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The history of public library service to Negroes in Little Rock, Arkansas, 1917-1951

Rosebud Harris Tillman

Atlanta University

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THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE
TO NEGROES IN LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS,
1917-1951

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE IN LIBRARY SERVICE

BY
ROSEBUD HARRIS TILLMAN

SCHOOL OF LIBRARY SERVICE

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
JUNE, 1953
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The history of public library service for Negroes in Little Rock, Arkansas covers a period of thirty-five years, thirty-four of which were characterized by completely segregated services. Segregation has been the general social pattern for southern states and therefore has been adhered to in the libraries of the south, with Little Rock as no exception.

The history of public library service to Negroes in the south exhibits itself in three general stages: (1) a stage in which library facilities were conceived and planned for white people only; (2) a stage in which public obligation to extend library service to Negroes was recognized by giving limited and segregated facilities to them; and (3) the beginning of a period in scattered portions of the south in which there is a limited integration of library service to white and colored citizens.

The main library in Little Rock was founded in 1867 as a mercantile library. In 1913 it received financial aid for the expansion of its program from the Carnegie Corporation of New York which was at that time using its funds for the development of public libraries. The library served only white citizens until 1917 when a small branch was established for Negroes. In 1951 after a period of thirty-four years of segregated library service, the main public library was made available to
Negroes, with the exception that children and young people under sixteen years of age or who have completed only the sixth grade in school are not permitted to use the library. They may use only the Negro branch.

**Purpose of Study**

The purposes of this study on the history of public library service for Negroes in Little Rock, Arkansas are:

First, to trace historically the facts relating to the development of public library service to Negroes in the City of Little Rock.

Second, to isolate as far as possible the events and factors determining the recent integration of library services in Little Rock in 1951, and to evaluate as far as possible the form which this integration has taken.

And third, to make some practical recommendations for extension and improvement of public library service to Negroes in Little Rock.

**Importance of Study**

It is generally conceded that good library service is a valuable adjunct to the progress of a community. It is therefore very important to make studies of the development of such services. No comprehensive survey of public library service for Negroes has been made in Little Rock before this one, and the present attempt will give data relative to the problems of general development of library services to Negroes in the south when studied in connection with Miss Barbara Mamie Adkins' thesis on "A History of Public Library Service to Negroes in
Methodology

The historical method was used in making this study because it is concerned with the history of library service to Negroes in Little Rock and the problems encountered in developing this library service. The procedure followed was: first, to interview long-time residents of Little Rock; second, to visit the State Library Commission, the Little Rock Public Library, and the State Department of Education of Arkansas for published information, pamphlets or clippings; third, to obtain permission from the Arkansas State Library Commission to make the survey; and fourth, to clear the survey with any other agencies designated by the Commission. Permission to make the survey was granted and cooperation assured. Very little information, however, was available at any of these agencies except the Little Rock Public Library. Interviews with long-time residents revealed information on locations, personnel and approximate date of opening for the Negro branch. Mr. Ed McCuistion, Director of Negro Education for the Arkansas State Department of Education, stated that as far as he knew no documents or printed materials had been issued in Little Rock concerning Negro public library service.

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2Ed McCuistion, Personal Interview, August 30, 1951.
Sources of Data

The chief sources of data are: the two daily papers of Little Rock—the Arkansas Democrat and the Arkansas Gazette; the State Press, a Negro weekly; the Library Scrapbook, a scrapbook of information on the history of the library service compiled and kept at the main library; correspondence connected with the early history of the main library building and branch for the Negroes; interviews with living persons who were participants in the movement to get library service for Negroes in Little Rock or who had a first-hand knowledge of participants, including the Negro librarians and their relatives; the 1939 recreation survey1 of Little Rock and the 19412 and 19463 Negro Community surveys of Little Rock, which contain brief surveys of library service to Negroes and a statement of some needs and recommendations. The Constitution of the State of Arkansas with all amendments up to 1951 was consulted.

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CHAPTER II

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Little Rock, so-named by Bernard de la Harpe, French explorer in 1722, because of a comparatively small rock outcropping on the south side of the Arkansas river which contrasted with a larger outcropping on the north bank, is the largest city of Arkansas and is located near the geographic center of the state, a bit to the northeast. Formerly it consisted of territory on both sides of the river, but in 1903, the section north of the river became an independent municipality now known as North Little Rock. It is said that the peculiar rock formations of Little Rock indicate the presence of undrilled oil. Little Rock, the capitol of Arkansas, is the political and commercial center of the state.¹

Population

This city has grown from a mere trading post in 1722 to a metropolis with a population of 102,213 at the 1950 Census. Of this number approximately a fourth or 23,517 are Negroes. The white population has more than doubled since 1910 with an increase of more than 122 per cent. During the same period the Negro population increased only a little more than 61 per cent (see Table 1). One of the reasons stated by practically all

surveyors of local conditions for the lower rate of increase of the Negro population is that the lower economic status coupled with inferior health conditions and sanitation facilities results in higher death and emigration rates.

**TABLE 1**

POPULATION TRENDS IN LITTLE ROCK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Negro Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>45,941</td>
<td>14,539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>65,142</td>
<td>17,477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>81,679</td>
<td>19,698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>88,039</td>
<td>22,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950(^b)</td>
<td>102,213</td>
<td>23,517</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Economic Conditions

The economic status of the white group as compared with the Negro group may be seen by contrasting the incomes and occupations of the two groups (see Tables 2 and 3). Data concerning incomes and occupations are given in the census of 1950 by white and non-white. However, the non-white group is composed
of 23,559 persons\textsuperscript{1} of whom 23,517 are Negroes.\textsuperscript{2} The per cent of non-whites who are not Negroes is so small that it is negligible, and for all practical purposes a non-white person in Little Rock may be considered a Negro.

The non-white, or Negro, group constitutes approximately a fourth of the population of Little Rock and bares a ratio to the whites of one to three. But the proportion of white families and unrelated individuals earning less than $500 is only two to one (see Table 2). Negro families and unrelated individuals constitute a third of the group in the two classes earning $1000 to $1999, the normal proportion drops to approximately one-fourth. In the salary groups above $2500, the Negro proportion ranges progressively from one-sixth down to nothing in the $10,000 and over group. The higher the salary range, the fewer the number of Negroes. The downward trend of the incomes of Negroes as compared with the incomes of whites shows conclusively that the economic condition of the Negro group is not as good as that of the white. People in low income groups are likely to have fewer leisure-time activities than people in the high income groups. Accordingly the comparatively low income of the Negro combined with the lack of recreational facilities, including reading materials tends to limit his cultural outlook.


TABLE 2

INCOMES OF FAMILIES AND UNRELATED INDIVIDUALS
OF LITTLE ROCK BY RACE, 1949

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incomes</th>
<th>Number of Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$ 0-$ 499</td>
<td>5,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500- 999</td>
<td>3,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000- 1,499</td>
<td>3,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,500- 1,999</td>
<td>3,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000- 2,499</td>
<td>3,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,500- 2,999</td>
<td>2,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,000- 3,499</td>
<td>3,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,500- 3,999</td>
<td>2,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,000- 4,499</td>
<td>1,975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,500- 4,999</td>
<td>1,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000- 5,499</td>
<td>2,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6,000- 6,499</td>
<td>1,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7,000- 9,999</td>
<td>1,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 and over</td>
<td>1,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income not reported for</td>
<td>1,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total..........</td>
<td>38,060</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Groups</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Non-White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional, Technical and Kindred</td>
<td>5,114</td>
<td>537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers and Farm Managers</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers, Officials, Proprietors, except Farms</td>
<td>5,423</td>
<td>797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical and Kindred Workers</td>
<td>8,167</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Workers</td>
<td>4,703</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen, Foremen and Kindred</td>
<td>4,821</td>
<td>627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operatives and Kindred Workers</td>
<td>5,803</td>
<td>1,825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Household Workers</td>
<td>2,288</td>
<td>1,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Workers except Private Household</td>
<td>4,926</td>
<td>2,504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Laborers, Unpaid Family Workers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers, except Farm and Mine</td>
<td>2,095</td>
<td>1,478</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


According to Table 3, the largest number of Negroes are employed in the occupations which are physically the least desirable. The Negro, who constitutes one-fourth of the population, has far more than one-fourth of the common labor jobs, but he is low on the scale in the clerical, sales, crafts, managerial and professional groups. The Negro public tends to patronize many of its professional and business men. At present and for the most part, most Negro doctors, lawyers,
dentists, ministers, and small business men in Little Rock serve Negroes only. The large number of Negro teachers is due to the large number of Negro schools. In Little Rock as in many other places, Negro library employment is limited to branches located in Negro neighborhoods.

Business and Industry

Seven banks and five insurance companies are among the white businesses of Little Rock. The City is also the headquarters of several insurance concerns. It has a well-developed business section and a residential section of which it is proud.

Negro business was once greater in Little Rock than it is now. At present Negroes own four office buildings which are occupied by Negro professional and business men. They own and operate a variety of small businesses such as undertaking establishments, grocery stores, barbershops, drug stores, insurance company offices, restaurants, cafes, and beauty parlors. Negroes are primarily in service jobs in private household work as operative and kindred workers. The best paying vocations for Negroes include law, medicine, teaching, barber and beauty work, promotion of commercial recreation; employment in menial capacities in white business and industry, postal employment and skilled and semi-skilled work in the public service of the city.

Education

Educational facilities of the City include public, private, and special schools. Negroes and whites attend separate
schools. At the secondary level, there is one large senior-high school, three junior-high schools and a technical high school for white children. There is one high school building for Negroes accommodating senior-high, junior-high, trade, and adult educational programs for veterans.

For white children at the elementary level there are seventeen schools. For Negro children at the elementary level, there are seven schools.¹ A recent building and modernizing program in the system has eliminated one small Negro school, replaced three others with larger and better buildings, and a fourth new building has been started.

On the level of higher education in Little Rock, besides branches of the State University, there is the white junior college. Recent court trials elsewhere in the nation involving Negro attendance in white universities have resulted in the University of Arkansas voluntarily opening its doors to Negroes. Negro students have been admitted to the medical and law schools of the University, to summer sessions of the Graduate School, and to graduate classes of the Extension School.

There are three Negro colleges in Little Rock. One of these, Philander Smith College, a private college, was recently accredited by the North Central Association. Another private college, Arkansas Baptist College, does senior college work but holds junior college rating from the State Department of Educa-

tion. Dunbar Junior College for Negroes is operated by the City but is partially supported by tuition fees.

Other educational institutions for Negroes in Little Rock include state-supported schools for the blind and deaf, a privately-supported business college, and a parochial school.

**Cultural and Social Facilities**

Little Rock has a museum of natural history and antiquities, a museum of fine arts, a municipal golf course, a municipal zoo, and 396 acres of municipally-owned parks inside the City limits. These facilities include a city swimming pool for whites. The white Boy's Club and the white Y.M.C.A. own completely-equipped buildings in downtown locations. The Little Rock Public Library is an imposing stone structure in a downtown location with a recently-completed annex.

Negro recreational and cultural facilities are somewhat meager by comparison. City limits are being extended to include 497 acres of wooded area southwest of the city as a Negro park, and a small swimming pool has been built on this site. A few years ago a bond issue of $359,000 was voted for the development of Negro recreational facilities, but the only definite results to date constitute the swimming pool in the Granite Mountain area just mentioned. A community center is planned. There are comparatively no parks and playgrounds for Negroes in the regular City limits. Small Y.W.C.A. and Y.M.C.A. buildings are supported by the Community Chest. A branch of the Urban League which has a limited recreational program has similar support. Of comparatively recent emphasis are the colored Boy
and Girl Scouts. There is one Negro moving picture theater, and Negroes are admitted to five of those for whites. Negroes have access to the Fair Park Stadium and City Auditorium when these are not in use by white concerns.

Of the ten hospitals in the City, one is a Veterans Hospital, one is a state institution, one county, and one for children. The 1946 Negro Community Survey\(^1\) devoted fourteen pages to a description of nine of these and a general statement of health conditions. The tenth, a Veterans Hospital, had not been built at the time of that survey. The Veterans Hospital, the Baptist State Hospital, the Missouri Pacific Hospital, The University of Arkansas Medical School Hospital, and the Pulaski County Hospital make provision for Negro patients but not for Negro doctors. There are two Negro hospitals, the Lena Jordan and the United Friends. Of these, the United Friends renders more general service, but both were severely criticized in the Survey. All these hospitals serve both the Negroes of the state and of the City and according to the Survey are inadequate for the dual purpose.\(^2\) There is no provision for the training of Negro nurses.

Surveys of housing, education, recreation and general conditions have noted and emphasized racial inequalities in Little Rock.\(^3\) The movement toward integration in education and


\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)U. S. Work Projects Administration, Arkansas. *Real Property Survey and Low Income Housing Area Survey* (Little Rock,
more adequate facilities in recreation has been paralleled by more recognition for Negroes in their voting and running for office. Negroes have been admitted to the democratic primary. A Negro ran for alderman and another for the school board. Both were defeated, but the elections were held without incident.

Library Facilities

Until recently, reading facilities for Negroes were limited mainly to inadequate libraries at the Negro high school, and the Negro colleges. For the last thirty-five years a small public library branch with limited staff, equipment and books has been available to Negro readers in Little Rock. Other books were sent from the main library to the Branch when requested by Negro readers. Since January 15, 1951, Negroes have been allowed the use of the main library. Library facilities at the Negro colleges and the high school have also been extended and improved.

Conclusion

Little Rock, the capital of Arkansas, is a political and commercial center of more than a hundred thousand in population. About one-fourth of the population is Negro. The great majority of Negroes are in low income groups. Educational, recreational

and general cultural facilities available to Negroes are not of the quality that white citizens enjoy.

Recent trends are encouraging. Such advances as the admission of Negroes to the University of Arkansas, recognition at the polls, and running for local offices suggest grounds for a more positive outlook.

Several recent surveys of the City have brought to light needs for improvement in areas of housing, health, recreation, and education, and some corrections and progress have been made.

The opening of the main library to Negroes in January, 1951, should prove an important influence in the social and cultural development of Negro citizens.
CHAPTER III

EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE TO NEGROES IN LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

Public library service in Little Rock began and developed in an atmosphere of segregation. Steps toward the integration of services to all citizens regardless of race were taken gradually and in 1951 the Little Rock Public Library was "opened to Negroes."

1 At this time, only eight other cities in the south were offering non-segregated library services, they were: San Antonio, Texas; Louisville, Kentucky; Chattanooga, Tennessee; Knoxville, Tennessee; Richmond, Virginia; Norfolk, Virginia; Fort Worth, Texas; and Covington, Kentucky.2

Legal Basis of Public Library Service in Arkansas

Constitutional Provisions

The constitution of the State of Arkansas of 1874, under which the state still operates does not mention library service. Libraries are mentioned only in two amendments, 30 and 38. On November 5, 1940, as a result of the general election, Amendment 30 was added to the Constitution of Arkansas. This Amendment provided that cities having a population of not

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1Arkansas Democrat, "Library Opened to Negroes," January 14, 1951, p. II A, col. 3.
2Ibid.
less than five thousand should be authorized "to levy and collect upon a majority vote at a general election, a tax on real and personal property of not exceeding one mill on the dollar on the assessed value thereof for the purpose of maintaining City Public Libraries."¹

On November 5, 1946, another amendment to the Constitution of Arkansas, Amendment 38, proposed also by initiative petition, authorized counties to levy a tax of not more than one mill on the dollar for the purpose of maintaining public county libraries.² These two amendments provided for the financing of public libraries for the people without mention of race.

The Constitution of Arkansas is silent on the subject of segregation also. It not only does not mention segregation but it contains in its Bill of Rights a provision very similar to the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

The equality of all persons before the law is recognized, and shall ever remain inviolate; nor shall any citizen ever be deprived of any right, privilege or immunity, nor exempted from any burden or duty, on account of race, color or previous condition.³

The General Assembly of 1921 created a State Library Bureau and added it to the Department of Education. The State Librarian, appointed by the State Commissioner of Education who

¹Constitution of the State of Arkansas with all Amendments (Little Rock, Arkansas: C. G. Hall, Secretary of State, May 1951), pp. 91-93.
²Ibid., pp. 102-104
³Ibid., p. 2.
is also a member of the State Library Board, must be a trained librarian and should help to organize and establish libraries in the state, and give advice throughout the state on library matters.¹

City Ordinances

There is no charter for the City of Little Rock. It was recognized by the territorial government in 1831 as a body politic incorporate in deed and in law. In none of the ordinances of Little Rock passed from time to time is there anything pertaining to the separation of the races in libraries. The latest compilation of City ordinances was published in 1932 and contains pertinent information regarding the Public Library.

On December 17, 1906, the Board of Public Affairs was authorized to select a site and build, furnish, and equip a library, and to receive donations and subscriptions toward that end. On February 11, 1908, the donation of $88,100 from the Carnegie Corporation of New York toward a library building in Little Rock was accepted and the City voted to provide $8,810 annually for library support. A Board of Trustees of the Little Rock Public Library was created April 29, 1907. The Board was authorized to buy a site, employ architects, and others to erect and maintain the library. Ordinance 1506 passed on October 4, 1909 and other subsequent amendments authorized the employment of a librarian, an assistant and a janitor. A third

assistant was created by ordinance 2003, September 22, 1913. An assistant for a branch was authorized April 2, 1917, by ordinance 2400.¹

On April 1, 1941, a City general election was held which levied on a one-mill assessment for the support of the Little Rock Public Library in accordance with the provisions of Amendment 30 to the Arkansas State Constitution. This is the main source of revenue for the operation of the Library. In 1951, $60,681.62 was realized for public library support by means of this one-mill assessment.² No City ordinance provides for the allocation of library funds on a racial basis.

Public Library Service, Little Rock, Arkansas, 1867-1916

The Little Rock Public Library was founded in 1867 as a mercantile library with 1,800 volumes.³ The "War Between the States" which had ended only two years before, the problems of the freed Negroes, the attitudes, usages and folkways of the whites carrying over from slavery, the impoverished condition of Little Rock, and the desperate strife in the political arena made any library service difficult, and effective library service to Negroes impossible.


³Scrapbook of the Little Rock Public Library, 1913-1917.
The Little Rock Public Library made little progress until 1906 when Sam W. Reyburn, member of the Little Rock Library Board and later treasurer of the Carnegie Fund for the Little Rock Public Library, applied to the Carnegie Corporation of New York for funds to construct a public library building in Little Rock. James Bertram who at this time was serving as Secretary of the Carnegie Corporation of New York was contacted. The sum of $100,000 was sought, but at Mr. Bertram's suggestion it was reduced to $50,000. The contractors requested the representatives of the City to revise their estimate back to $100,000. When Mr. Bertram was advised that the Library would be used for whites only, he said that "if such was the case, we could consider the whole matter at an end."

Mr. Reyburn argued in reply that "to be effective in any community, a library must exist in the hearts and minds of the people who supported and used it," and "to open the proposed library to colored people would result in waste of a large part of the money invested, as under such circumstances we would not get the wholehearted support of the white citizens." Some influential Negroes also endorsed this stand. Later Mr. Reyburn suggested that the "Carnegie Corporation of New York might see fit to contribute fifteen or twenty thousand dollars to provide a separate library for colored people."  

The Little Rock Public Library building which was to be

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1Written statement of Sam W. Reyburn to Miss Vera Snook, Librarian of Little Rock Public Library (undated).

2Statement of Sam W. Reyburn, _op. cit._
used only by whites was completed in 1910\(^1\) at a cost of $88,100 which was donated by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Ten per cent of the cost of the building, $8,810, was to be spent annually for the maintenance of the Library. This was not done, and in 1916 Mr. Bertram wrote to Mr. Reyburn complaining of Little Rock's failure to make adequate appropriations. Two editorials also appeared in the Saturday Evening Post criticizing the libraries helped by the Carnegie Corporation of New York for the small number of books on their shelves and the scanty attendance of readers.

**History of Public Library Service to Negroes in Little Rock, 1917-1951**

**Movement to Obtain Negro Branch**

In 1916, Mayor Charles E. Taylor found it difficult to "get an audience when he wanted to appeal for funds for a library for colored people."\(^2\) On July 1, 1916, Mayor Taylor wrote a letter\(^3\) to Mr. Reyburn in which he said that Mr. Bertram "peremptorily declined to consider the matter at all while the city of Little Rock was in arrears" in its library support. He said that no promise had been made for a Negro branch by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

During the year of 1917, a branch of the Little Rock Public Library was opened for white readers at the Ada Thompson

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\(^1\)Little Rock Public Library Plaque.

\(^2\)Statement of Sam W. Reyburn, *op. cit.*

\(^3\)Charles E. Taylor's letter to Sam W. Reyburn, July 1, 1916.
(Old Folks) Home, and seven other branches were started in the white public schools of Little Rock.¹

It can be seen that the question of library service to the Negroes of Little Rock had arisen at the very outset of the movement to gain funds from the Carnegie Corporation of New York for a suitable building for the Little Rock Public Library. As has been stated, the policy of the Corporation was against giving aid which did not include Negroes, but local sentiment seems to have influenced the Corporation to deviate from its policy. Once started the idea of library service to Negroes continued to live and grow among the leading people. Despite the rigid segregation pattern which prevailed, there was a friendly relationship between Mayor Charles E. Taylor and some of the leading Negroes.² After Mayor Taylor failed to get aid from the Carnegie Corporation of New York for a separate library for Negroes, and after public appeals for funds had produced little response, a group of interested white persons supported by the endorsement of the ministerial alliance and the Negro Citizens League³ made a definite appeal for library service for the Negroes of the City.

In response to this appeal in May, 1917, a small branch library for Negroes was opened. It was located in the center of the Negro business section on the second floor of an office.

¹Scrapbook of the Little Rock Public Library, op. cit.
²Dr. J. G. Thornton, Personal Interview, September 5, 1951.
³Mrs. Charlotte E. Stephens, Personal Interview, August 24, 1951.
building owned by a Negro lawyer, Scipio Jones. A rental fee of fifteen dollars a month was charged for these upstairs quarters which were rather inaccessible and unattractive as passers-by could see no evidence of a library. Because of the noise and rowdiness in the immediate neighborhood of this building it was not conducive to the development of a library.

Negro Board

In 1917, a Negro Board was created with functions advisory to the Little Rock Public Library Board on matters pertaining to the colored branch. Members of this Negro Board were Bishop J. M. Connor, Reverend J. P. Robinson, and Dr. J. G. Thornton.1 These citizens served seven years and were re-elected to a five-member Board to which were also elected Reverend J. M. B. Michelle and Dr. R. J. Meaddough. When the original members dropped out, there was no move to elect new members and the Board gradually died out. Dr. Thornton states that there was no action to eliminate the Negro Board.2

The membership of the Board of Trustees of the Little Rock Public Library at the time of the creation of the Negro Branch were Mayor Charles E. Taylor, T. H. Bunch, J. N. Heiskell, H. Fauten, George B. Rose, Sam W. Reyburn, T. M. Mehaffy, John N. Moore, Carl Voss, and Morris M. Cohn.3

1Dr. J. G. Thornton, Personal Interview, September 5, 1951.

2Ibid., April 4, 1953.

3Eighth Annual Report, op. cit.
1917-1919, Miss Carolyn R. Stephens, Librarian

The first librarian to serve the Branch was Miss Carolyn Rebecca Stephens,¹ a former school teacher. Miss Stephens was not a trained librarian but her college education and experience as a teacher plus her artistic talent qualified her for the position. Her beginning salary was forty dollars per month for thirty-six hours per week of work. In 1917, the Branch was opened from 2:00 to 6:00 P.M. and from 7:00 to 9:00 P.M. every day except Sunday. Now the library is open on week days from 2:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.

During Miss Stephens' administration, and up to the present time, the Branch was divided into two divisions, the children's department and the adult department. Miss Stephens seemed more interested in developing the children's department as she was especially talented in conducting story-hour programs and in drawing and painting attractive posters for children. Miss Stephens' mother, Mrs. C. E. Stephens, assisted her without pay with summer vacation reading projects. She also substituted as librarian when her daughter took her annual vacation.²

Although the materials in the Negro Public Library Branch were meager and inadequate they served to supplement the Negro high school and college libraries in the City.³ In 1917

¹Mrs. Charlotte E. Stephens, Personal Interview, August 24, 1951.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
the Little Rock Public Library acquired a total of 3,179 books, 259 through gifts and 2,920 by purchase. Of this number 636 duplicate volumes were given to the Negro Branch. In the same year, the Branch acquired by purchase 606 books making a total of 1,242 volumes added during the year. The room was furnished with shelves, chairs, tables, linoleum carpet, and a desk for the librarian. Miss Stephens reported a circulation of 3,091 volumes for the seven and one-half months that the Library was open in 1917, its first year. Inventory at the close of the year, 1917, showed 1,061 volumes in the Branch and furniture valued at $400.1 New books added during the year were selected on the basis of types of materials requested by patrons. From the inventory records 181 books were lost or discarded during the first seven and one-half months of operation. During this initial period the patronage was built up to 732 readers.

In 1919 Miss Stephens resigned to take a teaching position in Oklahoma. She was succeeded by Mrs. Etta Washington.2 Mrs. Washington had no training for library work but she was given some guidance by the resigning librarian and further in-service training by the head city librarian.

1919-1915, Mrs. Etta Washington, Librarian

Mrs. Etta Washington began her work as librarian of the Negro Branch on September 1, 1919. On her own initiative, she changed the hours of service from 2:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. and

1Eighth Annual Report, op. cit.
2State Press, August 24, 1915.
7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. to the present continuous service of 2:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. This suited the convenience of the readers better and especially of the college students, all of whom were affected unfavorably by the library being closed during the hours of 6:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M.

Mrs. Washington also retained an interest in the children's department but in addition labored to meet the needs of the college students for collateral reading not met at their respective institutions, and the needs of the adult reading public. She increased the number of magazines from five to twenty-six and obtained two newspapers—the Arkansas Democrat (white daily) and the Arkansas World (Negro weekly). A growing collection of current fiction and non-fiction was obtained during her administration. An effort was made to supply all books requested by patrons. The Main Library was liberal in lending to the Branch books requested by Negro patrons that were not owned by the Branch. Books given to the Branch were generally new except during the depression period when because of the lack of funds, the Main Library divided some of its books with the Negro Branch Library.¹

It has been the policy of the Little Rock Public Library to keep an accurate record of books requested by library patrons and to select and buy new books on the basis of these requests. This policy has been a distinct disadvantage to the Negro Branch because relatively few specific requests for books were

¹Mrs. Louise Smith, Branch Librarian, Personal Interview, August 23, 1951.
made by the patrons. The Main Library has interpreted the lack of requests on the part of Negroes as an indication of little or no interest in reading and in the use of the library.

There was and still seems to be among the local population a considerable number of Negroes who say, "Oh, you can't find what you want there, there is no use in going." This attitude of library clientele combined with the usual reluctance of authorities to supply anything more than the taxpayer demands, plus the facts that Little Rock does not adequately support its library system and that the revenue of the city is not overly large compared with that of other cities of its size, tends to keep Branch materials at a minimum.

In 1939, a survey of the Public Library of Little Rock indicated that in several areas the Library fell far below the minimum standards recommended by the American Library Association. The number of registered borrowers of the total population was 37 per cent less than it should have been, the percentage of books lent was 56 per cent short. In considering the total income of the library 9 per cent too much was put into salaries and 32 per cent too little was spent on books (see Table 4).

The American Library Association also recommended that there should be at least two books in the library per capita population. At this rate Little Rock should have had at least 163,358 books but it had only 65,000 books which averages about four-fifths of a book per person.
TABLE 4

COMPARISON OF THE LIBRARY OF LITTLE ROCK WITH THE MINIMUM STANDARDS OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>A.L.A. Minimum Standard</th>
<th>Little Rock</th>
<th>Per Cent Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Per cent of registered borrowers of total population</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books lent per capita</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per cent of total income for salaries</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per cent of total income for books</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The annual income of the Library based on the recommended one dollar per capita by the American Library Association would have meant that Little Rock with its population of 81,679 should have had $81,679 for its total library budget. It actually had $18,282, which was 78 per cent less than it should have had.

At the time of the writing of this thesis, the population of Little Rock had increased to 102,213 (see Table 1) and recommended per capita income by the American Library Association

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The revenue from all sources available for the public library was $109,141.78, not quite 62 per cent of the standard.

The book selecting, ordering, cataloging, processing, mending, and discarding is done at the Main Library. When a book reaches the Branch it is ready for immediate use. This is a continuation of the practice begun when the Negro Branch was first established.

In April, 1931, the Negro Branch moved to first-floor quarters at 922 West Ninth Street, a more central location, but one with many undesirable elements in the immediate neighborhood. In February 1941, the Branch was moved again to 923 West Ninth Street where it remained only two months and moved again to 1413 West Sixteenth Street. This location is more desirable than the preceding ones because it is closer to the Negro high schools and colleges. Moreover, the general environment at 1413 West Sixteenth Street is better than that on West Ninth Street. The rent at this location is fifty-five dollars per month. In 1945, the size of the Branch was doubled by renting the storeroom next door and using one room for children and the other for adults. This development was especially good because

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2 Statement of Financial Information, op. cit., p. 44.


the largest patronage of the Branch is that of children and high-school students.

In 1916, after twenty-six years of continuous service, Mrs. Washington resigned because of failing eyesight and health. At the close of her administration, the Branch had 4,208 volumes, a number of magazines, a collection of children's books, a collection of books by and about Negroes, a special room for the children, almost double the number of readers, and a more desirable location.

1945-1947, Mrs. Fannie Dukes Bryant, Librarian

Mrs. Fannie Dukes Bryant was chosen to succeed Mrs. Etta Washington as librarian. Mrs. Bryant was a graduate of the Dunbar Junior College in Little Rock and of Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia and had no formal training in library service. She was appointed at a salary of $75 a month and during the year this was increased to $100. In 1932 Mrs. Etta Washington received $60 a month as librarian and in 1933 this was decreased to $40 because of the depression which brought about a general drop in the salaries of all Little Rock library employees as well as in the salaries of city employees.

Under Mrs. Bryant, the "technical work, such as the cataloging of books was done at the Little Rock Public Library." Mrs. Bryant shelved the books and filed the cards as they came.

1Ibid.
2Banner, op. cit., p. 97.
3Annual Reports of Little Rock Public Library, 1932-1933.
in. During her administration, the new type library identification card was introduced, a metal plate with the name of the card holder, address and library number. Also a typewriter was added to the Branch equipment.

In 1946 the attractiveness of the Children's Department was enhanced.¹ A phonograph machine was placed in the Branch and a collection of record albums was begun. A reading project was conducted during the summer months and weekly story hours were held. Circulation at the Branch in 1947 was 15,558 as compared with a circulation of 217,270 in the Main Library;² a ratio of approximately one to fourteen. The ratio of the white and Negro population was approximately one to three (see Table 1). Therefore, the circulation of books at the Branch although steadily increasing was far below what it should have been measured by a comparison of the ratio of circulation to the ratio of population.

1947-Present, Mrs. Louise Smith, Librarian

In 1947, Mrs. Bryant resigned and Mrs. Louise Smith was selected as the new librarian.³ Mrs. Smith graduated from Gibbs High School (now Dunbar) and spent three years in Philander Smith College. She received some training in library service at Spelman College during the summer of 1930 when the Rosenwald Foundation made scholarships available to prospective

²Mrs. Catherine Chew, Personal Interview, April 22, 1952.
³Mrs. Louise Smith, Personal Interview, August 23, 1951.
Negro librarians in an effort to improve and develop library service for Negroes throughout the south. She had gained some library experience in a period of employment at Jasper, Alabama. A Dunbar Junior College student who had assisted Mrs. Bryant continued to assist Mrs. Smith two hours daily. During Mrs. Smith's administration, the number of books increased.

On January 15, 1951, all the facilities of the Little Rock Public Library system were made available to Negroes. From January 15, 1951, through August, 1951, there were 251 Negro borrowers registered at the Little Rock Public Library.¹

Name of Branch Changed

On June 2, 1951, the name of the Negro Branch officially became the Helen Ivy Branch in honor of Mrs. Helen Booker Ivy, a former principal of Capital Hill Elementary School and an ardent civic worker in the City. Mrs. D. D. Terry, wife of former United States Congressman, represented the Library Board and Attorney J. R. Booker, brother of Mrs. Ivy represented the Booker family at the ceremony sponsored by the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority for naming the Branch.

Service to Children

The Helen Booker Ivy Branch has a Children's Department housed in a room of its own with a street entrance and a door connecting it with the adult department.

¹Mrs. Catherine Chew, Personal Interview, April 22, 1952.
In the Children's Department tables and chairs vary in size to accommodate children of various sizes. There is an easy book section which is also a memorial to Helen Booker Ivy. One corner of the room is set aside for the librarian with her desk and a second desk for an assistant to work. The walls are beige in color and are decorated with a number of framed pictures of scenes of interest to children. Linoleum covering the center of the floor contains figures to amuse and interest children.

There are about fifty records for use with the phonograph at the Branch, but the Branch has access to the 511 records at the Main Public Library. Reading projects are conducted by holding reading contests among children during the summer months. In the summer of 1952, there were 135 children who participated in the contest, 85 of whom completed the reading of ten books by July 26, 1952.

Adult Department

The Adult Department is in a room which may be entered from the street and from the Children's Department. The walls are painted light beige with matching drapes trimmed in red and blue. In one corner is the magazine rack. Book cases are so built that books cover the four walls. One section contains books by and about Negroes. There are five tables seating six persons each, a dictionary stand, and a card catalogue. There are attractive window displays of books, but no curtains or shades to offer protection against sun glare or to insure privacy.
Book Collection

The Ivy Branch has now a total of 6,000 volumes in its collection, an increase of nearly 5,000 over its original number (see Table 5). This total includes the Helen Booker Ivy Collection which began in 1949 and contains 76 volumes, and the Negro Collection which was begun in 1917 when the Branch was opened and now contains 211 volumes. There are 38 magazine subscriptions including seven Negro magazines. The two local dailies, one national Negro weekly, and two local Negro weeklies are available. During 1951, there were added 1147 adult books and 416 children's books. Out of the 416 children's books, 19 were gifts from the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. Some Negroes in the City criticize the library for its purchase of a high percentage of fiction books.

Circulation

The circulation of the Helen Booker Ivy Branch increased from 3,091 in 1917 to 24,041 in 1951 (see Table 5), an increase of nearly 800 per cent. From 1920 to 1950, the Negro population of Little Rock increased from 17,477 to 23,517 (see Table 1), approximately 74 per cent. The growth of the circulation has therefore been far greater in proportion than the growth of the population. The contributing factors to the circulation increase are the development of educational and library facilities.

In 1950 the Branch circulated 8,050 juvenile books and 11,102 adult books (see Table 6). Fiction circulation was 2,626 for adults and 837 for juveniles which was approximately
one-fourth of the adult, and two-thirds of the juvenile reading.

Since 1917, a new public high school, Dunbar, has been built, and at its completion in 1930, a library of more than 5,000 books was added. The present library of Dunbar High School and Dunbar Junior College had 12,000 volumes in 1951. The two librarians are now in process of separating the high-school library from the junior-college library.1 From year to year, the Arkansas Baptist College and Philander Smith College, the two denominational Negro colleges of Little Rock, added many volumes to their libraries. Student population at all four institutions has grown rapidly. In June 1951, there were over 500 Negro graduates from high schools and colleges within the City as compared with not more than a hundred in 1917.

Establishment of City extension graduate classes by the University of Arkansas and the accreditation of one college, Philander Smith, by the North Central Association stimulated the demand for more scholarly reading materials. The librarian of the Little Rock Public Library states that the greatest demand of Negro borrowers from the Main Library through the Branch is for books in social sciences, literature, history, and biography, respectively.

Finance

The Little Rock Public Library is financed through the 1941 Ordinance based on the 1940 state constitutional amendment in accordance with which a one-mill tax is levied on the City.

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1Mrs. Eva C. Herndon, Librarian, Dunbar High School, Personal Interview, July 26, 1952.
No specific amount of the income is set aside for the Branch because "not only does the Branch have exclusive use of the books it houses but it may and does call for any book the Main Library has whenever such book is requested, and all materials and supplies are sent to the Branch by the Main Library on request."1

Little Rock does not adequately support its library system, and the revenue of the City is not overly large compared with that of other cities its size. The financial support accorded the Helen Booker Ivy Branch is limited. There never has been an appropriation for building. The rent was $15 per month for 2 1/4 years, 1917 to 1941; the present location has cost $55 per month since 1949 (see Table 5). The salary of the librarian of the Branch was $40 per month from 1917 to 1931 when it was made $60; but in 1932, this was reduced to $45. In 1946, it was increased to $120, and on October 15, 1951, it was raised to $140. (see Table 5).

Integration

January 15, 1951, the Board of Trustees of the Little Rock Public Library passed a resolution which permits Negro citizens above sixteen years of age and students who have reached the seventh grade to use the facilities of the Main Library.2 Library cards are issued to all registered borrowers.

1Mrs. Catherine Chew, Personal Interview, April 22, 1952.
2Arkansas Democrat, January 14, 1951, p. 11A, col. 3.
### TABLE 5

**Statistics of Circulation, Volumes, Borrowers, Book Expenditure, Rent, and Salaries of the Negro Branch of the Little Rock Public Library**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
<th>Borrowers</th>
<th>Volumes</th>
<th>Rent Per Month</th>
<th>Expenditures for Books</th>
<th>Salaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>3,091</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,061</td>
<td>$15</td>
<td></td>
<td>$40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>2,716</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>1,443</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>2,716</td>
<td>895</td>
<td>4,701a</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>2,814</td>
<td>1,177</td>
<td>2,778</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>2,785</td>
<td>1,376</td>
<td>3,830</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>2,599</td>
<td>1,525</td>
<td>2,121</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>3,329</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>2,295</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>2,676</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,392</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>2,544</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,509</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>2,425</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,514</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>2,594</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,618</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>5,752</td>
<td>2,670</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>3,409</td>
<td>2,917</td>
<td>2,708</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>4,985</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>10,716</td>
<td>3,681</td>
<td>3,280</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>9,194</td>
<td>4,014</td>
<td>3,439</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>9,623</td>
<td>3,370</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>8,058</td>
<td>3,713</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>9,031</td>
<td>4,713</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>9,709</td>
<td>4,208</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>10,666</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>12,119</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>11,980</td>
<td>5,573</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>11,041</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>11,242</td>
<td>6,435</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>11,041</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>19,073</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>19,960</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>17,787</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>15,558</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,600 app.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>19,054</td>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>14,099</td>
<td>1,181</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>18,159</td>
<td>1,701</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>19,152</td>
<td>2,134</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>24,041</td>
<td>2,355</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*a Little Rock Library Annual Reports, Branch Records, and Scrapbooks.

*b After the close of World War I, many worthless books were donated to the Branch by Negro and white citizens. These books were kept for a short period, then discarded. This caused fluctuations and drops in the number of volumes housed by the Branch.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Juvenile</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>1,472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>948</td>
<td>1,592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>1,126</td>
<td>1,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>1,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>1,653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>682</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>1,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>1,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>1,430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>863</td>
<td>1,479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>974</td>
<td>1,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>1,403</td>
<td>2,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>1,057</td>
<td>1,753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8,050</td>
<td>11,102</td>
<td>19,152</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Taken from the circulation record of the Little Rock Public Library Branch.

This action came about as a step in the evolution of white sentiment in Little Rock. The Board opened the Main Library to Negro patrons because it thought they were entitled to it and had a great need for it.\(^1\) There had been no prior public discussion of the measure except a "letter to the people"

\(^1\) Mrs. J. N. Heiskel, Chairman of the Board of the Little Rock Public Library, Interview, March 9, 1953.
urging it to be published in the Arkansas Gazette,¹ and the publication of this letter should be taken as a result rather than a cause of the sentiment for integration.

On November 23, 1950, the following letter appeared in the columns of the Arkansas Gazette.

As a recent white new comer to Little Rock, who during the past few weeks has become acquainted more thoroughly with the library facilities available to Negro readers in the city, I must state unfortunately, that these services are entirely inadequate and these library services for Negroes in this city hardly conform to the principle followed by the United States Supreme Court in innumerable cases involving segregation that wherever there are separate facilities for the two colors these facilities must be equal. The Negro branch of the Public Library contains only a fraction of the books of the white library. Theoretically a Negro reader can obtain any book in the main library through the Negro branch. In practice this does not hold true in many cases nor does it constitute equality. A librarian at the main library at Louisiana and Seventh recently told me that books in demand there are generally not forwarded to the Negro branch. Negro students, teachers and professional people, when in urgent need of reference books, usually have to wait one or more days until the book is transferred to the branch. Finally the Negro reader does not enjoy the privilege of browsing through the many books contained in the main library, a procedure often very necessary for the intelligent selection of books.

Segregated library facilities cannot be equal unless both libraries contain the identical books and offer the same services, something which is impractical and wasteful. The only practical and democratic solution is that of opening the doors of the main library to all readers regardless of race. Such a step would not be radical; in my former home town of Richmond, Va. Negroes have been admitted for several years already to both the Public Library and the Virginia State Library without any friction. The admission of our Negro fellow citizens to the Little Rock Public Library would be a meaningful expression of the adherence of the citizens of Little Rock to democracy and to American ideals at a time of intense international crisis when democratic beliefs are challenged in many areas of the world.

Georg G. Iggers²

¹Arkansas Gazette, November 23, 1950, p. 4A.
²Georg Gershon Iggers is a member of the faculty of Philander Smith College, Little Rock, Arkansas.
A statement issued by the Library Board said that while the "Branch can supply many library needs and has a particularly good collection of children's books, the Main Library contains reference books and periodicals which would be too expensive to duplicate and which are needed for research." This fact has become increasingly apparent since Negroes have been admitted to the graduate extension courses of the University of Arkansas in Little Rock. Neither the Negro Branch of the Little Rock Public Library nor the libraries of the Negro colleges could supply adequate reference materials for these graduate students. This situation in part led to the integration of library services.

The step to integrate library service is part of a more general movement in the City and in the State. Teachers' salaries have been equalized in Little Rock. Negro students have been admitted to the graduate and professional schools of the state university, some of which are located in Little Rock. Negro democrats have been admitted to membership in the local Democratic "white" primary. Recently Negro doctors have been admitted to the medical society of Pulaski County, of which Little Rock is the county seat, and the first Negro intern is at work in the University Hospital, located in Little Rock.

The integration received approval from the Negro. In nearby Pine Bluff where resides Attorney Harold Flowers who is counsel for the complainants in several suits for unsegregated or equal school services to Negroes now being filed in several

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1Arkansas Democrat, January 14, 1951, p. 11A.
localities in Arkansas, Frances Sampson, columnist for the State Press, seized the occasion to commend the Little Rock action and to recommend similar action in Pine Bluff.

The Little Rock Board of Trustees has passed a resolution which will permit Negroes to use facilities of the main library in that forward looking city.

The Little Rock answer is sufficient and despite the vigorous movement which is now under way by leaders of Pullen Street Branch [Pine Bluff] to get Negroes to support facilities there. The Little Rock answer to the problem ought to be immediately accepted in Pine Bluff and the Negro civic organizations of this community bolstered by whatever semblance of political entity which now exists here ought to begin work now and ask the Pine Bluff Library Board of Management to pass a similar resolution and bring an end to the foolish expenditure of public monies to maintain an unchristian-like system of enjoyment of things of this world.¹

These actions form a part of the general movement in the south which has resulted in several cities integrating their library service; San Antonio, Texas and Louisville, Kentucky, in 1948; Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1949; Knoxville, Tennessee in 1950; Richmond, Virginia; Norfolk, Virginia; Fort Worth, Texas; Covington, Kentucky; and probably others. Several other cities are considering the same action.²

Integration in Use of Other Types of Library Facilities

The Law Library in the State Capitol has been open for a number of years to the Negro lawyers as well as white, and even private Negro citizens wishing to do research using legal materials have been able to do so. For a long time, the Historical Commission in the State Capitol has permitted Negro

¹State Press, January 19, 1951, p. 4.
²Arkansas Democrat, January 14, 1951, p. 11A.
researchers to have access to their shelves and to sit in the stacks and collect data. The *Arkansas Gazette* has permitted Negroes free access to its back numbers. They have sat in alcoves and have obtained information along with other workers. For more than twenty years, the State Department of Education, located in Little Rock, has permitted Negro teachers and other persons interested to consult its reference shelves and to withdraw books. Likewise the collection of educational works maintained in the office of the Pulaski County Educational Department is open to Negro teachers and educational workers.

Prior to January 15, 1951, the county of Pulaski in which Little Rock is located operated a bookmobile service for county schools in which there were "from one to three boxes of books in the back of the bookmobile for colored people," and a "new bookmobile with complete space on one side for colored use" was planned. But recently, the county librarian let it be known that "the new bookmobile, as previously planned will not have a separate part set aside for colored. Since January 15, 1951, colored and white receive the same service jointly."\(^1\)

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\(^1\)Miss Mary Sue Shepherd, Pulaski County Librarian, Personal Interview, September 1, 1951.
CHAPTER IV

SURVEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

There is a paucity of documentary material and data on the history of the development of library service to Negroes in Little Rock. Recollections of interested citizens may have been colored by hazy memory or subjective attitudes. However, the several surveys of the City such as those by the Work Projects Administration, the Urban League, The Association of Community Chests and Councils, Inc., and George Peabody College for Teachers have brought together factual information concerning the City as a whole. Although these surveys were repetitious in some respects they served to emphasize some definite needs of the City including better public library facilities especially those for Negroes.

The Urban League Survey said in 1946: ¹

Although the Chests' and Councils' Survey was made nearly eight years ago, the review of public library services appears to be substantially the same today, with a few exceptions. . . . Library services to colored citizens of Little Rock are concentrated in two store rooms at sidewalk level in a frame building on Sixteenth Street. A special collection of books by and about Negroes is available at this branch. It is alleged that only a limited amount of material on Negro life is available at the main library. . . . Subscription to Negro national newspapers is not allowed by the Little Rock Library Board. . . . The branch librarian is not trained in library science. . . . A review of current practices and

¹Writers' Program, op. cit., p. 60.
program at the branch indicates a need for auxiliary training in library science on the part of the librarian, with special reference to organizing and arousing community interest and support. . . . In view of the multiplicity of recreation lags in the community, maximum use of all available facilities is certainly indicated. Book review teas, vital story hours and story play for children, community forums, smaller discussion groups, may well be included. . . . The space is extremely limited; lighting is bad in the office area especially, although both rooms need more adequate lighting. The ceiling is painted gray, a color most suitable for reflecting light. Venetian blinds at the windows would provide some semblance of privacy. . . . Bright cheerful window draperies would also make a further contribution toward a more attractive interior. . . . The Little Rock Library Board appears to have a further responsibility to Negro citizens. . . . in the area of equal accommodations and services. The indication is that the Board should either make provision for necessary auxiliary training in library science for the present branch librarian or employ an adequately trained librarian at an acceptable salary.

City officials and community leaders have worked together in Little Rock since 1910 to bring about gradual and continuous improvement. Such effort has resulted in a fairly good Negro Branch and integrated use of the Main Library.

As was true in the development of public library service to Negroes in Atlanta, Georgia, in Little Rock Negroes made known and began their struggle to secure public library service at the same time that the public library movement for white citizens began.

Inadequate financial support has characterized the public library development from its beginning. This constitutes one of many causes for the delay in providing separate public library service for Negroes. The Main Library was opened in 1910 and it was not until 1917 that the small, inadequate, poorly located Negro Branch was opened with approximately 1,000 books and a librarian whose salary was $40 a month.
At this time the library was open six hours a day or for thirty-six hours a week.

The salary of the librarian in charge of the Branch started off with $140 a month. The salary was gradually increased and now it is $140 a month. Although this sum represents a great increase, it is not enough to attract a qualified trained librarian to the position. The challenge of the opportunities of service in the Branch commands a well-trained librarian and a satisfactory salary should be offered for the position.

In spite of handicaps the Negro community demonstrated a great thirst for books by withdrawing on an average of about as many books as were owned by the Branch. Much of the enthusiasm of the part of Negro citizens may be attributed in part to the fact that there was a Negro Library Board consisting of professional and business men. This board served in an advisory capacity to the Little Rock Public Library Board on matters pertaining to the Negro Branch.

From 1917 to 1951 the Negro Branch was moved several times in an effort to place it in desirable surroundings. Today the Branch consists of two rooms, one for adults and the other for children.

A new building should be erected for the Negro Branch even though Negroes are now permitted access to the Main Library. This is not an argument for segregation. The fact of the matter is that there are racial concentrations of residences, and branches in any particular neighborhood tend to take on the culture of the neighborhood. This is true in cities like New
York and Chicago, where access to the main library is open and complete. There are branches in those cities which become Negro branches because of the neighborhoods they accommodate. Many people will come to the Little Rock Branch who will never go to the main building, and the branch building should be made as attractive as the resources of the City will permit. There should also be more branches both for colored and white throughout the City to take care of the increasing population and expanding City territory.

No records are available to give a picture of the extent that Negroes use the Main Library but it is rather significant to note that even though services of the Main Library were made available in 1951 the circulation of the Branch showed an increase of about 5,000 over that of 1950, and that over 200 registered borrowers were added at the Branch in 1951. Notwithstanding the fact that the Branch was open only thirty-six hours per week in 1917 and that circulation and patronage have increased consistently throughout the years, in 1951 it was still offering services for only thirty-six hours. The hours of service need to be made longer to more adequately serve the public.

Progress has been made in the development of a functional collection of materials for the Negro Branch. However, specific reading interests and needs should be studied and funds made available to add to the materials accordingly. The Negro collection which is used extensively should be assured of continuous growth especially because no emphasis is given to materials by and about Negroes at the Main Library.
The action of the Little Rock Board of Trustees in opening the Main Library to colored readers and the frictionless experiences which have followed demonstrate how simply and easily an interracial situation can be solved with a measure of justice to all. The conscience of white citizens seems to have been aroused first by Booker T. Washington's contribution to the original building and later by their own neglect and the needs of the Negro public. The public conscience and the Board conscience must have kept pace with each other because there has been no demonstration whatever against the innovation.
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