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A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE ACTIVITIES  
OF THE CONNECTICUT STATE  
LIBRARY, HARTFORD

BY GEORGE SEYMOUR GODARD

THE Connecticut State Library, like practically all the state libraries of the older states, had its foundation in the miscellaneous collection of books and other material which had gradually accumulated in the offices of the several state officials from the beginning. These volumes consisted principally of books purchased to meet temporary official necessities, or which had been presented by sister states, foreign governments, or individuals. Until they had been gathered together, arranged, and some one official made responsible for their completeness and safety, they were of very little service to the public.

In May, 1854, the General Assembly provided for the appointment of such a State Librarian and the miscellaneous collection of books belonging to the state, which had been thus accumulated in the office of the Secretary of State, was placed in the custody of this new official. During the seventy-six years which have elapsed since 1854, Connecticut has had but three State Librarians; viz., Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull, who served one year, when he resigned to go to Europe; Dr. Charles J. Hoadly, who served from September, 1855, until his death, October, 1900, a period of forty-five years; and the present State Librarian, George Seymour Godard, who came to the State Library August 1, 1898, as assistant, and who was appointed State Librarian November 28, 1900, a period of thirty years on July 31, 1928.

From its rooms in the historic State House on Main Street, now the old City Hall, recently so beautifully restored, the

Reprinted from  
*Essays Offered to Herbert Putnam*  
By William Warner Bishop and Andrew Keogh  
Published by Yale University Press



library was moved to larger and more convenient quarters in the new Capitol in 1878, where it remained until the completion of its new home in our State Library and Supreme Court Building, to which it transferred its activities November 28, 1910, my tenth anniversary.

The Connecticut State Library is especially fortunate, being central in its location, housed in a building substantially built, beautiful in its architecture, convenient in its arrangement, harmonious in its decorations, and homelike. It is, to paraphrase the words of another, a library by the people, of the people, and for the people.

From time to time as required, new departments have been added and the scope of its activities has been increased. With the other libraries in Hartford it forms a university system.

To the judge and attorney the Connecticut State Library is the Law Library of the state, commendably complete in its several lines, including Australian, Canadian, European, Indian, and South African laws, reports, and periodicals in English.

To the legislator and man of public affairs it is a Legislative Reference Library, in which he can, at his own convenience and in his own way, study easily, intelligently, and fully, not only the trend of legislation both at home and abroad and learn something of the reasons for and against the several movements, but he can also ascertain there the contents and daily status of each bill in his own legislature.

To the town clerk and judge of probate the Connecticut State Library is a possible, convenient, desirable, and safe depository for records, files, and papers not in current use. This Department of Public Records as used and enlarged by the public officials of our state, counties, towns, churches, schools, and other official districts within its borders has become one of the most important and accessible collections in our State Library.



Through our Examiner of Public Records, the Connecticut State Library is a source of intelligent assistance, which is theirs for the asking, in matters pertaining to paper, ink, typewriter ribbons, binding, repairing, indexing, and caring for those records and files which must be retained in their several offices, and to safes and vaults in which to protect them.

To the state officer and commissioner our State Library is the place where he can find at any time the reports of his own department and similar departments in other states, and a place where he can deposit any special reports, records, or other material which may come to him, or which he may care to have in a place of safety, and at all reasonable times have accessible to him and to those who have a right to use them.

To the selectman and town treasurer our State Library is the place where they are confident they can find a commendably complete file of the financial reports of their own towns and neighboring towns which are so often lacking at home.

To the World War Veterans our State Library is the Department of War Records established by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1919, to collect, classify, index, and install all available material relating to Connecticut's participation, public or private, in the World War. Here the records of the activities and services of individuals, in their own words, and of organizations, cities, towns, counties, and the state, officially—overseas and at home—all on uniform blanks, are being assembled for the benefit of our children and their children.

To the civilian war worker our State Library is the depository of the records and files of the Connecticut Draft Executive, the State Council of Defense, the State Agricultural, Industrial, and Military censuses, and the reports and returns

of war activities from the several cities and towns, and the many organizations interested in war work throughout the state.

To the members of the Military Order of Foreign Wars, and of the First Company Governor's Foot Guard and First Company Governor's Horse Guard, "Company K," City Guard, the Daughters of 1812, and other similar organizations and societies our State Library is the permanent home of the historical collections assembled by their members and friends.

To the civil engineer and surveyor our State Library is not only a source of supply of topographical maps of the state as it is today, but the depository of the official copy of the drawings and specifications for all dams and waterways approved by the State Board of Civil Engineers, and the repository of records showing the layout of many counties, towns, school districts, ecclesiastical societies, highways, etc., as they now are or used to be.

To the members of the Connecticut Geological and Natural History Survey and those interested along these lines, our State Library is the distributing and exchange agency for the several publications of the Commission.

To the minister of our older churches our State Library is a mine of wealth concerning many things which relate to the information, life, and activities of the several churches in Connecticut in the days of our fathers.

To the genealogist and descendants of Colonial and Revolutionary ancestry our large collection of official records consisting of muster rolls, pay rolls, lists, receipts, probate files and court records and files, and miscellaneous manuscripts, made available by minute indexes, the Barbour Collection of Connecticut Vital Records—the names in each town arranged alphabetically—supplemented by our collection of genealogies and local histories, is the one department thought of.

To the members of the Connecticut Society of Colonial Dames the Connecticut State Library is the home of that unique collection of manuscript histories relating to the early homes of our fathers in Connecticut which is being compiled by this society under the direction of a special committee.

The student of political economy and government is attracted by our large collection of public documents of our own state, the sister states, the United States, and the Dominions of Canada, Australia, and their several provinces, arranged in long series, easily accessible.

The inventor and prospective patentee thinks only of our long sets of patent reports and certified copies of specifications and drawings of patents, always at his service.

The pupils of our public schools think of the State Library as the home of the Old Charter—of Charter Oak fame—the Stuart portrait of Washington, the Riley portrait of Charles II, the portraits of our several governors, and the place where they can see the table on which President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, the Silver Service from the battleship *Connecticut*, and so many other things of interest to them connected with the history of our own state and the general Government.

The numismatist has formed his idea of our State Library through that remarkable collection of coins, currency, medals, tokens, and associated books, recently presented to the state by one of her sons, the late Joseph C. Mitchelson of Tariffville, Connecticut, and Kansas City, Missouri.

To the tourist and professional traveler the Connecticut State Library is simply a beautiful, new building, which, having been planned from the inside out as well as from the outside in, and having been built upon honor and for time, is acknowledged to be a model of its kind.

To the several state libraries of our own country and governmental libraries of Europe, the Connecticut State Li-

brary is looked upon as the exchange medium with the State of Connecticut, through which they receive promptly the official publications of the state, and in which may be found the several official publications sent in return.

To the sons and daughters of Connecticut, who have inherited or accumulated manuscripts and records which they have held almost sacred, the Connecticut State Library is regarded as a most fitting depository for these private collections of official and semi-official papers, which have to do with the early life and activities of the state and its several families.

To the members of the Massachusetts Historical Society the Connecticut State Library is the new home of the Trumbull Papers closely identified with the early history of the colony and state of Connecticut, voluntarily returned by the society, September 17, 1921, after having had them one hundred and twenty-six years: thus marking a new epoch in the care and custody of official records, and recognizing the provisions Connecticut has made for the care and use of such records.

To the librarian and his staff the Connecticut State Library is a group of departments, housed in a model building, with interested and competent assistants, whose aim and purpose is to serve intelligently, promptly, and courteously, not only the inquirers of our own generation, but, so far as possible, also, those who are to follow.

The preceding, I imagine, are some of the ideas which have become clustered about the name of the "Connecticut State Library," and may we not say that all of them are right, simply looking at the Connecticut State Library from their own point of view, and thinking along the lines in which they are specially interested.





