

Hollis Social Library Building Dedication at Old Home Day

August 24, 1910 - Hollis, New Hampshire

An idle library is no better than any other idler. It must be made to pay. This can be only by the intelligent and constant use. At the risk of utterances which may be called trite and obvious, I would with diffidence refer to the use of books. It is summed up in a word, "Read the best." Debased currency drives from the country all its gold. The illustration may not be apt, but it is no less true that the love of good reading leaves no room, no desire, for that which is without merit. By this I would not be understood to mean that only sober, serious books are all that is good reading. History and ethics and science are good reading. But the flashes of wit and humor, the play of fancy, the well-told story and the strains of eloquence and poetry are as certainly within the definition of the term. And as the vast majority of those who have peopled this earth are dead, so those who have in some form or fashion said the best things, the wisest things, the most interesting, encouraging and uplifting things are dead and their books live after them for us. The weariness of the body, the perplexity of the mind, nay, the sorrows that lie heavy on the soul itself, are lessened and lightened by the labors of those who have written themselves in books. Let no man be cast down that this opportunities for reading are not ample. It is reading much and not reading many things that educates. When the wise man of old was asked how best a man could become learned he replied, "By reading one book." "Beware of the man of one book" is the wisdom of the ages. That five feet of well-chosen books may be a liberal education is the deliberate statement of a renowned teacher.



LOOKING TOWARD HOLLIS COMMON FROM MAIN STREET

The thorough use of a few good books is not incompatible with toil. If any doubt it, [Robert] Burns with his sickle, Hugh Miller the stone mason, Elihu Burritt at his forge, Franklin at his press, and Lincoln on the farm and in the store bear conclusive witness.

Those who were the founders of our library, those who in long succession have cherished it for more than a century, and those who now at length have raised this fine structure for a greater usefulness, have been a reading people. Their standards in life as in letters have been independent, liberal and enlightened.

This structure may decay, but we are sure that other hands in other times will come to its rebuilding.

To the rational enjoyment, to the broader education and to the greater happiness of the people, then, we dedicate this library today. May it teach anew and more fervently the lessons of patriotism, good citizenship and respect for law in the age of unrest and change. May there ever be a continuation of its refinancing and uplifting influence reaching we may not dream how far.

At the conclusion of Mr. Proctor's address, Mr. Worcester, who was chairman of the building committee, in a few well-chosen words presented the keys of the building to Mr. Burbee, chairman of the board of selectmen, who accepted them on behalf of the town, saying that the thanks of the people of

Hollis, young and old, were due the committee, and especially the chairman, who had given not only of his time and money, but had worked with his own hands without compensation.

After the exercises in the church, a band concert was given on the common. A banquet was served in the town hall by Caterer Paige of Lowell, Mass., at which plates were laid for 400, the capacity of the hall and many more sat at tables spread in the church vestry.

Andrew H. Spaulding, president of the Old Home association, presided at the post prandial exercises and after an invocation by the Rev. Charles H. Davis, delivered a short address of welcome, after which he presented the Rev. Mr. Davis, who acted as toastmaster. Mr. Davis first called upon Thomas W. Proctor, who spoke briefly and humorously of some of the incidents of the past.

Mr. Proctor was followed by Miss Abbie Flagg, whose address was one of the gems of the after-dinner exercises and who said:

Miss Flagg's Address

The Scotch, who have given us so much in many ways, have a little saying which runs something like this. "East, west, home's the best." That, I am sure, is the feeling uppermost with all of us today, whether our mother town is the place of our birth, and early days, or the home of our adoption; whether we have elected to make it the scene of our life work or whether we have stepped aside a little from our work in some other center to come back to Hollis.

Some of us are sure in early youth that we are so differently constituted from the older people among whom we live that we are entirely free from this ingrained turning to the things of childhood; but time, which [...] shows us sooner or later that in that point, as in many others we are all akin. The dedication of the Powers stone this morning is an instance of the growing interest and pride which we are coming to take in our own ancestry and in the history of our town. Some short-sighted people look on this interest as foolishness, advising instead an increased enthusiasm for descendants.

But how about us poor unfortunates, and there are so many in Hollis, who have no descendants? What are we to do? Our friends seem strangely to resent our well-meant and really valuable advice as to the bringing up of their descendants.

Our ancestors are at least our own; our efforts in their direction cannot harm them greatly, and they are defenseless. So, I am sure we may safely continue the study of the past of our town and of the sturdy husbandmen to whom most of us owe what we are today.

The particular word that I have at this time is to those of our number who have left Hollis to settle in other places, and whose love for the old home and the old friends has brought them back today. You cannot quite know what it means to those whose homes are here to have you join us today.

Life in a farming community no farther removed from the great centers of activity than this, is not the somewhat monotonous existence that it may once have been. Ours is a farming town, and we want it to remain such. Putting an ordinary factory into Hollis would be like interjecting a ragtime melody into a pastoral; but yet if we would have the homely wits of home-keeping youth, we need all of the outside world you bring us, and we want you for that day.

If you are agriculturally inclined we need you back on the old farm or one near it, apply the knowledge of soils and crops which you have learned elsewhere.

We are ready for new ideas and eager to receive them from you. Or, if on the other hand you have no need of following any line of business, but to make a quiet home among us, we shall welcome you almost as gladly, and possibly more unquestioningly.

There are those doubting Thomases among us who shake their heads at the probability of anyone amassing a great fortune from a Hollis farm but we are all ready to help you spend your fortune and to spend it so quietly, so restfully, so beautifully, that it will seem to bring you twice the enjoyment that it ever did before.

We want you to come home to live, to be of us and to help us, as you can so largely, to make of our town the ideal community we would see it become. But, only a few of you can do that we know, a few have, and they do not realize how welcome they are.

We have room for others. If you come we will do you good, and we need you. If you cannot settle among us permanently, half a loaf or even a quarter is better than none at all. Come to us for a whole, or a part of your vacation season. Cranford has its inn now and there are still some empty houses, there are plenty of sites where bungalows could be placed, and where you could rest, the world forgetting even if not by the world forgot.

We need you in whatever way you come. We need you financially, we need you intellectually, we need you socially, and we need you most of all for encouragements, friendship and inspiration.

We are all children of the old town; some of us spend most of our lives here; some are here for the most part in spirit only, but so long as Hollis is our Jerusalem indeed, dear to us beyond any other place, and its growth and improvement the object of the earnest effort and untiring enthusiasm of all of us, so long it will continue to be to future generations the cherished mother it is today to all its sons and daughters.

The toastmaster next called upon H. O. Hadley, past master of the State grange, who said among other things that he wanted to say something of the serious side of "Old Home Day" that "We want people to come back, to enjoy renewing old friendships, but we want them to realize, too, their advantages." Mr. Hadley spoke of the advantages of farm life and of the possibilities of New Hampshire as a fruit raising state, and told of some of the methods employed in other parts of the country.

Miss Bertha Coburn was the next speaker, who spoke briefly, saying that the time has come when the young man in the country may enter the social life, or if he chose, public life, and compares his life with that of the professional man who often was obliged to work nights and Sundays, and of the doctor who worked all the time.

William O. Adams of Boston spoke feelingly of the old town, and said that he came back to Hollis as he came to a shrine; that he found no such pure examples of a New England town and friendship as the friendships formed there; that he counted them among the best things in his life, and said that he hoped that nothing would happen to destroy the splendid democracy that has always existed in the old town of Hollis.

Frederick A. Hubbard, who followed, spoke feelingly of the death of Judge Frank Worcester, and said that he felt that he and all of the sons and daughters of Hollis had lost their best friend. He said, "You knew him, you saw him in the early spring sitting under the magnificent elms where he romped in his boyhood days, and but a few days ago he was brought back—and I ask you all to rise and stand for a moment in silence in memory of Judge Frank Worcester."

The remainder of the afternoon was passed in renewing old friendships and in listening to the band concerts.

The above article was written for the Manchester Union by one of its editors, Alfred F. Eaton, a former resident of Hollis, and used by permission of the Union.