revolution might build colonial bookcases across the entire west wall of the Historical Society's Library reading room. He was very pleased that our organization was interested in such a project and invited Mrs. Browne to appear before the Board of Directors of the Historical Society to explain to the members what the State D.A.R. would like to do. The Board was unanimous in granting approval of this project giving a rising vote of thanks. She particularly wanted the bookcases to be colonial, with thirteen panes of glass in each door, and made from the same beautiful mahogany as that already used in the room of the Historical Society Reading room. George Forsythe, architect of the Historical Building was solicited to draw the plans and he did so without cost to us.

We could not have built the bookcases had it not been for our friends. We enlisted the interest of the State Board of Affairs, and were given permission to have them made at the State Penitentiary for cost of labor, material, and transportation. We are deeply indebted to Mr. Virgil Browne, who was Chairman of the State Board of Affairs at that time for his courtesy and co-operation in permitting this work to be done.

The bookcases were to be thirty-five feet in length and as the State organization of Daughters of the American Revolution had thirty-five chapters, Mrs. Browne suggested that each Chapter pay for one foot, or get twelve people to contribute \$5.00 each as a Memorial either for men or women in the service of our Country, or for members of the Daughters of the American Revolution who have served their organization with especial honor. It was estimated that the cost would be \$60.00 a foot or \$5.00 per inch. The plan of financing worked so well and Mrs. Browne was successful in getting so much of the work donated or at cost that there was a surplus amounting to \$1,600.00. This fund is being used to purchase additional books.

A Colonial mahogany plaque hangs on either side of the bookcases with the bronze insignia of the Daughters of the American Revolution. One plaque holds bronze plates with the names of related members who served in the Armed Forces, the other one the names of honored members of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Mrs. Browne interested Mr. Louis Macklanburg, one of Oklahoma City's most patriotic citizens, in the D.A.R. library project,

and he offered to make and contribute the plaques and the bronze plates on which the names were to be inscribed. The names were engraved without charge by students in the engraving department at the Vocational Rehabilitation School (G.I.), at Okmulgee, which is a branch of Oklahoma A. and M. College. This was through the courtesy of the superintendent, Mr. Keith Carvelle.

Tulsa Chapter, whose enthusiastic Regent, Mrs. Luther E. Tomm, was formerly State Regent and Librarian General, gave the ladder or steps that make all books accessible. This is a beautiful and useful gift from Tulsa Chapter on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Memorial Genealogical Library.

The building of these bookcases is a splendid achievement for which every member of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Oklahoma will always be grateful to Mrs. Browne. The bookcases stand as a living memorial to her foresight in initiating the plan and seeing it through to its final completion during her term as State Librarian.

As State Regent, she appointed Mrs. John P. Cook and Mrs. Frank Sewell to compile a second catalogue of the books in the Library. The first one made by Mrs. Browne has become obsolete for many volumes have been acquired by the Library since it was issued.

Having adequate space to display properly our growing library has been a great incentive for increased contributions. The purchase of the Annette Ross Hume Genealogical Library by Oklahoma City Chapter and its presentation to the D.A.R. State Library is an acquisition of inestimable worth. The following is taken from the report of our State Librarian, Mrs. Henry D. Rinland:

"The presentation of the Hume Library was a magnificent gift from Oklahoma City Chapter to the State Genealogical D.A.R. Library. The Chapter Librarian, Mrs. John P. Cook writes, 'Special credit for this acquisition is due our Chapter Regent, Mrs. Earl Foster, Honorary State Regent and Chairman of the State D.A.R. Library Board, Mrs. Andrew R. Hickam, and our immediate past State Librarian who is now State Regent, Mrs. Virgil Browne.'

"This fine collection of more than five hundred volumes of bound and unbound genealogical books and papers were assembled by Mrs. Annette Ross Hume of Anadarko, Oklahoma. She was a prominent member of the Oklahoma Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, and her hobby was collecting genealogical source material. Through her efforts many members were added to the rolls of the State Society. Mr. Ross Hume, her son valued his mother's collection of books at \$2,500.00; and offered them to us because his mother would be pleased to have them housed permanently in our beautiful colonial bookcases in the State Historical Society Building."

The dedication of the completed bookcases was held during the State D.A.R. Conference in March, 1947. On February 23, 1950,

appropriate dedication ceremonies were held for the Annette Ross Hume Library and other recent addition of books to the State genealogical Library as well as the memorial plaques. This was during the State Conference and there was a distinguished group present. Mrs. Virgil Browne, State Regent presided. Miss Helen McMakin, Librarian General, gave a talk on the usefulness, benefits and value of such a library, and Mrs. Roscoe C. O'Byrne, President General of the National Society, D.A.R. gave the dedicatory address.

The State Board that voted to create the State Genealogical Circulating Library was composed of the following members of the D.A.R.: State Regent, Mrs. Andrew R. Hickam, Oklahoma City; Vice Regent, Mrs. W. F. Wiker, Ponca City; Recording Secretary, Mrs. C. E. B. Cutler, Okmulgee Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. J. Enoch Piersol, Oklahoma City; Treasurer, Mrs. Fred G. Neff, Oklahoma City; Registrar, Mrs. C. L. Beatty, Blackwell; Historian, Mrs. Carl Kruse, Enid; Chaplain, Mrs. L. N. McCash, Enid; Parliamentarian, Mrs. E. F. Walsh, Bartlesville.²

At this time, little did this group visualize that the Library would expand to its present size and worth in twenty-five years. It now contains more than 2,000 books and pamphlets, with an estimated value of more than \$8,000.00. These volumes are instruments to assist in the perpetuation of our great patriotic Society, the Daughters of the American Revolution.

In the years that have passed since that memorable day, November 11, 1925, when the Library was officially inaugurated our members have become more and more library conscious. It has been the interest and enthusiasm shown all over the state that has brought the Library to its present proportions. Every Chapter can not make a gift like the Annette Ross Hume Library, but every Chapter and every member who has had a part in the success of this fine accomplishment is to be congratulated. May all of those who have not had a part in building this splendid memorial be fired with enthusiasm and determine now to do all in their power to add worthwhile books to the shelves and make this the finest genealogical library collection in the Southwest.

²The names and the dates of the terms of office of successive librarians are: Mrs. J. F. Johnston, Muskogee, 1925-1927; Mrs. Frank Hamilton Marshall, Enid, 1927-1929; Mrs. C. R. Richards, Tulsa, 1929-1931; Mrs. D. A. Hughes, Oklahoma City, 1931-1933; Mrs. F. S. Etter, Bartlesville, 1933-1937; Mrs. Lester B. Gum, Oklahoma City, 1937-1940; Mrs. J. P. Curtright, Shawnee, 1940-1943; Mrs. John P. Cook, Oklahoma City, 1943-1946; Mrs. Virgil Browne, Oklahoma City, 1946-1948; Mrs. Henry D. Rinsland, Norman, 1948-1950-1951.