

Research Collections in Historical Societies, Private Libraries and Museums

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FOR THE PERSON INTERESTED in historical children's books, there are sources other than the academic library—historical societies, museums and private libraries. However, only a few of these institutions are included in the standard directories, such as *Subject Collections: A Guide to Special Book Collections*, *Subject Collections in Children's Literature* and *Directory of Special Libraries and Information Centers*.¹ In view of the growing interest in this subject, questionnaires requesting information about historical children's literature holdings were sent to those institutions that were listed in the above directories. In addition, questionnaires were sent to a random list of institutions compiled from *American Art Directory*, *Directory of Historical Societies and Agencies in the United States and Canada* and *The Official Museum Directory*.² There was no "Children's Books" subject listing in *Directory of Historical Societies* so selections were made from the following groups: "Ethnic or Racial Societies," "Pioneer Societies," "Religious Societies," and "Societies Based on Historical Persons."

Response to the questionnaires was good, although not as geographically dispersed as hoped. It was quickly discovered why so few of these institutions were included in the subject collection directories: very few had children's books, and those that did had no plans for acquisition or use. As one curator wrote, "The collection's presence here is a matter of historical accident rather than design."

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One library of which every researcher of early American children's books should be aware is the American Antiquarian Society of Worcester, Mass. This library, containing over 7000 titles, is divided into two parts: books printed prior to 1821 and books printed between 1821 and 1876. (The latter period will be extended to include all the publications of McLoughlin Bros., part of a recent gift to the society.) The former group, which includes d'Alté Welch's personal library of Americana, contains more than 2800 items, representing two-thirds of the total number of titles printed in America prior to 1821.

The Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City is a private library with a wealth of material from ancient times to the present and is truly a researcher's delight. An introduction to a very small part of the Morgan's holdings may be found in its publication *Early Children's Books and Their Illustration*.³

The Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery in San Marino, Calif., has American and English children's books from the fifteenth century through modern times. These are included in its rare book collection and have been acquired over the years as part of the library's overall purchases.

The Boston Athenaeum also contains items of interest. In 1803 when the Athenaeum opened, children's books were part of the general collection. In 1898 the children's collection was large enough to merit relocation to a separate room. Strongest in Victorian and Edwardian children's books, the collection represents almost two centuries of book publishing, a result of the library's continuing purchase policy. The rare and fragile books are currently shelved in the Rare Book Room, but the rest of the collection remains on open shelves and is available to members for borrowing.

Among the historical societies with important collections of early children's books is the Connecticut Historical Society in Hartford. This collection contains more than 2000 items and is composed primarily of the personal libraries of Caroline M. Hewins (donated in 1927) and Albert C. Bates (donated in 1953). Hewins was the first librarian of the Hartford Public Library and a pioneer in the development of library service to children. Bates was historian and librarian of the Connecticut State Library for many years.

This collection consists primarily of American juveniles of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with special emphasis on Connecticut imprints, juveniles published before 1820 and New England primers. The books are fully cataloged and accessible. The entries in the card catalog

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for those items donated by Bates carry his personal notations. For example, the following entry for a hornbook states: "This hornbook was found in the Stone House in Guilford. It was the property of John W. Norton, who certifies that it descended to him from John Hart, the second student to graduate from Yale College in 1703." The society's 1927 and 1953 annual reports describe the Hewins and Bates gifts and *A Bibliography of American Children's Books Printed Prior to 1821* by d'Alté Welch lists the early books.⁴

The Illinois State Historical Library in Springfield attempts to collect all literature concerning Lincoln, adult and juvenile, contemporary and retrospective. There are a few children's books published before 1920 in the collection, for instance, Horatio Alger, Jr.'s *Abraham Lincoln: Backwoods Boy; or a Young Railsplitter Becomes President* (New York, 1883) and James Baldwin's *Story of Abraham Lincoln for Young Readers* (Werner School Book Co., 1896).

During the 1940s and 1950s, David McCandless McKell collected more than 2000 children's books, many of which date from the nineteenth century. The collection includes British and American first editions of Rudyard Kipling's *Captains Courageous* (1896 and 1897), different editions of twelve titles by Samuel Langhorne Clemens, and the first edition of Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus, His Songs, His Sayings, The Folklore of the Old Plantation* (1881). After McKell's death, his family donated his collection to the Ross County Historical Society in Chillicothe, Ohio, which McKell had strongly supported. The library was established in a historic Chillicothe home which McKell donated to the historical society in 1946 for the expansion of its museum. In 1973 Frank B. Fieler published a descriptive catalog of this collection. The McKell library also contains bibliographies, texts, correspondence, notes, and formal papers which document the collection.

Libraries and museums centered around famous people sometimes contain items of note to those interested in historical children's books. The Rutherford B. Hayes Library in Fremont, Ohio, includes books which belonged to the Hayes children, as well as an uncataloged collection of school texts of the period.

About 400 juveniles are in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park, N.Y. Some of these books were Roosevelt's childhood possessions, others belonged to his children or his mother; however, Roosevelt actively collected most of them, adding to his collection until 1945. His personal collection is kept in his Hyde Park office where they were originally placed, while the rest of the books are housed in a separate stack area of the

library. The collection includes first editions of such interesting titles as *The Last of the Huggermuggers* (1856) and *Kobboltozo* (1857) by Christopher Cranch. In the former the inscription by Roosevelt reads: "This and its sequel I read at least a dozen times." About 80 percent of the books were published prior to 1920. Chapbooks with imprints from the New England area compose about half the collection. There are also a number of French children's books which belonged to Roosevelt's mother. Works by the classic authors of children's literature of the nineteenth century make up the rest of the collection. Plans for the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library's collection include compilation of a book catalog.

At the American Life Foundation (Watkins Glen, N.Y.), researchers interested in alphabet and picture books can find more than 1000 historical and contemporary examples of these, as well as early periodicals, reference books on authors and illustrators, juveniles from several periods, and publishers' catalogs. The collection, begun in the 1930s by nursery education pioneer Ruth S. Freeman and her husband, contains several thousand items, many of which are described in two publications: *Children's Picture Books Yesterday and Today* and *Children's Books: Their Illustrations and Decorative Art*.⁵ At present, the collection can be seen by appointment only.

Orchard House in Concord, Mass., the home of Louisa May Alcott, contains her works, as well as books by members of her family. Books from her own library, including copies of Dickens, may be found in her bedroom. However, valuable Alcott manuscripts, letters and first editions are housed in the Houghton Library at Harvard.

Mark Twain's home in Hartford, Conn., has some books from his own library, and members of the Mark Twain Memorial Association are actively searching for copies of titles he is known to have had. His own writings are included, although the first editions and rare books are in the Stowe-Day Library in the nearby Day mansion. Some of the books which belonged to the Clemens children are scattered throughout the schoolroom, the playroom and Susy Clemens's bedroom. In addition to textbooks, including a Palmer Method handwriting manual, there are books illustrated by Kate Greenaway, the Rollo series by Jacob Abbott, Palmer Cox's Brownies series, and picture book publications of the McLoughlin Bros. Although the books are cataloged, most of them are used as display pieces to enhance the nineteenth-century atmosphere of the famous house.

Along with first editions of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, both written during the years when Clemens lived in Hartford, the Stowe-Day Library contains books, manu-

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scripts, letters and a host of miscellany belonging to Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Beecher family, actor William Gillette, poet Lydia Sigourney, and others who lived in the three houses of the Memorial Complex or in homes nearby. The library contains a fascinating mélange of materials, and books for children are shelved with those for adults.

Juvenile books, although mostly textbooks, can be located in reconstructed villages, such as Greenfield Village and the Henry Ford Museum (Dearborn, Mich.), and Old Sturbridge (Sturbridge, Mass.). Children's books, including many McGuffey Readers and numerous New England primers, are in the Ford Museum's Rare Book Collection. Those at Sturbridge are in the schoolroom and scattered throughout to add authenticity to the setting.

Special subject libraries sometimes have unusual juvenile books, even though they may have no policy of acquisition. The Sol Rosenbloom Library of the Hebrew Institute of Pittsburgh concentrates on Judaica and has some juvenile books. The Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College collects materials on the history of the Religious Society of Friends since 1650. Of the 30,000 volumes, there are a few hundred for children, which include some interesting copy books handwritten by Quaker children. The Library Company of Philadelphia emphasizes books and related items printed in Philadelphia before 1876 and, of the few juvenile books in the collection, the most unusual is a manuscript of a child's version of Benjamin Sands's *Metamorphosis*.

Some of the state libraries which are building collections of books about their state or by authors who have lived in their state have juvenile books as well. Although most of these collections began in the 1940s and 1950s, there are some pre-1920 imprints.

Although it was expected that some of the art galleries would have juvenile books published before 1920, very few do. The Cleveland Museum of Art has about 100 books with drawings by famous illustrators such as Pyle, Crane, Greenaway, and Rackham which are holdovers from their children's art programs of the 1920s. In most cases, however, responses from art galleries indicated that they had no collections of children's books other than those used in connection with their programs.

This was true of some of the children's museums, also. The Brooklyn Children's Museum is moving into a new building which will house its collection of about 2000 books in a separate library. Although a few of these books date to 1920 and earlier, the majority are contemporary titles on subjects such as geography, natural history, world cultures, and similar topics which will complement and supplement the work of the museum.

From this sampling, it appears that only the major historical societies and private libraries have made any effort to collect children's books, and even they rarely have acquisition plans. Other than a few private libraries and historical societies, the large public libraries and some major universities remain the principal sources of historical children's books. However, almost every institution contacted in this survey had some historical children's books, even if only a few.

As the interest in children's books continues to grow, and children's books published before 1920 become more scarce, the innumerable small, local institutions like historical societies and museums will increase in importance as possible sources of juvenile books. Perhaps more of these books will be removed from cartons and cupboards and properly appraised.

Since many historical societies and museums are known only locally, the investigation of their resources must be conducted by area residents. Perhaps the children's sections of state library organizations might survey such institutions in order to list their holdings. Some treasures may be discovered as a result.

The public needs to be educated about the value of children's books in all aspects — as social history, children's entertainment, literary works, illustrators' canvases and collectors' items. There are still too few bibliographies and descriptive brochures of historical children's literature holdings; more should be published by those institutions with major collections.

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