T H E F I R S T H U N D R E D Y E A R S

A HISTORY OF THE

C O R N E L L P U B L I C L I B R A R Y

Ithaca, New York

and the

C O R N E L L L I B R A R Y A S S O C I A T I O N

1864 - 1964

by

Sherman Peer

THE AUTHOR

> It's good to think of the new library so well organized and increasing in service. I am happy to have lived to see it functioning fully and so well received by the people of Tompkins County.
>
> --Letter from Sherman Peer, dated February 27, 1969, to Mrs. John Vandervort, chairman of the trustees of the Tompkins County Public Library.

Sherman Peer searched the records of the Cornell Library Association, many other written sources, and his own rich memories to write this history. A prominent Ithaca attorney who enjoyed writing and story-telling, Mr. Peer completed his work on it in 1964, when he was 81 years old. The epilogue was written by Mary Tibbets Freeman, and the manuscript was prepared for presentation at the formal dedication of the Tompkins County Library Building on April 20, 1969.

The historian also shaped the library's history by assisting in its successful rebirth as a public institution in its second century. He was convinced that the Cornell Public Library, operated since 1866 by the private Cornell Library Association founded by Ezra Cornell, needed public funds for a new building and continuing support.

Mr. Peer personally raised more than $65,000 from local corporations and friends in the late 1950s, and with this fund as a beginning, he approached the City of Ithaca and asked it to construct a new library. After several years of indecision, Tompkins County accepted the challenge in 1964. The library was constructed at 312 North Cayuga Street and opened its doors under county operation on February 3, 1969. Mr. Peer's determination, despite those who tried to persuade him that the library could survive on private funds, was important to the success of efforts to win public sponsorship.

Sherman Peer was born September 11, 1882, at East Palmyra, New York, the son of Frank Sherman and Harriet Reeves Peer. He often spoke of his happy boyhood in the Genesee River Valley, but considered Ithaca his home. He attended Mt. Morris and Ithaca high schools before entering the Cornell Law School, from which he graduated in 1906. After a year of study at New College, Oxford University, England, he was admitted to the New York State bar in 1907 and established a law practice in Ithaca. He was an infantry major in World War I, and at the war's end was liaison officer between the War Department and the National Training Detachment, which directed the training of enlisted men at universities.

During his professional career, he was an attorney and trust officer for the Tompkins County Trust Company, counsel to Morse Chain Company, and, starting in 1936, general counsel for the Cooperative Grange League Federation Exchange, the post from which he retired in 1947. In 1947-52 he taught courses in cooperative law at the Cornell Law School, holding the rank of professor.

He was instrumental in organizing Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations, was president of the Cornell University Research Foundation, and a founder of the Ithaca Foundation which supported many community projects. For many years he served as a director of the Tompkins County Trust Company and the National Cash Register Company. Also he was a president of the Tompkins County Bar Association and the Federation of Bar Associations of the Sixth Judicial District.

His novel Sabbatic Leave was published in 1946. He also wrote magazine articles and unpublished works including another novel, The Genesee Valley Newcombs, and a collection of historical sketches, "Genesee River Country," on file at the public library.

With his father, he was a foxhunter and an accomplished horseman, and rode with the Genesee Valley Hunt. His last home in the Ithaca area was a century-old

mill that he remodeled on Salmon Creek, near Ludlowville.

Mr. Peer's association with the library began in 1947, when he was elected a trustee. He was president of the Cornell Library Association in 1951 and 1952, and in 1955 the Association named him Statutory Librarian, which involved service as a Cornell University trustee. He retired from the post in 1964, and the Association then awarded him the title of Honorary Life Trustee.

Quietly and anonymously he made countless gifts to the library. An avid reader, he often asked the librarian to purchase current books for him, and then gave these to the library collection. When the Association found it necessary to hire a consultant and architect, he made a substantial gift, and later made two more financial contributions -- one in memory of his parents and the other to qualify the library for federal funds under the Library Services and Construction Act. The program for the cornerstone-laying ceremony on April 22, 1968, said, "His deep concern for proper housing of the library and untiring efforts in soliciting funds launched this building project."

Although he was happy to learn that the new library had opened, he never saw the building in which he had played such an important role. He and his wife Muriel had moved to Florida, and he died in Tampa on March 31, 1969. A son, two daughters, and eleven grandchildren survived him in addition to his wife. At the library's dedication, the meeting room was named the Sherman Peer Room in his honor.

--Jane Marcham

FOREWORD

A history of the Cornell Public Library and of the library building is not a symphony in words, but like a symphonic composition it has four themes: Ezra Cornell, the Library and its building, the People of Tompkins County, and Cornell University. The dominant themes are Ezra Cornell and his public Library. This manuscript will avoid, except when and where desirable, details of the life of the Founder because excellent books covering his life and works have appeared regularly between 1884 and 1952.

This manuscript is designed to cover the first hundred years, beginning April 5, 1864 (the date of the Library Charter) and concluding with the centennial celebration.

There are a number of reasons why a history should be written. Source material is widely scattered among minute books recording the proceedings of the Library Association, transactions of the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee of the University, letters to and from Ezra Cornell, anecdotes in scrap books and other unexpected places, and, generally speaking, all sorts of material in nooks and corners, subject to the hazard of fire. Another reason is that although all biographies of Ezra Cornell and histories of the University make casual mention of the library building, none gives any adequate account of it as the cradle of Cornell University. The Library was a going concern in 1865, whereas it took the University all of five years (1868-1873) just to get its feet firmly planted on the Hill and another five years to feel at home there. Subsequently Cornell's expansion and growing reputation as a great institution of learning was so swift, so dramatic, that the part played by its so-called "Foster Mother" has been overlooked as men of letters all over the world have been paying court to the "Daughter." Even the people of Tompkins County, for whom the public Library was founded, are aware of the humble origin of the University, which grew into being in a

brick building at the corner of Tioga and Seneca Streets.

Secretaries of organizations similar to the Cornell Library Association seldom, if ever, write for posterity. Instead, they write for the week or month, too often merely to record minor detail. It may be that the important transactions which interest the historian either are not at the moment seen in perspective or are so well known at the time that mention in the minutes of discussion, of arguments, of human reactions, and even of final actions taken is often omitted from the Record. This history will, at times, "read between the lines" to supplement missing data.

-- Sherman Peer

CHAPTER I

The story begins in April 1828 with a young man, aged twenty-one, walking along the south bank of Fall Creek, probably in the late afternoon, for he has been walking since dawn from his father's farm near De Ruyter. Now, following the old road from Dryden, he has been in sight, off and on, of the waters in Fall Creek and has noted how the gorge deepens as he moves westward to his journey's end. We are told that over his shoulder he carried dangling from a stick a box in which were carpenter's tools and very likely personal belongings wrapped, no doubt, in a threadbare coat. These articles and a slender purse comprised his worldly assets as he found himself in a clearing where one would naturally stop, weary and probably hungry, having walked out of one world into another which he now saw for the first time, although he had heard about it and had decided to live in it in case it was as represented.

On his left the view opened to the south and west. Here was the spot in which to take note --just as a pilgrim might be expected to take in the proportions of the city wall and splendid gate before walking from the known into the unknown. In Ezra Cornell's case the spot could have been a rail fence or stump on which to rest while he listened and twisted about to hear and see everything. From the right came the sound of falling water, to the north a glimpse through the trees of the lake, in front West Hill and sunset, and to the southwest the stately peaks of the Newfield Hills. Down below, among the trees, he could see a few rooftops and church spires.

What did he hear in the Fall Creek gorge? Falling water was music to his ears for he was a practical-minded young man with know-how in the use of carpenter's tools. Even as late as the early nineteenth century, for a man with a strong body, energy, and know-how, the sight and sound of falling water meant power, and power meant mills, manufacturing, prosperity, and an oppor-

tunity to make a good living; that the blend of what he heard and saw stirred his imagination, we learn from Ezra Cornell's own description. He imagined a new life in the village below. He must have asked himself, "What will the future be? What are the people like?" How fantastic to think that the murmur of water in the gorge might have whispered, "In thirty-six years from this very month you will have persuaded the Legislature to grant a charter for the first public library in a village in New York State. You, Ezra Cornell, will build and endow it. And that will be but the first step. In thirty-seven years the same Legislature will charter a great university named for you, and you will locate it in the fields on your left and this, too, you will endow with your fortune!" A photograph of Ezra Cornell taken when he was twenty-one shows a pensive, thoughtful, almost melancholy face. The eyes suggest a dreamer and a personality hedged round by frustration incident to poverty and humble origin. How different the likeness shown in a photograph taken forty-two years later — fire, drive, and will power latent in the photograph of 1828, obvious in the features of 1870.

Ezra Cornell may have said to himself: "This is the place!" But what of the people? He had seen nothing of the people who ahead of him had chosen Ithaca. What was Ithaca, what were its business affairs, and would the townspeople welcome a farm boy from De Ruyter?

In the early hours of the day following Ezra Cornell's arrival, he looked for work as a carpenter and, at the same time, began to take stock of the village, looking for signs of growth and friendly faces. Ithaca, then an incorporated village, may have looked quite pretentious to the farm boy, even though Owego (now State) Street, presumably rutty, bumpy, and soggy from the spring rains, would not get its first pavement -- of planks -- for another twenty years. He found the main business stores facing one another

across Aurora Street, between Owego and Seneca. Not much, we believe, on Seneca between Aurora and Tioga for the old city hall was not built until 1843 and the original site of the library building at the corner of Seneca and Tioga is first described as a "lot on which a tavern stood in 1806." The original Jacob Vrodman's Tompkins House probably stood at the intersection of Seneca and Aurora, however, Ezra Cornell could not have missed the original Court House fronting on Mill (now Court) Street, where the Old Court House now stands, nor the Presbyterian and Baptist Churches, substantially where the present houses of worship are located. He would be curious, also, to see where manufacturing was going on, for these plants would spell out what the town was doing for a living. Without industry and exports the inhabitants would be more or less dependent upon one another's washing. The mills he found where the water power was captured; one at the foot of Fall Creek Gorge; another where Aurora Street crosses Six Mile Creek; and a third far up the hill, at the top of Eddy Street about where Cascadilla Hall now stands. But Ezra Cornell was a carpenter of sorts and was more intent on getting a job. He was soon hired to work on a building, a church. The church could have been the new Dutch Reformed, for it had been organized April 2 and was completed in thirty days. His first regular employment, where he was to begin to learn the know-how of machinery, was with Otis Eddy as Manager of a machine shop in the present neighborhood of Cascadilla Hall.

In spare hours Ezra Cornell might go to the Inlet to see what the canal boat fellows were doing and to look at the S. S. Enterprise, which ferried passengers from the terminal of the Catskill Turnpike to the foot of Cayuga Lake, where transportation was available via the Cayuga and Seneca Canal to a landing on the Erie Canal.

What were the people like? Pretty much the same types he had known in De Ruyter--with a difference. A state of excitement, new to Ezra Cornell, prevailed. Everywhere everybody was talking -- in the taverns, at the street corners, and in all such places "wise and far-seeing" men were seeing visions. The optimists were not to be talked down; the pessimists not to be persuaded to change sides. Ithaca, the village, was to become a great metropolis -- how big was anybody's guess.

In the preceding year (1827) someone had come out with a big idea. We do not know either the name of the prophet or just how the idea was sprung. When Ezra Cornell moved about the village, however, he heard about it from men who were strangers, and since he, too, was a stranger, he would be subject to inoculation with the fever by Tom, Dick, or Harry without formal introduction. The two newspapers, The Ithaca Journal, Literary Gazette, and General Advertiser and the Ithaca Chronicle, were also telling the story by reporting commercial statistics, what prominent citizens at home and elsewhere were saying, what the Legislature was considering, all supplemented by editorials which made exciting reading. Land values were moving up, and in anticipation of great days and as if to prove validity of reports was the announcement that the "Clinton House is to be started next month." This hotel was an unheard-of venture in an upstate village of just under thirty-six hundred inhabitants (United States Census, 1829).

Ezra Cornell had a visionary side and so he, too, became an optimist. It was all so simple! The State had but to build a ship canal from Great Sodus Bay on Lake Ontario south to the Erie Canal and then by a short jog to the east to the Cayuga and Seneca Canal and thence to Ithaca. The village would become a Great Lakes Inland Port! From the Middle West Ithaca would import iron, wheat, and other commodities including "frontier skins" by a route which led

along Lake Erie to Buffalo at the mouth of the Erie Canal and thence to Ithaca where these imports would be manufactured, processed, finished, and shipped to market. But this was only half the vision for in 1828 the Legislature had chartered the Ithaca - Owego Railroad (the second railroad to be chartered in the State), and so commerce from Ithaca would also, in the near future, be shipped south to Owego and thence by the Susquehanna River to Atlantic seaboard ports. In return, coal from Pennyslvania would come north from transshipment at the Inlet by lake steamers and canal boats to ports along Lakes Erie and Ontario as well as to places east and west along the Erie Canal. If the street-corner pessimist was "agin" the expense to the taxpayer, he was assured that by comparison the cost of Clinton's Ditch from the Hudson River to Buffalo made the ship canal and incidental dredging along the route a trifling matter. What is more, the Legislature had not only chartered the railroad, but it was fully expected to charter the ship canal -- which, in fact, it did in the following year. The Ithaca - Owego Railroad did not materialize for six, long, exasperating years, and the ship canal was never dug, but Ithaca kept hopeful and when the railroad was opened for business in 1834 and began delivering coal from Pennsylvania at the Ithaca terminal for transshipment, land values in Ithaca began to move skyward. Henry Abt* tells us that a parcel of land which sold in January, 1836, for $4,676, rose to $59,929 by July of that year. Then came the National Panic of 1837.

For the purpose of this history we are omitting what happened to Ezra Cornell during the next thirty-eight years. The story of these years has been often and well told. There is, however, one incident in the period 1828 - 1864 which belongs to this history. In 1843, Ezra Cornell went to Portland, Maine, for the purpose of promoting there, as he had in other parts of the East, a plow of improved design. This business was not very successful; he was grubbing a living for himself and his family. At some time during these

* Henry E. Abt, ITHACA, Ithaca, 1926, p. 640

lean and hungry years, he tells us, he picked up a quarter lying on the pavement of New York City, a lucky find which was a little blessing in that he was enabled to buy a lunch. As a traveling salesman he was still, as at twenty-one, walking upwards of forty miles per day to save money. At Portland he walked into the office of one F. O. J. Smith, Editor of The Maine Farmer. He found Smith on his knees on the floor of his shop making chalk marks on the boards. It seems that Smith had been awarded the contract, on behalf of Samuel F. B. Morse, to dig a ditch and in this ditch to string a lead cable containing wires for America's first telegraph line between the cities of Washington and Baltimore. What he was doing there on the floor was attempting to design the "plow" with which to dig the trench. Smith greeted Cornell as having providentially arrived to help him design a plow which would work and also contrive another machine which was probably in the "chalk" stage if indeed in any stage outside Smith's head and by which the cable would be laid. On this occasion Ezra Cornell was the man with the right ideas at the right time. This fortutious incident launched the farm boy from DeRuyter toward fame and fortune. The going was rough, the elements tempestuous, but in the wake of his career he left the Cornell Public Library and Cornell University.

CHAPTER II

EZRA CORNELL'S LIBRARY

By 1866, thirty-eight years from the time Ezra Cornell had first arrived in Ithaca, he had become a rich man for his times and had prospects of becoming more wealthy. By that time also, having more than enough to support his family, he had fully decided to put some of the fortune acquired from the telegraph business to practical public use. It would be better to do this while he was alive, he believed, for then he could plan, work out details, and have the satisfaction of seeing results—much better than by leaving a fortune with a Will and Testament directing his Executor what to do. He knew that, such is human nature, no executor would perform his duties with the vision, the meticulous attention to details, or the know-how he would himself. Cornell had by now put in fifty-eight years of frugal—at times penny-pinching—living and while learning the principles of business and how to get things done had lost nothing of his personal integrity. And so he writes: "Case should remember that there is danger in becoming suddenly rich." This comment was made in the middle sixties in connection with the suggestion from a Mr. Case regarding his making another fortune in the oil then becoming exploited in the Pennsylvania fields. It was this conviction, irrespective of the source of sudden wealth, which strengthened Ezra Cornell's resolve to use the major part of his present and prospective wealth to build a public library for the people of Tompkins County and a university for the nation. Much better indeed than dumping a "fortune in the hands of his children at death." Cornell had lived long enough to see what happened to children of the rich.

He had picked Judge Francis Miles Finch of the law firm of Boardman and Finch, practicing in Ithaca, for his counselor and trusted friend. Judge Finch had been born in Ithaca, had graduated from Yale in 1849, and had returned to Ithaca to study and practice law. Although Judge Finch was the legal architect of Ezra Cornell's plans to establish and endow a public library and univer-

sity in the village, his role in these benefactions is all but forgotten. His reputation as an Associate Judge of the Court of Appeals of New York State is still known to lawyers across the nation. Nothwithstanding his celebrated post-Civil War poem, The Blue and the Gray, his many notable addresses on public occasions, and his assistance in the founding of the Library and Cornell University, our memory of him has suffered the erosion of time.

When in 1862 Ezra Cornell told Judge Finch that he proposed to build a library and asked the Judge to draw up a charter, a close collaboration began between these two men which lasted until Cornell's death. The two men were as different in appearance, background, education, and temperament as were Ezra Cornell and Andrew D. White. All three possessed in common a high sense of integrity as well as practical ideas and an understanding of the importance of public service. The combination of minds was perfect, for Ezra Cornell had the vision and money to back it; the other two had the ability to take over where Cornell left off for lack of training and education.

Judge Finch's first job was to draft a charter for the Library Association and then to re-draft it time and again until his client was satisfied that every big and little detail was spelled out. Then Ezra Cornell, himself a member of the State Legislature, offered his charter for adoption, and on April 5, 1864, the Governor signed his name in approval.* The legal foundation for the library had been laid.

Ezra Cornell did not wait for his charter in order to get going on the library project, however. Already he had purchased on Tioga Street along the south side of Seneca at a cost of $2,772.97, a lot, 74 by 124 feet. The price indicates that nothing of consequence stood on this lot although it was across

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* N. Y. State Laws, 1864, Chapter 126.

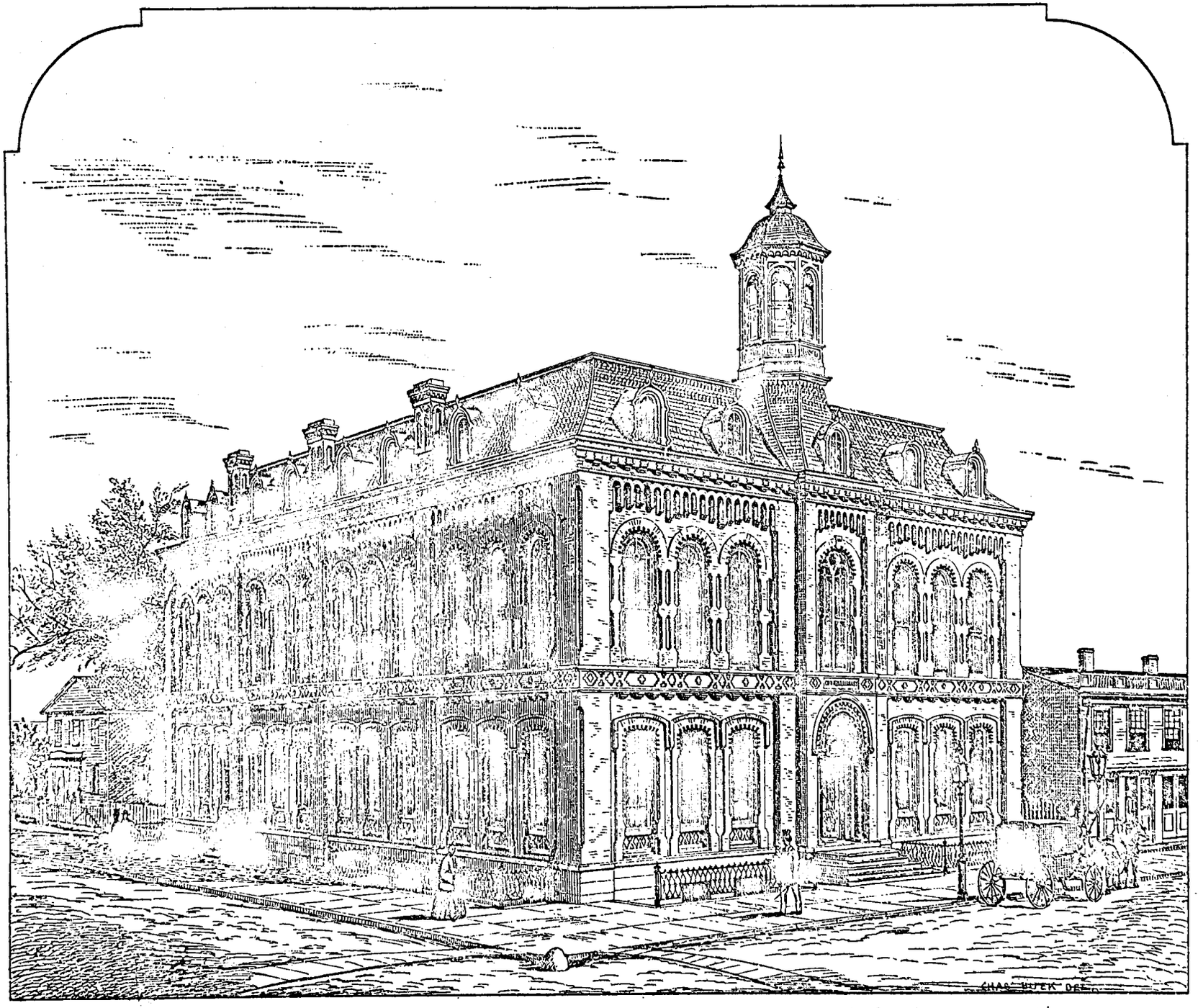
the street from the City Hall which had then adorned Ithaca for twenty years. In the spring of 1863, men, teams, shovels, and scrapers had moved into the library lot, and dirt was moving out. Meanwhile, Ezra Cornell had been looking for an architect. He wrote Judge Finch, "Ithaca has sent out sons who retain affection for home and enterprise to volunteer a plan for an edifice from which the rays of light and knowledge will radiate to her present and future generations." He added that he would pay $125.00 for a complete set of plans and specifications, meaning, of course, if he had to. William Hodgins of Albany, New York, an architect, was given the job at the flat fee indicated. The architect undertook the job, worked overtime at alterations to suit his client, and claimed an additional fee. The client wrote him that a "bargain was a bargain." He would pay no more. In time and as a result of solicitous letters, however, he added another twenty-five dollars.

No such grand edifice had gone up in Ithaca since the Clinton House. The citizens were delighted and became sidewalk superintendents. Just the same, as the building went up slowly between 1863 and 1865, Ezra Cornell, as a Builder, was impatient with delays. The stonemasons grumbled, "Ezra Cornell is a rich man—by far the richest in Central New York. He must pay us more." But he refused, a strike was called, and the Builder went to Syracuse to get men to cut his stone. By 1865, however, tenants were moving in, including Boardman and Finch, the newly chartered First National Bank, the Post Office, the DeWitt Guard, and Cornell's pet, the Farmers' Club.

At last the day set for Dedication of the library proper and the library building, December 20, 1866, came.

The architect's sketch of the building is reproduced here; note its imposing proportions, the wrought-iron fence along both streets and the street lantern perched above Tioga. Where were the first tenants' quarters?

The basement which runs under the entire superstructure was designed to



Am. Photo-Lithographic Co. N.Y. (Osborne's Process)

Architect's Sketch (1863)

quarter the DeWitt Guard, later the G. A. R. A newspaper described the basement drill hall as "the finest in the State"; the writer of the item did not even limit his praise by adding "west of the Hudson River." The First National Bank and the Post Office fronted on Tioga Street and were reached by steep stone steps. Inside, a twelve-foot hallway divided them.

On the left when entered from Tioga Street was the First National Bank with tellers' windows, a room vault, and a room for meetings of the directors. At the right was the Post Office, and, in the rear, were the offices of Boardman and Finch, Attorneys, the Collector of Excise Taxes, and a small office for Ezra Cornell.

Around the use of the second-floor rooms the entire building was designed. Back of the high-arched windows the library proper faced out on Tioga Street and, in depth, about half-way along Seneca. Alcoves constructed of different kinds of wood common to New York State were lined with shelves to accommodate upwards of 30,000 books, but for many years there were more empty shelves than filled ones. To the east of the library was a roomy Lecture Hall complete with a stage and a balcony, which commenced near the southeast window and ran in horseshoe fashion around the north wall and back along the west wall toward the stage. The sidewalls reached nearly to the roof. This hall which would seat eight hundred, Ezra Cornell intended to be used for lectures by distinguished scholars from beyond the horizon, and, in fact, such well-known savants as James Russell Lowell, Goldwin Smith and others of their standing spoke here. When, however, Ezra Cornell told the architect to include a lecture hall, he could not have realized that for a decade it would be most helpful to his university.

On the third floor as well as in the basement, Ezra Cornell had the architect plan rooms for social organizations. Probably there was head-shaking among townspeople about a building designed for many loosely-knit bodies which

might be here today and gone tomorrow, but the Builder could afford this extravagance since he had the money. He also linked past and future by providing for a Drill Hall in the basement for the old soldiers of the Civil War, and a museum on the top floor where the implements of pioneer days could be preserved for posterity. Later on he would advocate facilities in the library where old folks would be encouraged to write about unreported events which otherwise would be lost to future generations. Ezra Cornell was not so visionary as to expect these social organizations, including the Farmers' Club, to pay rents sufficient to pay for their space, but we have no way of knowing whether he was surprised as well as disappointed at the trifling returns collected in subsequent years. Indeed the original interior lay-out of the library building showed he both wanted to have his cake (rents) and eat it too (civic satisfaction).

This was the "edifice," to use his own expression, which Ezra Cornell decided to dedicate on December 20, 1866.

In the mid-nineteenth century there was a definite pattern considered appropriate for public dedications: An Invocation by a minister of the Gospel, followed by an Address summing up the occasion and introducing the benefactor. Next, the formal Presentation of the building and its Acceptance by a prominent citizen, and, finally an Oration by a recognized master of the art. Music was not only appropriate but served a purpose in that the audience had a chance to take a mental breather between heavy, long-winded addresses. The occasion would end with the Benediction. With some slight variations, this formula was adopted by the Committee on Programme for the Dedication of the Cornell Public Library.

CHAPTER III

THE DEDICATION

On the evening of December 20, 1866, church bells rang and cannon boomed from the hilltops as church sextons and old soldiers zealously did their part to celebrate the dedication of the new library building. Within the library building itself, the lecture hall was crowded. Those seated on benches on the main floor presumably were especially invited guests. Among those seated on the balcony were probably men who had worked on the building. Architect Hodgins, however, was not among those present. Even the decorations marked the importance of the occasion. The walls were hung with evergreen wreaths, festoons of bunting, and a plentiful display of the Stars and Strips, and along the balcony, facing the stage, the name of the Founder was spelled out in big, wreathy letters. On the stage had been placed a speaker's desk, and, behind this, seated in the first row, was Ezra Cornell. The record tells us that on his entrance, accompanied by the Board of Trustees, he was greeted with "hearty cheers" by the audience. On either side of him were seated the principals in the ceremony: the Chairman of the Meeting, the Honorable John H. Selkreg, editor of the Ithaca Journal, and Member of the Legislature; the Reverend William Searls, pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church, who gave the opening prayer; the Honorable B. G. Ferris, who accepted the gift from Ezra Cornell on behalf of the Library Association; the Reverend Thomas C. Strong, D. D., pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church, who offered a prayer of dedication; the Honorable Francis Miles Finch, who delivered the Dedicatory Address; and William Rogers of Aurora, New York, the Orator of the occasion. In the second row sat those of the Board of Trustees who took no part in the ceremony other than that of lending their presence. At the conclusion of the ceremonies, just preceding the Benediction, an original hymn to the tune of Old Hundredth was sung by volunteers from various churches. Undoubtedly, members of Ezra Cornell's family, including his wife and his eldest son, Alonzo B.,

who was also a Library Trustee, were present, but neither of the two people who might have been chiefly rewarded by the spectacle, his father and mother, was living in 1866.

On the floor of the Lecture Hall where the invited guests were seated, every seat was taken although the night was bitter by cold. No wonder, for the Dedication had been much publicized and gossiped about for over two years. The audience must have been impressed with the size of the room and the decorations. Some guests noticed that the balcony was not supported by posts but rather was hung from the ceiling by stout iron rods, and considered that this did not look like good engineering in view of the balcony's capacity. Indeed, although Ezra Cornell felt sure that the support was ample, substantial posts were later inserted underneath, and the public felt reassured.

The Record of the Proceedings at the Dedication presents in great detail all that took place and includes the opening prayer, the prayer of dedication, all Addresses, the Hymn, and a copy of the Charter and Deed of Conveyance from Ezra and Mary Ann Cornell to the Trustees of the Library Association. It had been stipulated in the Charter that upon tender of the Deed and at the moment of Acceptance, the Trustees designated in the Charter would automatically become an incorporated body. This Record runs to one hundred nine pages, and although it gives the appearance of having been printed from engraved plates, it was actually first lettered by hand and then transferred to stone plates. Occasional original drawings were included also, for good measure. The book is available at the library for inspection.

Of the events which comprised the Dedication, only one Address and a letter bear on the history of the Library.

Immediately after the Opening Prayer and apparently without introduction, Ezra Cornell approached the speaker's desk and read a factual statement.

> Ladies and Gentlemen: I have invited you to assemble this evening to witness the consummation of a long cherished purpose — the establishment of a Public Library in the Village of Ithaca, the use of which shall be free to all residents of the County of Tompkins, an Institution which, I trust, will be found useful in increasing the knowledge and elevating the moral and religious standards of the people....
>
> Having decided in the Fall of 1862 to found a Free Public Library, I mentioned to a few friends my intention, stating to them that I should appropriate $20,000 for the purchase of a lot and the erection of an edifice....
>
> My own reflections on the subject had led me to the conclusion that a public library to be successful must possess the means of support, and saw that the sum which I had intended to appropriate to this object would be entirely inadequate.

He continued by saying that he was not long in arriving at a decision to

> have a library room, reading room for ladies and for you, gentlemen, a lecture room and such other rooms adapted to business purposes as would furnish an income from their rent adequate to defray the expenses incident to the support of the library.

Ezra Cornell's tall, spare figure was well known in the village, but in the role of philanthropist, he had assumed a new aspect to his audience. There must have been an intense interest in his appearance, delivery, choice of words, and whatever qualities were to be seen in his features which might show how a rich man behaves in public and in what respect wealth had changed him. Probably few people in the village had seen him smile; no one, perhaps, who had seen him laugh with any show of abandon. The business of making money the hard way and the necessity for dealing with the ruthless competition which worked to eliminate him as a factor in the telegraph business were serious matters and showed in his features. Probably, the townspeople saw no change in the Founder other than what we find in comparing the photos of 1828 and 1870.

In the course of time, the library building underwent such radical changes

in the arrangement of its rooms that it is of interest to know what Ezra Cornell said, in part, about the original interior:

> The basement has a "drill hall" for the DeWitt Guard and two offices fronting on Tioga Street with separate entrances. The ceiling is twelve feet high.
>
> The first floor is about three feet above the level of the sidewalk. The entrance from Tioga Street leads into a hallway twelve feet wide extending to an entrance from the rear yard.
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> This passage is intersected by a hallway entering from Seneca Street, also twelve feet wide. On this floor are five offices. In the northwest corner entering from Tioga Street is the First National Bank, other tenants are Boardman & Finch, the post office, office for the U. S. Collector of taxes.
>
> On the second floor is the Library, thirty feet wide and fifty feet long, ceiling twenty-four feet in height. This room is divided into two tiers of alcoves for books, with ten alcoves in each tier. Each alcove is furnished with different native wood. The room is fireproof, its walls are of brick, thick and substantial. It is capable of housing 30,000 volumes. [The building was anything but fireproof, and as for the statement about the library, he would have been justified in describing it as "fire resistant."] The Lecture Room is on this floor taking up half the floor area. It is sixty feet long by fifty feet wide.
>
> On the third floor is a room occupied by Fire Company No. 4; another by Ithaca Farmer's Club, also a room for the Ithaca Historical Society. The roof is in the "French Style" and is covered with slate and tin.

Ezra Cornell then went on to give in detail the names of the various contractors and suppliers and to thank the workmen, "as if each was conscious of the future reward that his labor was sure to bring to himself and his children.

Next he proceeded to a detailed breakdown of costs. The sums expended for construction added up to $58,905.53; the purchase of books, $4,000 for three thousand volumes; these sums, added to the cost of the lot, made a grand

total of $65,676.50. It has been estimated that were the library property reproduced in 1955, the cost would approximate $500,000; in 1968 the cost would be much higher. Accordingly, the actual cost in the 1860's represented a fortune.

The Founder was well aware that people were saying that he would have to "tail-up" his library if it was to keep from going "busted." At the close of his address, by a breakdown of probably receipts and expenditures, he endeavored to prove that the project would be self-supporting. Tenants already in possession would be paying rent of $2,393 per annum. When all rooms were rented, he believed rents would amount to a least $3,000. Next he went on to give figures on the costs of operation:

librarian (in actual attendance)	$ 500
janitor	500
insurance	120
fuel	200
gas	200
magazines and newspapers	400
incidental expenses	80
	$ 2,000
Leaving for the purchase of books,	1,000
	$ 3,000

and added the comment: "And may no future New Year's Day find here an empty treasury." Did any of the Trustees sense that if they were to spend $1,000 a year for books, by Ezra Cornell's own figures every New Year's Day would find an empty treasury? The Founder undoubtedly had a motive in warning the Trustees not to expect him to "tail-up" deficits. This warning, like Banquo's Ghost, sat in on trustee meetings for years to come.

Having disposed of the details, the Founder was now ready to perform the act which automatically created the Trustees a corporate body and vested in them, and presumably in the corporation, title to the library property. He summed up as follows:

> Fellow citizens of Ithaca, this property belongs to you and the other citizens of the County of Tompkins... The Board of Trustees are your agents...to give the residents of the County of Tompkins equal privileges and opportunities in the uses and benefits to be derived from the Library.
>
> Mr. Chairman:
> I now present to you the deed of the property and the keys to the edifice and may God bless the enterprise and make it fruitful to the people in Knowledge, Truth, and Virtue.

Mr. Ferris, who had been appointed to receive them, accepted the deed and keys on behalf of his associate Trustees and proceeded to give an extended address in praise of the Founder and to paint a rosy future for the library. He then read the entire Charter, in the drafting of which Judge Finch had used about thirty-five hundred words, and the Deed of Conveyance, which the Judge had managed to spell out in about fifteen hundred words.

Both the Charter and Deed designated particular persons who were to be trustees for the first year and to whom as trustees title runs. Ezra Cornell first mentioned as trustee and as grantor would be trustee for life, and on his death, his oldest living descendant, and thereafter, down the line, the oldest lineal descendant would succeed him. Next, as ex-officio trustees were named seven pastors of local churches who would have tenure during the length of their pastorate and five residents of the county who had been elected or appointed to public office. In both these instances also the successors would be automatically ex-officio trustees. In addition the Charter also provided for six trustees at large.

The Board of Trustees was empowered to adopt By-laws for the administration of the building and library, to make rules respecting the use of library facilities, and to have certain incidental prerogatives.

The novelty and the magnitude of the gift to the residents of Tompkins

County together with the real or apparent austerity of the Founder seems to have kept the occasion free from any element of humor, unless at this late day we find it in a letter from the Honorable Andrew D. White to Ezra Cornell regretting that other engagements in New York City made it impossible for him to attend the Dedication. The letter is a fine example of prose at its best; however, to close he says:

> Feeling this identity in purpose between these foster sisters, The Cornell Library and the University, allow me to pledge myself, that in the position to which I have recently been called [President of Cornell University] no effort of mine shall ever be asked in vain.

In 1866 the "foster sisters" idea, whatever its meaning, may have been merely a happy figure of speech by way of closing a letter. In the light of subsequent events, however, during the next decade, the relationship was more truly that of foster mother and daughter. At the time the letter was written, the library building was an actuality, and the University but an idea on paper without a building or student. Both institutions had in common a foster father, and, in Judge Finch, a legal midwife. Justification for our calling the library building a "cradle" for the University derives from a reference to the library as Cornell's "foster mother" in an article by Professor T. F. Crane. "Tee Fee" Crane had come from Princeton University to Ithaca to study law in the office of Boardman and Finch in 1865. The law firm and other tenants had moved into the library building a year preceding the Dedication. He wrote:

> Here Ezra Cornell had a tiny office next to the post office... In this office the first meeting of the faculty of Cornell University was held in October, 1868... It was from this office [Boardman and Finch's] that I saw Cornell University gradually grow into being.

When the office was too small for meetings of the university trustees,

the board room of the bank was used. It was in the board room of the First National Bank that Andrew D. White was elected Cornell's first president, and in the same board room, "meetings of the Board of Trustees of the university and the Executive Committee were held for twenty years." Likewise it was in the Lecture Hall in the library building that Cornell University was dedicated in 1868. Professor Crane goes on to say that students took their entrance examinations in the Drill Hall, a practice which also "continued for many years." Graduation exercises for classes of the University were held in the Lecture Hall until 1883 when the Armory was completed on the campus. It was to this room also that Ezra Cornell's coffin was brought in December 1874, in order that the townspeople might have an opportunity to take a last look at the man who had done so much for Ithaca. Some four thousand people are reported as having filed past his bier. Sage Chapel had been completed in 1874, and it is significant that his body was carried to the library instead of to the Chapel. Truly, the library was the place where, free from the bitterness, financial harassment, and frustrations which attended the founding of the University, Ezra Cornell realized his first dream of service to posterity.

From another source we learn that as early as September 5, 1865, a group, which included the Governor of the State, the Lieutenant Governor, the State Treasurer, several senators, assemblymen, and prominent citizens, had assembled at the library, in connection with Ezra Cornell's pledge to put up $500,000 to establish the University and to organize its Board of Trustees. At this meeting Ezra Cornell was elected Chairman of the Board, George W. Schuyler, Treasurer, Francis Miles Finch, Secretary. The Board appointed an Executive Committee, Finance Committee, and Building Committee and, incidentally, transacted Cornell University's first order of business.

Cornell University's use of the library building for its first decade was due as much to the presence there , until December 1874, of Ezra Cornell, as to its facilities for holding meetings and university lectures, to the availability of books for use by Cornell students, and to the fact that the first business office of the University was maintained there. For all the latter, indeed, suitable accommodations on the Hill were lacking.

When the Dedication ceremonies were over, the audience had listened to some twenty-one thousand words. No doubt they hustled into overcoats, and probably they gossiped both on the way home and for weeks on end about how wealth had not spoiled Ezra and what he had so handsomely done.

How did it happen that in 1862, Ezra Cornell decided to establish a free public library instead of choosing to undertake some other civic project? We know that he consulted business and professional friends in Ithaca for advice before making a move. What would have been more natural than for these men to have suggested some project which would have helped commercial interests and benefited all residents of the village, as for example, the elimination of mud in the business district. Periodically, floods swept down Aurora and State Streets on the way to the lake, tossing buildings along and sweeping away dams, and, on subsiding, leaving deep gouges in the streets. This damaging situation was difficult to endure, but the village was poor, and the creeks were too numerous to harness. Yet, if any of the citizens consulted by Ezra Cornell tried to suggest such a project, he did not have the ghost of a chance for success, for a library was the sole idea in Ezra Cornell's head. The reason why lies in youthful frustrations; some may see them pictured in his photographs.

Both Ezra Cornell and his brother had cleared timberland on his father's farm near De Ruyter in order to get money to pay tuition at the local academy.

Education in useful knowledge came out of books, and books, out of which a well-rounded education could be had, were not easily available at the Cornell farmstead. There must have been many times between the day of his arrival in Ithaca and his seeking out various prominent citizens to ask their advice when he realized the importance of knowing something about electricity, physics, and engineering. A working knowledge of these subjects would have helped so much in making a living and solving problems connected with the telegraph business. Like a parent who wants his child to have a better education than himself, he may have felt that every young man to be born in Tompkins County was potentially a "foster son."

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST TEN YEARS

On the day following the Dedication those Trustees who are mentioned in the Deed* of Conveyance held their first meeting in order to organize as a corporate body. Between the date of the Charter (April 5, 1864) and the day of delivery of the Deed by Ezra Cornell and his wife (December 20, 1866), all but one ex-officio trustee (Samuel G. Williams) had been eliminated as such for one reason or another. Judge Finch, in drafting the Deed, had substituted the new members of the Board in the places of those who had fallen by the way, and at that first organizational meeting the make-up of the Board of Trustees was as follows:

Ezra Cornell, member for life
Rev. Theodore F. White, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church
Rev. John W. Paine, Rector of St. John's Episcopal Church
Rev. Thomas C. Strong, Pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church
Rev. Joseph N. Folwell, Pastor of the Baptist Church
Rev. William Searls, Pastor of the First Methodist Episcopal Church
Rev. S. P. Gray, Pastor of the Second Methodist Episcopal Church
Rev. Iarnes Tuohy, Pastor of the Church of the Immaculate Conception
Samuel G. Williams, Principal of the Ithaca Academy
Chester W. Barney, Principal of District School No. 16
Anson W. Knettles, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Tompkins
Philip I. Partenheimer, President of the Village of Ithaca
Elias Treman, Chief Engineer of the Fire Department
Francis M. Finch
George W. Schuyler
John H. Selkreg
William R. Humphrey
Alonzo B. Cornell
Benjamin G. Ferris

The first order of business was the election of officers: Ezra Cornell, President; Benjamin G. Ferris, Vice-President; Alonzo B. Cornell, Treasurer; Francis M. Finch, Secretary and Librarian.

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*Recorded in Tompkins County Clerk's Office in Liber 4 of Deeds, p. 102.

Judge Finch functioned as Secretary for eight years. As Librarian his duties were nominal, but his position as such was comprehensive with respect to library business. The Board appointed an Assistant Librarian-in-charge and this practice continued from year to year until about 1950, when the title became Director of the Library. At Annual Meetings, Judge Finch would read a report of library activities for the past year. No doubt the Librarian-in-charge prepared the report, a custom which has continued to the present.

Francis Miles Finch, by virtue of his office as Librarian, became also one of the first ex-officio Trustees of the University. The Charter of Cornell provides that whoever is elected Librarian of the Cornell (public) Library Association shall be an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees of the University. That this odd tie-in was Ezra Cornell's idea is confirmed in a letter of his to Judge Finch, February 1865: "As to the Librarian, I think I am right and if the University bill passes I will be still stronger in that conviction."* We have to surmise his reasons, for we do not find any other reference to the matter. What connection did the two institutions have a century ago? When the University Charter was passed by the Legislature (April 27, 1865), the public Library was a fact, the University but an idea on paper. Ezra Cornell had been so abused by opposition to his "God-less" university idea, and the road ahead was so guarded by lions yet to be encountered, that he may have thought the future of his university very uncertain. Nor could he have figured what would be its size even fifty years later. Judge Finch had been the legal architect of both Charters, also to a large extent Ezra Cornell's eyes and ears. At the time it may have seem appropriate to tie this trusted man into both institutions; what Ezra Cornell might think of the idea is problematical.

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*From a letter discovered in 1955 and turned over to the Cornell Public Library by Professor Henry E. Guerlac.

But to return to the Public Library which was now a going concern, though unsteadily, as details were gradually worked out. Between the beginning of construction (spring of 1863) and the Dedication, much spade work had to be done, and, as the Founder was in Albany and elsewhere much of the time, he had to have an agent on the job. This agent was Francis Miles Finch. "Judge" Finch is the title by which he is remembered, but that title fails to describe his versatility — lawyer and judge of distinction throughout the United States, poet, man of letters, and finally, master of detail. As a young man practicing law in an office in the rear of the Library building, a step removed from the Founder's office, he was well situated for attending to detail. Undoubtedly, it was he who inspired an editorial in the Ithaca Citizen and Democrat, April 4, 1865.

> The First National Bank and Post Office have removed to their splendid rooms in the Cornell Library...the building is an ornament and blessing to Ithaca.. all property in Ithaca has increased in valuation, houses have been sold for five, six, and eight thousand dollars which four years ago would not sell for half that amount. The large amount of paper money afloat has done part of it, but a large part is owing to the public generosity of Ezra Cornell.

The Library's progress is recorded in Judge Finch's letters to Ezra Cornell. On July 4, 1866, he wrote:

> ...wire screens on the Library alcove, $500. too high. ...Have made a list of periodicals, will cost inside $300. Ladies desire to open their Reading Room Monday and tonight the young men meet to plan to open theirs. ...C. S. Grant gave us a splendid present, Hogarth's Works and Don Quixote, illustrated by Doré. The Clock Co. are making a Calendar clock to give us.

And nine days (December 29, 1866) after the Dedication, he could report already on its being crowded:

> The Library so overflows with readers, especially evenings, that Mr. Ferris [Director of the Library] and I have been driven to open the Men's Reading Room for their accommodation ~~as~~ bare as it is. In wet and muddy weather the Library carpet would be ruined and we must supply another place.

Progress of the Library is also worked in the Minutes of Meetings of the Trustees and of the Library Association. So, on January 25, 1867, it is recorded that School District No. 16 had transferred its library to the Cornell Library Association for "safe keeping," and that the Board had voted $300.00 for newspapers and periodicals for the Reading Room.

On April 13, 1867, the Board adopted a set of By-laws, the principal item of which was:

> Art. I. Each member of the Association before entering upon his duties shall be publicly sworn into office in the presence of the Association. "To uphold the Constitution of the United States, the State of New York and my duties as Trustee." The oath must be taken before a Notary Public, engrossed in writing and kept in a book in the Library entitled, "Book of Obligations."

No such book has been discovered. In all probability the custom was tried and found wanting.

And on December 20, 1867, at the first Annual Meeting, the Treasurer Reported the Collections:

Rents for '66	$ 2,139.05
Expended	1,504.63
On hand	$ 631.42

Nothing expended for books. The Board thanked General William S. Burt of Boston, Massachusetts, for the present of a quandrant which had been part of the outfit of a Rebel privateer and had been captured by General Butler at New Orleans. Regrettably, the gift has long since disappeared.

At the close of Ezra Cornell's Address at the Dedication, he said that he

had placed 3,000 volumes on the library shelves, "and shall add 1,000 each year until the number 15,000 is made up." Was this a promise or a statement of intention? There is no record of his having given any books during 1867. It appears that he had come to the conclusion that if he always did the needful for the Library, no one else would come forward to help; that it was time the townspeople began to learn that the Library was a public charge. Earlier in the year, under date of January 10, Judge Finch seemed uncertain of the Founder's intentions, for he wrote:

> If you intend to make this year the commencement of your annual donation of 1,000 volumes and the labor and selection and purchase is to fall upon me I have some suggestions to make.

Seven days later, the Library again figured in Judge Finch's letter:

> Finally, you see, I continue to have "Library on the brain" as some of the people say. But I can't help seeing what is wanted and worrying over the question of ways and means.

The Librarian reported that the reading rooms were supplied with the Chicago Trubune, Boston Journal, New York Tribune, New York World, Albany Argus. Monthlies were represented by London Society, London Art Journal, Hours at Home, Atlantic Monthly, Blackwood's Magazines, American Journal of Science. And the quarterlies were the London Quarterly Review, North Bristol Review, Edinburgh Review, Westminister Review, and the North American Review.

On March 6, 1868, the Library Committee reported to the Trustees that the circulation of books had already begun. Presumably all had been catalogued, arranged on shelves, and a method adopted for recording outgoing and incoming volumes.

Ezra Cornell had set October 7, 1868 for the Dedication of the University,

but almost four years of preparation preceded this event. The University Trustees had met for the first time on September 5, 1865 in the Library for the purpose of organizing as a corporate body to transact business. Governor Reuben E. Fenton, Lieutenant Governor Thomas G. Alvord, and thirteen other trustees were present. Ezra Cornell was elected Chairman of the Board, Francis Miles Finch, Secretary, and George W. Schuyler, Treasurer. The principal business was Cornell's offer to give his bond for $500,000, to be secured by Western Union Telegraph stock, "to the amount of $700,000." This offer was accepted. In view of the purchasing power of this sum at the time, the gift toward the founding of the University was handsome! The meeting closed with the selection of a committee to locate a site for the University on East Hill.

Although meetings of the University Trustees were held in the library building at least once a year, there is no record of any action taken by the Executive Committee before October 9, 1868. At that meeting it was decided to employ a Business Manager who was to have his office in the building. The record of meetings of Trustees would thus seem to suggest that Ezra Cornell, assisted by Francis Miles Finch, was, in fact, Cornell University for all practical purposes between 1865 and the Dedication three years later. In his office in the library building, he transacted all business that had to do with the beginning of the University: the building of Morrill Hall, the arranging for accommodations for faculty and students on the Hill, and the advancing of money to meet payrolls. In addition he carried on a voluminous correspondence in long hand, found space in the library building's halls and attic to store books purchased by Andrew D. White for the University, and in point of fact attended to all the day-to-day details incident to founding a university.

Great preparations had been made to set the stage fittingly for the official opening. At ten o'clock in the morning all seats were filled in the

Lecture Hall. Bells had been ringing in the churches and one or more cannon booming and echoing against the hills. The crowd numbered 337 students, as well as members of the State Board of Regents, men of letters, senators and assemblymen. When Ezra Cornell, accompanied by the Faculty of the University, entered the Hall, the audience rose to greet them. All biographies of Ezra Cornell and Andrew D. White mention the sick and worn-out appearance of both men. The Founder delivered an address from a manuscript, then Lieutenant Governor Woodford administered the oath of office to Andrew D. White and delivered into his hands a casket containing keys which represented the temporal estate of the University — but to what locks they appertained we are not informed. The Charter and Laws for the University's government and the "broad" seal of the corporation were also hidden in the casket. White accepted the chest and was declared and thereby installed as President of the University.*

On the day following, exercises were held on the campus near where the university library now stands. Townspeople and guests either threaded their way through the city cemetery or climbed up a dusty road which led past the Fiske-McGraw mansion. Morrill Hall was the only finished building. The foundations of White Hall were peeping above ground. In every direction the campus was an eneven stretch of farm lands. There was not even a bridge over either Fall or Cascadilla Creek. Probably the townspeople took this drab prospect for granted, but what must men like James Russell Lowell and other guests from metropolitan centers have thought? The contrast between the sentiments of the speakers and the actuality of the campus sickened Andrew D. White. He well knew that among the faculty and guests were those who, like himself, were familiar with well-established American and European universities.

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* He had been elected President by the Trustees, November 21, 1866.

A scaffold had been erected on which bells given by Jennie McGraw had been hung. Librarian Francis Miles Finch gave a fine Address of Acceptance in which he asked what the melody of the bells would mean to faculty, student, and, lastly Ithacans.

> Citizens of Ithaca. What will these bells say to you?... Never shut your ears to these college chimes because they will remind you of the example this day set. ...Never let it be said that you have neither part nor lot in this great enterprise which some day will make your homes classic ground.

On January 20, 1869, a public meeting was held in the Lecture Hall for the purpose of laying before the people a sketch of the "condition, work, and wants of the Library." Whitlock's Band and the Orpheus Glee Club which later became the Cornell Glee Club were on hand to furnish music for the occasion. The room was crowded, for undoubtedly the townspeople expected to hear of big events in the offing. A gift of 1,500 volumes was announced as having been given by Jennie McGraw. The audience moved a vote of thanks to her and to other citizens who had given volumes to the library during the year.

Jennie wanted the books put in an alcove to be named after the "Bates" family of Ithaca, who had been "long identified with its early and its late history."

President Cornell proposed that the Trustees "provide suitable books," bound in a most durable manner so that they would last for centuries, and kept in a place convenient for public use. In these books, he suggested that citizens should be encouraged to record

> any fact, historic or geological, that may occur within their knowledge, which they may want to jot down in the history of the times.... During the year many citizens have passed away, carrying with them to the tomb many incidents valuable to history which are now lost forever.

There is no record that such books were provided, although at a later date a not very durable scrapbook was provided which is still extant and contains some newspaper clippings. Had from the beginning the Library kept only published reports of events in which it was concerned, this history would more truly reflect the part it took in the life of the county, including the founding of Cornell University. Finally, a list of periodicals for the Reading Room was given; the list is impressive.

At this same meeting also eight engravings were reported to have been stolen from the London Art Journal. Comment was made of the "deplorable, moral obliquity as to pilferers of such works of art." It would be necessary, the audience was told, to purchase an entire new set for the year 1868. This incident seems to account for the new regulation which was put into effect requiring each applicant for borrower membership be sponsored by one or more responsible persons who guaranteed the Library against loss, damage, or expense.

The Library was officially opened for business March 2, 1868, and the new regulation went into effect that day. Books, newspapers, and periodicals had been available for use in the Reading Room long before the official opening, but owing to the job of cataloging, shelf arrangement, and other details, books were not formally signed out, and would-be borrowers appear to have helped themselves.

The Librarian reported that during the year circulation was 12,077 and that some 3,676 books had been given by Cornell. There appears to be an inconsistency in the book inventory. We are first told that Cornell gave 3,000 in 1866; now he has given 3,676, and the total inventory at this date is 6,316. This contradiction may be explained by the fact that the Ithaca Academy had turned over its library for "safe keeping" with a verbal understanding that title passed and that various citizens had given books in limited numbers.

The Treasurer's report tells us that the Library building was erected in 1864-1865; that tenants had moved in on the first floor in the spring of 1865; that rents collected in 1868 amounted to $3,040.76 and disbursements, $2,882.72, including the purchase price of twenty volumes bought by the Trustees. The actual cash balance on hand was $93.16. Apparently there were also unpaid bills on hand, for the Treasurer added that there was an actual deficit of $154.30. One reason for the deficit lay in rent in default by the County of Tompkins. The County had leased the Drill Hall for the DeWitt Guard and refused to pay $300.00 for the year 1868.

Following the reports Colonel H. B. Sprague who was in command of the military unit on the Hill, gave an Address entitled "Riches and what Constitutes them." Evidently it was a fine address; at least a newspaper said so and for good measure paraphrased his remarks as, "the nobility, value, and influence of labor."

The meeting was concluded by the Orpheus Glee Club singing "The Chimes."

On July 1, 1869, the first Commencement for students at the University was held in Library Hall at which time eight diplomas were given out to men who had transferred the previous September from other colleges. President White gave the commencement address — a custom which continued, as Professor Crane tells us, until the Armory was built on the Campus in 1883.

The meeting held on November 11, 1870, was called for the express purpose of deciding what to do about the rent for the Drill Hall which was then in default for over a year. Authority was given to sue the County. This was done, and at a subsequent meeting it was reported that $321.00 had been collected after suit; it looks rather as though the political complexion of the Board of Supervisors had undergone a change between the time of voting for a lease and the time to pay.

At this meeting also it was reported that about twenty-one books had been "lost" and that the loss had been charged to students at the University, In the two years of operation, however, only thirty-five volumes had been reported as missing.

The University's first provision for library service was in two rooms in Morrill Hall. Later, the books were moved to McGraw Hall. In neither building was there room for students and books equal to the demand. The present Uris Library was not built until 1891. Use of the Founder's library down town, situated in close proximity to student rooms, was natural during the first ten years.

Far more serious was the report that borrowers were falling off; that circulation was declining because books were being worn out with use; that money must be forthcoming for rebinding; that additions each year (presumably by the Trustees) were offset by books discarded; that the end result would be a library shrinking both in numbers of volumes and borrowers unless something was done. Indeed, the Trustees were told that if it were not for private gifts, the Library would not have 1,000 volumes. The reason for the situation is attributed to public apathy. This news must have all but stunned some of the Trustees as their imaginations pictured a shrinking library and lessening of circulation, and we may even assume that dark thoughts possessed the minds of some. "Didn't Mr. Cornell promise to donate 1,000 volumes each year until the shelves held at least 15,000? Isn't this the Founder's problem?" There is no record of any such questions being raised, but in the absence of President Cornell, is it not fair to assume that someone spoke up? Banquo, whose ghost was referred to earlier, is by now a member of the Board and will continue to sit it on meetings for some years to come. We know that one faction on the Board (undoubtedly the Trustees-at-large who were business men) took the

position that if there were any surplus at a year's end, it should be invested against a "rainy day."* The other faction took the position that they were trustees of a public library rather than managers of real estate; that the purpose of the Founder was to establish and operate a library for the residents of Tompkins County for all time; in short, that every dollar of surplus should go for the purchase of books! Surely, some conservative trustee must have replied, in effect, that unless the building could be maintained during the "rainy days" which were sure to come (witness the periodic panics over the years), that there would be no place in which to house the library, and may even have reminded the book-buying faction that the Founder had warned, "And let no future New Year's Day find here an empty treasury." The conservative faction could not silence the book-spenders but evidently, judging by the record of attendance over the following years, these men and their successors determined policies.

The Trustees, however, were unanimous in agreeing that money, more of it, must be secured from some source. It appears that Ezra Cornell had attended but one trustee meeting since that following the Dedication. The Trustees were learning that they and they only would have to find ways and means of keeping the Library afloat and on an even keel. The Founder was completely absorbed in private business affairs, in the struggle to finance the University and in trying to keep his health.

The years 1871 and 1872 in the history of the Library were apparently mainly concerned with routine matters. By January 30, 1873, however, financial conditions had improved. The balance in the Treasury was $2,400 — "rainy-day" money which the conservative element had managed to salvage at the expense of

*The charter, Art. Third, Sec. III provides in substance that running expenses of the building shall always have preference over expenditures for any other purpose.

the book account. In the previous year a law had been passed by the State enabling a village to assist an established library financially, and at the Trustees' meeting in January it was recommended that a publicity campaign be commenced to get public support for a village grant-in-aid. It also appears from the minutes that Ezra Cornell had offered to give $1,000 for books if the citizens or village put up a like amount. This is the only instance of record, during the residue of his life, in which he offered in a measure to implement his promise or intention of adding 1,000 volumes a year. Neither the citizens individually nor the village met the challenge. Fifty-nine lean years had to pass before the city and county assumed liability under appropriate laws and then only when it became a question of keeping the Library open. In the meantime, however, a number of citizens left bequests to the Library which materially helped.

On December 4, 1874, coming events began to cast their shadow. On that day Francis Miles Finch tendered his resignation as Secretary and Librarian. Presumably, he and members of the Founder's family were the first to see the shadow. On December 7, 1874, Ezra Cornell died, aged sixty-seven, just short of his sixty-eighth birthday. Ithaca went into mourning and the Library building was draped with black bunting. The Founder's body was taken to Library Hall where for three and one-half hours townspeople filed past the bier to pay their respects. Then it was taken across the street to the residence of his son Franklin, where funeral services were held, after which the funeral procession moved to the village cemetery where the coffin was put in the Cornell vault, in later years to be moved to the Sage Chapel crypt.

December 7 was a dark day for Ithaca, the University, and Cornell Public Library. Ezra Cornell had been beset with financial troubles ever since founding the University. His great fortune which had come quickly seemed

determined to steal away hastily. The townspeople, however, still thought of him as a man of great wealth, power, and prestige. Now the Benefactor, the man who in a financial storm could be counted on to save the ship and crew, was suddenly no more. Death was a fact, but realization that it had happened and of its consequences formed but slowly in the minds of those affected.

On December 21, 1874, the Annual Meeting was held, and Alonzo B. Cornell, oldest son of the Founder, was elected President of the Library Trustees. Judge Finch's resignation was accepted, and William R. Humphrey elected Librarian in his place.

It will be remembered that when Ezra Cornell projected the annual budget on which the Library should be run, he figured on $3,000 annual income and $2,000 for running expenses, leaving $1,000 for the purchase of books. In this connection the actual figures presented in the very month in which he died prove interesting. The Treasurer reported:

Income		Running Expenses	
office rents	$2,059.58	books	$ 56.75
lecture hall	375.00	binding	101.20
military hall	400.00	repairs	326.40
fines	133.91	insurance	187.50
interest on investments	125.00	janitor	600.46
misc.	76.20	ass't Librarian	773.18
		fuel	151.51
		gas light	239.50
		periodicals	89.22
		contingent	60.35
		"	97.45
		misc.	81.46
Total	$3,169.69	Total	$2,764.55

On March 6, 1876, it was reported to the Trustees that a contract which had been worked out between Ithaca Academy and the Library Association provided that the Academy, whose real estate had been taken over by the village's Board of Education, would pay the interest derived from a fund of $11,000 which it

possessed to the Library Association annually on condition that the money would be spent by the Association exclusively for books and that books so bought would have a suitable label descriptive of the origin of its purchase. Although title to the fund remained with the Academy, nonetheless this contract constituted the Library Association's first endowment.

In the ten years since the Dedication, the book circulation had grown to 28,000 and the inventory to 10,369 volumes. The Treasurer reported receipts and expenditures:

Receipts		Expenditures	
rent of Lecture Hall	$ 271.35	janitor	$ 600.00
office rents	2,197.50	contingent	69.45
military hall	400.00	librarian's salary*	749.64
interest on investment	105.00	contingent	67.63
fines	111.60	fuel	114.65
interest on Academy Fund investment	479.63	periodicals	62.50
misc. income	82.60	gas	159.51
		repairs	550.80
		insurance	187.50
		cataloging	195.13
		printing	10.25
		water	20.00
		books	771.05
		binding	68.30
		stationery	25.41
		misc.	105.00
	$3,647.68		$3,756.82

*This salary must have been paid to the Director of the Library. It would appear that Statutory Librarians were never on the pay roll.

CHAPTER V

THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS

1877 through 1896

During the next two decades, Ithaca grew from a village into a city. The period in the town's history is remarkable for its progressive outlook and the accomplishments of the citizens, who, now that Ezra Cornell had gone, seem to have grown up to their responsibilities. At the time of his death, the village was much changed and bettered from what it was when he came to town looking for a job as a carpenter. During these next twenty years, more changes and improvements were made. The town installed one of the first telephone lines in the United States, an electric light system, and a street railway — which also was one of the first in the Country. In the business district the streets which had divided the year between dust and mud were paved. Although at the beginning of the period much of the flat land west of Cayuga Street, and the area to the southwest known as the Titus Flats, were swampy and in the spring were flooded; by the close of 1897 the areas had been much filled in and the north branch of Six Mile Creek, which formerly ran to the Inlet between West Buffalo and Seneca Streets had been diverted and confined in the improved channel. Indeed, in many respects these vital years might be called the period in which Ithaca worked its way up out of the silt which in prehistoric times washed down from the hills.

Activities at the Library during these two decades followed pretty much the old routine. The library building no longer cradled Cornell University which now was housed in numerous buildings on Ezra Cornell's farm. Only the students clung to the town for hillside rooms in which to sleep and for amusements of singular variety.

At their meeting on October 7, 1879, the Trustees received a petition signed by 1,100 residents of the village requesting that a speial reading room

be supplied with periodicals and books of reference published in America and England and be kept open both during the day and until ten o'clock in the evening. The Trustees replied that a reading room was already available and was supplied with periodicals, and that sources would not permit another. Unfortunately, the petition did not state what conditions were unsatisfactory For years past the Library had subscribed to upwards of fifty newspapers and magazines. Perhaps the petitioners were not satisfied with the space allotted to periodicals; more likely they objected because Cornell students monopolized the best reading matter. After all, it would be too much to expect that Cornell students who lived below Stewart Avenue would climb East Hill at night to read newspapers and magazines — even if they had been available at the University.

The years 1880-1881 seem to have passed without event. On July 11, 1882, however, it was reported at the Trustees' meeting that the post office had moved out. Library finances again were at low ebb. Office rentals in the previous twelve months amounted to $1,915; the cash balance was $107.75. Economies were obviously necessary, but the only item which could be cut was the janitor's wage which was reduced from $500 to $300 per annum. There was, however, a piece of good news, too. John Rumsey, a former trustee of the Library, had left the residue of his estate to the Association, the income to be used for the purchase of books: "but in case a loss shall occur of any portion of the principal, said interest shall be applied to replace the amount until such Trust Fund be made good." This bequest turned out to be $11,925. John Rumsey was the first testamentary donor to the Library Association. On December 10, 1884 the Ithaca Academy gave the Library Association outright the $11,000, the interest on which has been paid to the Association since 1876. These two gifts together with the sum of $4,212.07, which the Association had

managed to salvage from operations since 1866, put the Library in a position to devote more money for book purchases.

At the Annual Meeting on December 21, 1885, William R. Humphrey, Librarian, declined re-nomination and Professor Charles Mellen Tyler was elected to succeed him. On December 28 of the same year, the space once occupied by the post office, was made available for a second reading room in response to a petition signed by 601 citizens. The Treasurer reported by way of a Balance Sheet the following items:

Academy Fund	$11,000.00
Rumsey "	11,925.00
Investments	4,212.07
Total	$27,137.07

At this impressive showing the Board went on record as expressing "the hope that no action may be taken to impair the surplus fund, which may, by unforeseen contingencies, be necessary to sustain the integrity and continued usefulness of the institution." The Board had appropriated $1,623.56 during the previous twelve months for periodicals and books. Presumably, both factions on the Board had been officially recognized and were satisfied, but it would seem as though the conservative faction had the last word! The Treasurer also reported that the sum of $510 had been received from townspeople, but there is no indication as to whether it was solicited or just donated out of hand. Income from the two trust funds would approximate $1,380 per annum and in itself would justify the spending of $1,623.56 for books and periodicals.

In 1886, library affairs offered a side glance at sewer conditions in the village: the Y.M.C.A. was considering renting space on the second floor, but would require additional toilet facilities. The Board was agreeable but at the same time was unwilling to go to any expense in the matter. After the meeting

on October 5, the Y.M.C.A. was informed that it had permission to dig a cesspool in Seneca Street or in the yard at the rear of the building. The office of the City Engineer (in 1955) is authority for the statement that in "excavating in city streets, cesspools have frequently been discovered." On December 20, the Librarian reported that fifty-three periodicals were available in the Reading Room and that attendance had been between sixty to seventy-five per day for the first six months and not less than one hundred per day for the balance of the year. The books were insured for $4,500 and the building at $23,750.

Benjamin Ferris, Vice-President, and Trustee since 1866, tendered his resignation, which was accepted, and was made an "honorary trustee for life." This is the only instance on record.

On December 20, 1888 the Board adopted a resolution to extend to "trustee associate members and ex-trustees privileges of the library." Also it was agreed that books and periodicals would be "allowed to enter the alcoves for examination, inspection and reading."

In 1889 increase in book circulation was noted principally as a result of the number of books taken out by children, "many of them taking from 4-6 volumes weekly." This is the first official recognition of the importance of children. Perhaps books for children would have been stressed earlier except for the fact that the Founder seemed to have had in mind "youth." Did he in his childhood ever see a book written exclusively for children? To him books were a means to an end, not entertainment for children. Remembering his hunger for an education, he thought and planned in terms of youth. It was a later generation which realized the importance of children in libraries.

The First National Bank, a tenant since 1866, was crowded for space. The Board of Trustees decided to move the first-floor reading room, formerly

the post office, upstairs. The bank took over the space vacated, closed off the east-west hallway and extended its banking facilities across the entire frontage on Tioga Street.

On October 6, 1892, Stephen H. Synnott, Rector of St. John's Episcopal Church, was elected Librarian to succeed Charles Mellen Tyler. On April 5, 1892, it was reported that the portrait of Ezra Cornell had been moved and hung in Library Hall. Also the Librarian wanted a "subject index" of books and thought that a couple of "smart students" would be glad to do the job for from $50 to $75. Eight months later $300 was appropriated for the subject index, but there is no record whether it was done by some of Cornell's smart students; much more likely it was made by some clever girls in town.

On July 2, 1895, a resolution proposing to sell the four-volume collection of Audubon's Birds of America to Cornell University for $1,700, payable in four installments, was introduced. The Trustees declined the offer. This collection had been included in the original three thousand volumes donated by Ezra Cornell to the Library. He paid $1,075 for the books.* There is no previous mention of this valuable collection. If the sum offered seems wholly inadequate, we should remember that only after the turn of the century did collectors begin to bid Birds of America to twenty times what Ezra Cornell paid.

The year 1896 marked the Library's thirtieth anniversary and it seems in order to record that year's balance sheet and operating statement by way of comparison with those of 1866 when Ezra Cornell warned: "And let no future New Year's Day find here an empty treasury."

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*Ezra Cornell had purchased these and a number of other books in January 1865, at an auctionof the library of the late John Taylor, on the recommendation of Andrew D. White. Immediately after the auction Cornell wrote his wife that he had purchased 1,024 volumes for $2,403,75. This sum included the price of the Audubons.

Receipts		Disbursements	
rents	$1,975.04	Miss Mack's salary	$ 500.00
Library Hall	150.00	contingent	8.81
Academy-Rumsey trust interest	171.00	Miss Rankin's salary	250.00
fines	139.13	John Mack's salary	300.00
interest on (Assn.) inventments	107.50	contingent expense	45.75
Repairs to Geo. Williams office (reimbursement)	75.00	lights	121.78
misc.	49.40	coal	184.60
City of Ithaca	200.00	repairs	1,241.60
		tax	13.50
		insurance	178.37
		printing	50.00
		binding	83.80
		reading room	160.02
		periodicals	138.00
		books	180.00
		water	14.00
		misc. expense	15.00
	$2,867.07		$3,485.23

Undoubtedly the item "repairs" was responsible for an operating deficit of $618.16. Of special interest is the item of $200.00 from the City of Ithaca under Receipts: it is the first entry recording receipt of money from the City.

CHAPTER VI

THE NEXT THIRTY YEARS

1897 through 1927

The period extending from just before the turn of the century to the high point of post-World War I prosperity was marked by growth in book volume and circulation and culminated in an event which divided the Board of Trustees into two new factions and set in motion a plan which contemplated elimination of Ezra Cornell's "edifice" as the building which would house a library designed to serve the people of Tompkins County presumably for "all time."

Library affairs seem to have been routine during 1897 - 1898. Early in 1899, however, things began to happen. On January 5, a special committee was appointed to "investigate the propriety of requesting a larger appropriation from the City toward the support of the Library." This item from the minutes would suggest that the City had agreed to make a nominal donation during the next year (1900). As has already been noted, the first time a gift was received from the City was in 1896. Now after an interval of four years the two hundred dollar donation was to be renewed. Off and on for years past without any result the Association had sent delegations to City Hall to request an appropriation. The present promise of but $200 left them gloomy and disappointed.

Other developments added to their gloom. In July the disparity between professional library standards of service and the trial and error methods of earlier years was brought to their attention. The Librarian reported that "reclassification and systematic cataloging to approved methods are over due. The old system is out of date." In December they learned that damage to library periodicals and books had led the Library Committee to place signs in the reading room offering $5.00 as a reward for information leading to conviction of offenders. The Librarian reported that good results had followed.

By December 1900, office rental had shrunk to $2,014.54, and only the interest from the Association's investments and trust funds, together with monies from fines and miscellaneous sources, brought the total receipts to operating solvency. The library building was thirty-five years old; obsolescence had sent in. Undoubtedly, there were rooms vacant on the third floor, and the basement seems not to have been occupied.

In April 1902, the Drill Hall was rented to the G. A. R. for one year for $100: clearly, the Old Soldiers were thinning out at a progressive rate.

At the Annual Meeting in December 1904, it was reported that the Reading Room was supplied with eight dailies, fifteen weeklies, thirty-two monthlies, and three quarterlies, the latter being the Edinburg Review, London Quarterly, and Political Science Quarterly. Samuel B. Turner, who had succeeded Stephen H. Synnott as Librarian, expressed pleasure in the new system of cataloging. "The catalog system now in vogue in all public libraries like that of Cornell University and Carnegie has been adopted and simplifies registration." The system informed the librarian as to the number of times a book had been drawn out, by whom, and at what time, and its present whereabouts.

Two years have elapsed since the Board was told that cataloging conditions were "chaotic." There is no record of a special appropriation for the purpose, and Sam Turner, the new Librarian, must have leaned on a remarkable Director of the Library to have accomplished the task of recataloging thousands of volumes. The Secretary makes no mention of the name of the Librarian-in-charge. Undoubtedly, she was one of many devoted women who through trying years and at meager salaries have done so much to keep the Library functioning. In his report Librarian Turner also noted that 15 percent of appropriations was expended for for fiction; 85 percent for history, economics, discovery, travel, industries,

practical agriculture, hospital nursing, etc., "not forgetting," he added, "the wants of juvenile readers."

In 1906 Charles Mellen Tyler was elected Librarian for the second time; in 1908 Franklin C. Cornell, President, died on January 22. At the next Annual Meeting Roger B. Williams, President of the First National Bank, was elected President of the Library Association, the first President not of the Cornell family.

By the time of the Annual Meeting in 1912, M. M. Gutstadt, Manager of the Lyceum Theatre, had seen in the too many empty seats in his theater the handwriting on the wall. The movies had begun to catch popular attention as means of entertainment. Renwick (now Stewart) Park was a center for the promising industry, and Pearl White, Francis X. Bushman, and others of early fame were in Ithaca making pictures for the Wharton Brothers. Already the Wilgus Opera House had ceased to exist. According to the Minutes, Mr. Gutstadt had approached the Board with the proposal to rent the Lecture Hall "for a theatre," on a long term lease. The Minutes are silent as to whether the Board knew that he intended to make the Hall into a movie house; undoubtedly, this was well understood if not expressly stated.

In 1912 there were trustees still living who had known Ezra Cornell and were familiar with events which had taken place in the Lecture Hall. In 1912 also the huge portrait of the Founder still hung there. Some may have sensed that if the Hall were rented for a moving picture theatre the portrait would have to be moved and that something peculiar to the Founder would go with it. Just the same, rental of the Hall had been most uncertain, fluctuating from year to year, and the Association was under obligation to get all it could out of the building. Beyond question, the proposition was tempting in prospect, sad in

contemplation. The Board referred the matter to the Finance Committee, presumably to negotiate regarding rent and years of tenure. We learn no more from the Minutes, perhaps in deference to what the Founder would have thought were he to read of this over the shoulder of the Secretary. At any rate the "Happy Hour" moved in and remained there for years. At the end of 1913 there is a casual reference: "The question was raised as to re-renting Library Hall to the Happy Hour Theatre."

The scanty notes referring to the theatre comprise but one of countless instances showing lack of imagination or neglect on the part of Secretaries. Time and again some action, precipitated by an emergency or a new concept in Association management, is merely hinted at as brewing and or having been consummated without a line of explanation or a report of what happened. How right Ezra Cornell was when he deplored in 1866 the fact that historic events, unless captured in library records, "would be lost forever to the tomb." Francis M. Finch, the first Secretary, was present when the comment was made; his minutes are the most comprehensive of any.

The expenses and patronage of the Library both continued to expand. By the end of 1916 office rents had climbed to $3,281.90; expenses to $3,627.81; number of books, 28,077; and circulation at the rate of 4,036 per month. In 1918 Ebenezer Turner was elected Librarian to succeed C. M. Tyler. The Board continued to worry about income, and President Williams requested the Librarian and Secretary to accompany him to City Hall to ask for a donation of $1,000. We have no report that the Mayor was called upon, but find that in 1919 the City appropriated $200 to the Library.

On April 30, 1921, it was reported that Chapter 385 of the Laws of New York had been amended to provide that an established library might receive public support from a city or county without the need for either's taking over ownership.

As the years go by Library Trustees will give increasing attention to this amendment.

At the Annual Meeting in 1921, books on shelves numbered 30,280, the average number of readers was 5,356 monthly. The Treasurer reported that gross rents amounted to $4,769.14 and that operating expenses had kept pace:

library salaries	$1,633.85
janitor	504.00
insurance	686.00
fuel	1,159.75
light	449.00
water	89.22
repairs	598.76
	$5,120.58

Except for the janitor's salary how out of line with the Founder's "yard stick"!

The Board considered taking an active part in a proposed county-wide library plan as provided by recent legislation. The Librarian recommended that the Association take immediate steps toward a county-wide service. A committee was appointed to confer with other county organizations interested in the movement, and the recommendation was "unanimously approved." This is the first mention of county book service. The legislation which prompted it has long since been outmoded. At this meeting a reference to the Happy Hour Theatre is implicit in the Librarian's complaint regarding litter and peanut shells. The janitor must have been long-suffering, but his anguish at the sight of the peanut shells, popcorn, and litter generally left by the audience was not assuaged by any increase of salary.

A publicity campaign aimed at acquainting area residents with the inadequacy of the Library's income was waged by members of the Board and the Rotary Club and Ithaca Journal were suggested as the principal media.

A traveling library was put into effect as the result of conferences with

agencies in the county. Two hundred and thirty-eight books were purchased for the purpose, and others were taken from the shelves. These were sent to Mecklenburg in April and to Slaterville Springs in June. No further mention of this activity occurs. At the Annual Meeting in 1923, however, the Librarian reported that the Danby Village books had been allotted and were waiting to be called for. This indicates that the traveling library is still in operation and that Danby will share in the Library -- if and when some interested person will take the trouble to pick up the books.

In 1924, the Fire Chief, always an ex-officio member of the Board, critized the quantity of rubbish in the basement and on other floors of the library building -- a state of affairs which may relate to the janitor's unchanging salary -- and warned of danger from wiring in the theatre.

By 1926 the First National Bank had taken over more space and was paying an annual rent of $3,000. By virtue of this increased rent, gross rentals in this year reached an all time high of $7,721.50.

The date, September 8, 1927, marks the beginning of a chain of events which puzzled and worried the Trustees for nearly a decade. It began with a letter from a committee of the First National Bank requesting the Association to consider three propositions: Will the Association consider (1) a sale of the (Library) building; (2) renting all of the first floor [to the First National Bank]; or (3) an extended lease?

The order in which the questions were asked indicated that the bank preferred to purchase; next, if failing to come to a price, to take over the first floor. Number 3 must have been properly a part of Number 2, for extensive changes would be required at considerable expense and the First National Bank knew that the expense would directly or indirectly be its concern. A Committee with power to negotiate with the bank was immediately appointed and consisted of Franklin C.

Cornell, II, son of a former President of the Library; Charles E. Cornell, oldest living descendant of the Founder, and Frank D. Boynton, Secretary of the Association and Superintendent of the Ithaca Public Schools. These gentlemen met immediately after adjournment of the Board and reached the following conclusion: The Committee's first reaction was to reject any idea of selling the building, but they would consider renting the first floor and basement for $12,000 per year. If this was not acceptable to the bank, then they would recommend to the Association that it lease the present quarters for $7,000 per annum. No meetings of the Board were held, presumably because R. B. Williams as President of the Association would be in the embarrassing position of being President of the Bank, also; furthermore three directors of the same bank were usually in attendance. Finally, a letter signed by the Committee and dated October 17, was sent to the Bank. It stated, in effect, that if the property could be sold for a price sufficient to enable the Association to purchase a new site and to erect a suitable building, and an endowment included in the purchase price sufficient to warrant to the Association an income annually equal to the total rental of the property, then the Committee would recommend that the property be sold. The reader should remember that two of the three members of the Committee were descendants of Ezra Cornell.

The Committee could hardly have expected the Bank to take such a vague and costly proposition seriously. The Bank made no reply; however, committees from each institution met for an exchange of views. Oddly enough, the meeting turned up an entirely new plan whereby the Library, Bank, City, and "possibly the University" would combine their efforts and influence to erect a new building adapted to the uses of the Bank and Library and "thereby carry into full effect the Will of Ezra Cornell." This is the first instance of record which

contemplated a new building in which the City would be a partner in the plan. Apparently, however, the idea died as quickly as it had been born!

At the Annual Meeting in December 1927, bequests from Ai Brown of approximately $40,000. and $1,687.33 from Clinton H. Howland were announced, and the Ithaca Trust Company, later the Tompkins County Trust Company, was designated Trustee of the Association's trust funds. The meeting's main order of business, however, was the election of officers. R. B. Williams was finding his position as president of two institutions, which by circumstances found themselves at opposite ends of a bargaining position, untenable and declined to be re-elected either as President of the Association or as a Trustee. Franklin C. Cornell, II, was elected to succeed him in the Presidency, and Harry G. Stutz, Editor of the Ithaca Journal, was elected to succeed him as Trustee.

The rest of the meeting was concerned with various reports in the course of which the Secretary deemed it of significance to record that borrowers prefer fiction to nonfiction in a ratio of five to one, and that juvenile circulation in ratio to adult is one to three and one-half.

CHAPTER VII

THE NEXT DECADE: 1928 to 1938

This ten-year stretch marks the most tumultuous period in the Library's history. During much of the time the Board was divided and to some extent dismembered by conflicting personal interests. The Minutes are scanty and in no way as revealing as are newspaper clippings and the recollections of Trustees still living. There is almost the impression that the Association's Secretary, fearful that the spirit of Ezra Cornell was reading over his shoulder, deliberately omitted unpleasant detail. Every action of the Board centered on the question of revenue; although this concern is largely habitual, in this period it was more than ever crucial.

The three proposals presented to the Trustees by the First National Bank and answered by the Association's Committee in October 1927, left both parties in a quandary as to the next move, if indeed, any move could be made in an attempt to reach an agreement. The Bank and the Library Association had to deal at arm's length, and the "arm" was very long by reason of their respective positions. The bank directors must have been stunned by the Committee's counter-proposition involving (a) a lease of first floor and basement for $12,000, (b) upping the rent of the old quarters to $7,000, (c) paying a price for the building sufficient to enable the Association to buy a new site and erect a suitable building, and (d) providing an endowment sufficient to carry the new Library. In addition, the Bank directors had had it in mind to lower (at their own expense) the first floor of the building to street level, a change desirable for business reasons now that there was no danger of Six Mile Creek's running amuck down Tioga and Seneca Streets. But if the Library Association's proposals seemed outrageous, what other means were there which would make possible the continuance of the Association, Ezra Cornell's Library, and its maintenance?

The Bank made no reply to the letter of October 17. Individual Trustees, however, made moves designed to pave the way for a solution. The Minutes of the Meeting held on February 13, 1928, do not mention, for example, that the Board was ready to authorize application to the State Legislature for an amendment to the Charter to permit sale of the Library property and that three days previously (February 10) Assemblyman James R. Robinson had introduced a bill in the Legislature to permit the sale. The Trustees at this meeting recommended that such a step be taken. Many days would have to elapse between the drafting of a bill, its printing, and its submission to the Legislature. There is no mention in the Minutes whether the proposed bill was submitted or its terms discussed. What probably happened is that the business of the Association was discussed and action agreed upon in consultations in private offices, thus circumventing the necessity of holding meetings of the Trustees at which Directors of the First National would presumably be present.

The main points in the amended Charter are as follows:

> If, in the opinion of the Trustees, said premises shall become unfit or undesirable for library purposes, they may sell the said premises, with the consent of the Supreme Court, and in that case shall devote the proceeds of such sale together with any other funds that they may have available or which may be donated to said Association, either to establish an Endowment for the purpose of this Act or to the purchasing of a new site and the erection thereon of a suitable library building.

And, eventually, the Amendment was approved by the State Legislature (N. Y. State Laws, 1928, Chapter 353).

At this February 13 meeting also it was reported that the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors had appointed a Committee to confer with the Association regarding plans to implement the county-wide book service.

On April 2, 1928, in order to pave the way for this joint enterprise and to secure a small donation from the State, the Association authorized application to the State Board of Regents for registration -- a move which brought the Regents into the plan as a third party. At this meeting also the Association accepted the plan drafted by respective Committees whereby they joined forces to establish county-wide book service. The terms of the agreement spelled out in considerable detail the objectives of the plan as well as what each party agreed to do:

> To provide library service for every section of Tompkins County.
> To make books available to all ages, but giving special attention to needs of children.
> To provide books for each of the 118 rural schools and for each of the village schools.
> There is to be one central station, such as a store in each village or hamlet or in garages, churches, or other organizations' quarters.
> To change books at each station at least every two months.
> Service to commence July 1st.

The three sponsoring organizations were the Library Association, the Library Extension Division of the State Department of Education, and the Tompkins County Board of Supervisors. For the whole set-up there was to be a Board of Directors consisting of seven members of whom four should represent the County and three the Association. The Directors were to employ and supervise a County Librarian and to work up a budget to implement the system from year to year. The Association was to provide working space, to contribute $1,000 a year for two years, and to lend 1,000 books for three years. Other details are not important in view of the discontinuance of the system later on.

The plan as worked out in 1928 differed radically from that authorized by the Legislature in 1950 (Chapter 273). It ignored established libraries in the

villages of Dryden, Groton, and Trumansburg, for example, whereas the Act of 1950 for county-wide book service authorizes a federation of all established libraries in the County, including the County Traveling library, in order to promote better service; it does not, however, necessarily require extending library service into every corner of the County; also, the later legislation affords substantial subsidies from the State to implement the system.

The strategy of this first plan, which the Association accepted without hesitation, seems to have been two-fold in purpose: first, to provide a comprehensive book service everywhere in the County, which objective Ezra Cornell had desired, but was unable to accomplish in the horse-and-buggy days because of the expense and difficulties of transportation. The second reason may have been the wish to interest the County financially in the Library, in view of shrinking rents and the possibility that the building might be sold at a price which would preclude any source for operating expenses other than income from endowment, which was needed for the purchase of books. The first reason is obvious; the second may be inferred as passing through the minds of Trustees.

The Legislature having amended the Charter, the Association's Special Committee under date of May 28, 1928, wrote to Jared T. Newman, a Director of the First National Bank, to the effect that no answer had been received to earlier communications with reference to a sale or lease. Three days later the bank offered to reopen negotiations.

On June 4, 1928, the Association went on record as offering the Library property to the bank or anyone else for $150,000, with the proviso that the Library was to remain in possession of second floor, rent-free. The Association agreed to abide by an appraisal of three real estate men chosen from

outside the County.

By December 21, 1928, the date of the Annual Meeting, although six months had elapsed, no reply had been received from the First National Bank. By now, moreover, it had become apparent that there was a division of opinion among those library Trustees who were not connected with the bank. The question was whether to stand pat or to compromise on the price. The indecision was evident when on the suggestion of Trustee Mynderse Van Cleef the Trustees appointed a Committee to make a thorough study of the consequences of a sale, including cost of a new site, and of building a library building, and the possibility of financial aid from the City, presumably in an amount to equal the loss of rents. Public sentiment meanwhile had been made aware of the problem. The Parent Teachers Association and 463 individuals joined in a petition advocating sale of the property, erection of a new building on a site to be selected, and City aid to make the change possible. The Exchange Club went on record in favor of the idea. It must now have looked to some members of the Board of Trustees and of the Directors of the bank that a deal would be made. The Association had legislative permission to sell; citizens had taken a stand in favor; and the bank had not rejected the offer of $150,000, and it seemed reasonable to suppose that a compromise on the price would be reached. The only uncertainty lay in the attitude of the City.

Obvious to all concerned was the fact that it would take considerable time to work out details leading up to agreement among the Association, the bank, and the City of Ithaca. Meanwhile, the bank was uneasy because its lease was soon to terminate and its future whereabouts might be uncertain unless a move were made in some direction. Consequently, it offered to rent its old quarters for a three-year term at $7,000 per annum; with the proviso that either party

would be free to terminate the lease on six months notice. The Trustees accepted this offer.

Memoranda from the files of the late Harry G. Stutz show what was going on outside Board meetings. A special Committee on Library Service had been appointed by the Board at the Annual Meeting. On December 24, 1928, the Committee met and passed a resolution requesting the Committee on Preliminary Plans for a suitable library building to submit to the Library Service Committee plans and estimate of costs. The memo goes on to say that the Service Committee was uncertain of the scope of its authority, because of an omission in the Association's Minutes. The Secretary was requested to rectify the Minutes to the end that the Service Committee might know the extent of their authority in order to plan their approach to the City for help and otherwise to work up a comprehensive City and County Library service in a new building.

The Service Committee members agreed that:

1. There should be a building in Ithaca of modern design, devoted exclusively to library uses.
2. It should be located on a site sufficiently large to provide for present and future needs and for foreseeable expansion during the next fifty years.
3. It was impractical at the moment to select a site.
4. New building should include: a reading room for adults; one for children; a room or large alcove for reference books; a room or rooms for the County Traveling Library and Librarian; a receiving and work room; a Librarian's office which could be used as a Board room; and a small staff work room for cataloging.

The Committee discussed possible future uses of the old library building. It was agreed that whether the Bank did or did not remain as a tenant it would be difficult and costly to adapt the building to modern commercial uses. The members then discussed adequate library service, presumably in a proposed new building, including the need to employ professional librarians and working staff

generally, including a "scrub woman."

In the files also is a memo dated January 1, 1929, giving the substance of a conversation between Charles E. Cornell and Frank D. Boynton. Dr. Boynton presented some ideas of proper facilities, including books for children, in the proposed new library, which the Library has long since followed.

On January 2, 1929, President Williams of the First National Bank wrote to accept the contract calling for $7,000 annual rent, three years extension, and the stipulation that either party might terminate on six months notice.

At a meeting on November 4, 1929, it was reported that a conference had been held between the Association's Committee and the Finance Committee of the Common Council. Naturally, the Special Committee had met and agreed on a strategy of approach and must have had in mind a provision in the Amended Charter that required the proceeds of a sale to be set up as an endowment or expended by the Association in acquiring new facilities. It seemed best to advocate first that the proceeds of sale should be retained by the Association as an endowment; second, that the City should purchase the new site and erect the library building; and third, that a means of making it easy for the City would be to suggest that it authorize a bond issue for the purpose even if to do so would require a public referendum. After the conference, however, the Committee reported that the Finance Committee was adverse to any bond issue. In all probability, the Finance Committee warned that the public would not vote in favor of any additional municipal debt. The next-best suggestion was that the City include in its annual budget an amount to cover operating expenses, in which case the Association would use the proceeds of sale for acquiring new facilities. At the November meeting, therefore, the Special Committee recommended that the idea of a bond issue be dropped and that the City be urged to include a "liberal sum" in the tax levy; presumably the Trustees approved.

At this November meeting also, it was reported that the Happy Hour Theatre had ceased to use Library Hall. The room which had been earning a substantial sum per annum was now a liability, and who could possibly make use of it as a paying proposition?

One of the Trustees made reference to the Audubon Collection of Birds of America in storage at the Ithaca Trust Company, saying that it was valued at between six and twelve thousand dollars. In this reference there is a hint that sale of these books would ease the financial pinch. No action was taken, however.

Trustee Stutz moved that the library building be sold "in the near future" for the purpose of purchasing a new site and erecting a building thereon. The Trustees approved this motion, but their approval was meaningless, for all knew that a sale, even at a price of $150,000, without a subsidy from some source, would not finance the Library's future. It is plain that Trustee Stutz sensed frustration; that unless some move, even if radical, was made at the time, his dream of a new library would get nowhere and that in operating the building, the Association would be dependent upon one tenant. The future of Ezra Cornell's library must have looked pretty grim to him.

By the time of the Annual Meeting in December, almost nine months had elapsed since the Special Committee had met with the Finance Committee of the Common Council, and nothing had come out of negotiations. Evidently, Trustee Stutz had been active in exploring ways and means to get clear of the fog which for so long had enveloped the Association. Although the Minutes do not say so, evidently he took the lead in interviewing Roger B. Williams and in a letter dated December 8, got an offer from the bank for $100,000 for the building, together with the agreement that the Library should remain in possession of the

second floor for a reasonable time, rent-free.

The Board rejected the offer as "too low." It would be interesting to know whether in the opinion of the Board "too low" meant less than the fair market value or whether the offer was too low to enable the Association to buy a lot, and to rebuild and maintain. The decision was probably based on both counts. No counter offer was made, and the Board turned to other matters, including the possibility of selling the Audubon Collection and "any other books, the market value of which exceeds our use." How well this item in the Minutes illustrates the worried state of minds, for now the Trustees were scraping the barrel; they were thinking of selling the "crown jewels."

The Librarian reported books to the number of 40, 363, of which 1,298 had been furnished to the County Librarian for circulation outside the City of Ithaca by means of the book van, and added the comment that the county service was efficient.

Nearly sixty-five years had passed since Ezra Cornell set up his yard-stick for library receipts and operating expenses. What would he have thought of the report presented by the Treasurer at the close of 1929?

Receipts		Disbursements	
First National Bank	$6,000.00	Miss Elsebree, Ass't Lib.	$ 1,500.00
Happy Hour Theatre	896.00	Assistants	2,322.40
Ithaca Engraving Co.	530.00	janitor	1,000.00
Motor Vehicle Bureau	255.00	gas and electricity	488.58
Stover Printing Co.	363.00	fuel	1,076.54
C. I. Hill	290.00	water	132.87
M. L. Taylor	165.00	insurance	2,310.77
E. Smith	120.00	repairs	933.00
Veterans	200.00	books	28.85
Tompkins County	90.00	subscriptions	32.50
fines	588.00	supplies	262.76
City of Ithaca	200.00	exit signs	144.43
Income from Endowment	3,400.00	cleaning books	226.00
misc.	34.31	equipment	681.45
		misc.	12.00
	$13, 101.37		$11, 155.28

The Trustees had long realized that the Association was dependent either upon the First National Bank and other tenants for sufficient rent to keep the building functioning or upon the sale of the building at a price which, with a subsidy from the City, would enable the Association to operate a new library building. On January 15, 1930, a committee was appointed to go before the Common Council with the question: Will Ithaca support a new library? If the answer was yes, then it might be that a sale could be consummated with the Bank for a figure, presumably between $100,000 and $150,000.

In the meantime the Finance Committee of the Association recommended that the Bank be offered a lease of the entire first floor for five years at $12,000 a year and for an additional five years at $15,000.

On May 19, 1930, the Special Committee appointed to go before the Common Council reported that it had met with a Committee representing the city and that it was agreed that the city's Finance Committee would recommend to the Council that a referendum be held on the proposition. The referendum was to offer two phases: first, that of bonding the city for funds to erect a new library to be owned by Ithaca, and administered by the Association; or, second, that calling for an annual contribution of "something like $7,500 for annual support." Trustee Stutz reported, however, that when "Alderman Morrison proposed the Plan to the Council he was met with silence. No second to his motion." In addition Trustee Stutz now thought it would be unwise to have a referendum, because the City had issued bonds for $300,000 for public improvement, and stated that he had been advised that a referendum would be beaten. Apparently, the Trustees accepted the rebuff as final, for nothing more was done to persuade the City to reconsider its "silence." Undoubtedly, a referendum would have been beaten, for the Depression which began toward the close of 1929 had been steadily deepening and was to continue downward for another two years.

At the Annual Meeting in December 1930 the Treasurer reported rents from the First National Bank of $7,000 and a contribution from the City of $200, as usual. The Librarian reported books purchased for $2,155, newspaper subscriptions at $43.75, and a balance in the book fund of $25.35. The number of volumes was 41,682, and circulation 67,300. Of the books purchased, 539 were nonfiction and 532, fiction.

In the meantime, circulation had increased substantially, largely, it was decided, because there was so much unemployment. The Librarian suggested that Library Hall, now unoccupied, be used as a reading room.

By June 27, 1932, the finances of the Library Association, in company with the national economy, had reached the low point of its sixty-six years of existence. There was not a quorum at the meeting, but the consensus of those present was that the Library must close after July 15 for an indefinite time! And close it did.

On July 22, 1932, a meeting was held in the Directors' room of the Ithaca Trust Company, presumably because the Library was closed. Paul Bradford was elected Trustee and Treasurer. An informal discussion followed regarding ways and means of reopening the Library.

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of this year are a revelation! The Trustees were informed that the City of Ithaca had rented the "old bank rooms," from October 1, 1932, to January 1, 1933, at $125 per month and had appropriated $250 per month for the year 1933; that upon these rents and other revenue the Library had been reopened; also that for the year 1932 the County had contributed $420. In the absence of specific information we may assume that this sum was a contribution in connection with the Traveling Library service. From these sketchy notes we must assume that the bank had moved out, and that the City had taken over most, if not all, of the first floor. Records at the First National Bank indicate

that it moved out, and that the City had taken over most, if not all, of the first floor. Records at the First National Bank indicate that it moved out over a weekend in May 1932. The Association's Secretary made no mention of this, presumably because for the past year everybody had watched the bank's new building at the corner of State and Tioga Streets going up under forced draft!

By May 4, 1933, it was evident that the work of various committees in negotiating the County and City had borne fruit. At a meeting of the Trustees, it was reported that the County had appropriated $3,000 for Library support, and the City, $2,000, by way of a supplement to its rent of $2,000. Trustees Stutz, Kulp, Hull, and others should be congratulated for perserverence in the face of "silences" off and on for some years past! At this meeting Mrs. Thomas Barker was elected a Trustee. The Treasurer reported a cash balance of $19.61 and unpaid bills amounting to $262.15. This report really marks the low point in the Association's finances thus far, although from previous reports we suspect that at the year's end there had been an empty treasury in spite of Ezra Cornell's warning. However, as soon as the promised funds should be received from the County and City, the Association would again be on an even keel.

Notwithstanding generous contributions from County and City, by the time of the Annual Meeting in December 1933 the Association was bedeviled for money, for it appears that a windstorm had blown off a portion of the roof. An appropriation of $461.24* was voted from the Rumsey-Academy trust to pay current bills which meant that, according to the terms of the bequests, $3,000 had to be appropriated to the Rumsey trust to bring it to the principal amount bequeathed under the Rumsey Will. Western mortgages held by this trust had gone sour in the Depression.

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*According to information supplied by Mr. Paul Bradford, although this appropriation was voted, it was never used. The bills were paid early in the following year from current funds.

As soon as one hurdle was cleared successfully, another showed up unexpectedly. On October 7, 1934, it was reported that the County had decided to go on its own with reference to the Traveling Library. The only explanation given was that the State Librarian had taken the position that there could not be two county libraries in one county, and that since the Cornell Public Library was a county affair under its Charter and as designed by Ezra Cornell, the Traveling Library must be subsidiary to it and receive books from the State Library through it. What a perfect illustration of bureaucracy's wrecking a worthy project! No wonder that the Supervisors decided to go it alone, not that books from the State were necessary, but because there could be but one answer to such legalistic, highhanded ruling.

At the Annual Meeting in December 1934, Harry G. Stutz was elected Librarian to succeed Ebenezer T. Turner, who was living with friends in Connecticut. At last, the Treasurer was able to report receipt of County and City subsidies. A Special Planning Committee was appointed to report on ways and means of securing either a new library building or the complete rehabilitation of the existing second floor.

Early in the following January the Board gave attention to Library Hall. It was to be opened as a reading room upon completion of a new stairway from the first to the second floor and the remodeling of the old Happy Hour Theatre. The Trustees proposed an amendment to the By-laws to provide for the position of Librarian Emeritus, apparently with the thought of electing Ebenezer Turner in recognition of years of good service. To comply with By-laws in effect, the position would need to be voted upon at a subsequent meeting, but no vote at a subsequent meeting is recorded. Plans for remodeling the first and second floors were presented by Claude L. Kulp, Chairman of the Special Planning Committee. The principal items are:

> Since it is not feasible to ask for a new library building at this time, we urge the rehabilitation of the entire second floor...An unofficial conference with the Board of Supervisors reveals a genuine interest in the Cornell Library and a friendly attitude toward any plan for improving library service....
>
> The supervisors have been informed by the State Librarian that under Sec. 118 of the Education Law any county may contract with the Trustees of a free library, registered by the Regents... to furnish library privileges to the people of the municipality or district for whose benefit the contract is made.

What the State Librarian was telling Tompkins County is that although it could lawfully hire the Cornell Public Library to give county-wide service, it could not negotiate with the Library Association regarding the running of a library service as an independent entity.

In this connection the Association's secretary has seen fit to spread upon the record a statement by Professor Charles H. Hull, Trustee, which reads as follows:

> A public library to meet the needs of our city must be much more than a collection of books suitably housed. All that is inert. A public library is above all a living organization. Its animating spirit resides in a staff devoted to making it useful and by training and experience competent to do so. When the [Library] Association began it was forced to depend, like all but the very largest libraries in those years, upon the incidental services of persons otherwise employed.

Professor Hull went on to say that in modern times professional librarians have come to be recognized as essential to adequate service — hence an increase in costs. He recommeded purchase of a site and erection of a library building at a price not to exceed $100,000.

Trustee Kulp reported for the Special Planning Committee that the Welfare Agencies would move into the building's first floor on condition that a new stairway leading from the inner corridor on the first floor directly to the library he built with city funds. The Report goes on to say that since it was

not feasible to ask the City for a new library at this time, the rehabilitation of the entire second floor in accordance with plans prepared by Architect Thorne in 1932 should be urged, and that an attempt should be made to secure funds for the purpose through either the Temporary Emergency Relief Administration (Federal) or the Tompkins County Development Association and the local funds, required as a preliminary, but sought from either the County or the City.

A new library building continued to be a much-discussed subject. At what cost? Should the County or the City maintain it? On February 6, the supervisors wanted to know whether the Library could become a county institution and be operated by it. The Trustees authorized the Special Planning Committee to continue its labors with the County and City, looking toward some ultimate solution.

Two weeks later, on February 20, the Board met to consider a statement by the Special Planning Committee. It was presented by Claude L. Kulp and runs to upwards of twenty-five hundred words. He sketched the origin of the Association, the needs of Ithaca for library service, the inadequacy of existing facilities, and the obsolesence of the building. His Committee estimated that a new site could be purchased for between $20,000 and $25,000 and a library building erected for $86,400. The report continued with a plan for the interior arrangement of a new building, including space for the County's Traveling Library and suggested that the two municipalities each contribute the sum of $8,000 annually, which, together with Association's resources, would produce the sum of $20,000 — sufficient to run the new library. He concluded by saying that the work of his Committee was finished and suggested that a new Promotion Committee be appointed to work with the County and City. Accordingly, the Kulp group was discharged, and a new Promotion Committee appointed. So convinced were the Trustees that the idea presented by the Kulp Committee was sound that, by way of getting started, they voted immediately to secure option on a new site. Purchase would, of course, depend

upon a sale of the old building and lot, presumably at a minimum of $100,000. The First National Bank had moved out, however, and what about a new customer? The Minutes make no mention of this uncertainty. The Trustees seem to have been optimistic for two reasons. A new lot and library building, according to the Kulp report, would run to between $110,000 and $115,000 and might be done for much less if the project were accepted as a Work Relief job. At this stage in planning the Trustees are thinking in terms of a County Library, presumably to be operated by the Association under contract, although the Minutes do not so state. As a W.P.A. project, it was believed that the Government would advance 100 percent of the cost, of which 30 percent would be an outright gift, 70 percent to be repaid by the County over a period of years.

At the end of July, the Chairman of the Promotion Committee reported that, as a result of conference with the Board of Supervisors, the Board had decided to submit the proposition concerning the Library to the voters of the County. Meanwhile, an architect had been engaged and an option secured on a favorable site, and basis for a proposed working agreement with the County outlined. An informal plan, subject to the favorable reaction of the voters, contemplated amending the Charter to change the Library's name to The Ezra Cornell County Library. The argument for the change was that it would thus be more easily distinguished from the Cornell University Library. The meeting was then adjourned in order to give the Trustees time to think.

By September 11, the Trustees had digested the Kulp report and had found a number of legal objections. The new plan contemplated the setting up of a Library Board of Directors, consisting of three of the Supervisors, three of the Association's Trustees, and a seventh member who would be elected by the other six. Such a radical idea, together with the change of name, would require Legislative approval. In addition, the plan made no mention of details of management

or maintenance. Furthermore, the Trustees did not contemplate any transfer of the library building to the County of Tompkins; and so on. Most of the objections stemmed from necessary and radical Charter amendments and, apparently, from a deep-seated reluctance to let Ezra Cornell's benefaction gradually disappear in serving as merely a stepping stone to a county-owned and managed library to which the Library Trustees would donate the building and lot as means of hastening the change.

Charles E. Cornell, President of the Association, summed up the objections to the proposed plan as tentatively agreed to between Supervisors and Association in a letter from Upper Jay, New York, dated July 24, 1935, addressed to Claude L. Kulp. The letter reads as though Ezra Cornell, grandfather of the President, were speaking over the writer's shoulder. It follows:

> I appreciate fully the splendid work that your Committee has done toward a new Library Building. Still with me I cannot see the necessity of the entire new set up as proposed, when an independent management organization can be had through our own existing association, and under our original Charter. What we all desire, if there be no ulterior motive, is to provide a new and adequate Library Building and to broaden our service for the whole County...,
>
> Our Board represents Education, Religion, City and County administration, every phase of Civilian life, politics do not dominate, nor is it ever considered in the election of Trustees....,
>
> I do not look upon it as a "New Library," it is only "Cornell Library" in a new setting.

At a meeting on October 3, 1935, Chairman Kulp poured oil on troubled waters by reporting a further conference with members of the Board of Supervisors. They assured him that the County did not want "to run the library, but to turn management over to the Association." What Trustee Kulp learned about maintenance is not reported in the Minutes. The news relating to the County's attitude so relieved the Trustees that they passed a Resolution expressing appreciation of the attitude of the Supervisors, and stating, also, that the Association would make

available all its books, facilities, and endowment for the use of the people of the County. They would, in addition, furnish adequate and uniform library service. Next, the Trustees proposed, if the county-wide referendum proved to be favorable, that there be one county-side library with which the County's existing Traveling Library would be combined. Furthermore, the Supervisors would have representatives on the Library's Board of Trustees, presumably three, in addition to the Chairman of the Board, who, of course, would be an ex-officio member. If it were desired, the Supervision could have membership on the Library Committee, also.

On November 5, 1935, the following Proposition was voted on by the people:

> Shall the Board of Supervisors of Tompkins County authorize the construction and equipment of a county library building, provided forty-five per cent of the total cost, estimated at $178,000 is obtained by grant from the Federal Administration of Public Works, and provided the County's share of the cost of such project shall not exceed the sum of $100,000 and shall be raised by a bond issue payable in equal annual installments over a period of thirty years?

The vote in the City was 2,534 in favor, 1,306 against. Not a single Ward turned it down. When the votes of the Towns were tabulated, however, it was found that the proposition had lost by a margin of 685 votes. Opposition was heaviest in the town of Groton, where a Citizens Nonpartisan Committee had been formed to work against the referendum with the result that there were 201 votes for and 1,213 against. The reason given for failure of the proposal was adequacy of library service in the villages of Dryden, Groton, and Trumansburg. Sentiment was against being taxed for a library which would primarily benefit Ithaca.

The vote in the Town of Ithaca was 485 for and 190 against. The Ithaca Journal on November 18 answered critics with the following statement:

> The library proposal was not made without real consideration of the diverse interests. On the contrary, the problem was studied for months. The basis of taxation was fair to all. Over 70 percent of the total cost would have been carried by Ithaca and the Town of Ithaca. The cost to the townships would have been small and the urban communities are now paying most of the costs of the traveling library service and they do not object. The library proposal included expansion of the traveling library service, enlarging the book supply of the existing libraries and a budget that would have largely been paid by the urban communities.

The Journal's statement called forth letters from several Ithacans advocating renewal of the proposal as a city project in view of the vote cast in the four wards. The editor of the Journal agreed, but the Library's Trustees had put their all into the plan and the necessary publicity and political know-how and now, like a spent wave, had lost initiative and force. From this distance in point of time it looks as though the proposal would have carried if individual Trustees had visited the towns, contacted grass-roots politicians of both parties, and the trustees of the village libraries, if only to point out those same facts published in the Journal twelve days after the vote.

At the Annual Meeting on the twentieth of December following, Chairman Kulp made a written report of the activities of the Planning Committee for the year. At his request his group was released from further endeavors, and a new Citizens' Committee made up of seven people who were not members of the Board of Trustees, was authorized.

On November 5, 1937, plans for a new library building came to life again. Claude L. Kulp reported talks before luncheon clubs, and Trustee Stutz reported that city officials had a friendly attitude. On December 20 of that same year, a new committee was formed to carry forward negotiations with the Common Council, the Planning Commission, and the Chamber of Commerce.

The Annual Meeting scheduled for December 20, 1938, was adjourned until January 16, 1939, the first instance of an adjournment from the date set by the Charter to a day certain in January following. The purpose was to put the Library Association's business affairs on a calendar-year basis, and the practice has since been consistently followed.

At this first adjourned meeting, Chairman Kulp reported that as a result of a conference with members of the Finance Committee of the Common Council relating to a municipal referendum for building a new library at City expense, he and his committee members believed it would be inopportune to press the City for this project because City taxes were to be raised $4 per thousand to meet the ordinary budget. Subsequently, for a period of sixteen years, the project of a new library building lay in abeyance.

Considerable space has been given in this History to the reporting of successive attempts to interest the City and County in the idea of a new library. All efforts beyond the donations which these municipalities were making toward the support of the Library had failed. The record shows how earnestly and with what devotion the Library trustees had discharged their duties and, in particular, how the pattern of their procedure has subsequently been followed. The Record also indicates how active a part descendants of Ezra Cornell, namely Charles E. Cornell and Franklin C. Cornell, II, took in supporting a plan which, if consummated, would have been the end of the library building which for so long represented Ezra's first benefaction to the residents of the County. Indeed, the position taken by these two men would serve, twenty years later, to erase all hesitancy, on the part of library-minded people, to see the end of one of Ithaca's most venerable landmarks.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEXT SEVENTEEN YEARS: 1939 to 1955

In the period from 1939 to 1955, hopes for a new or remodeled library building alternately rose, sank, and rose again. After 1940 there had been a notable change in the Library's administration, as amateurs were replaced by professional librarians. During the previous seventy-six years, scant attention had been given to "Assistant Librarians." Meager allusions to underpaid spinsters occur in Treasurers' reports in such references as "Miss Rankin's salary"-- but there is scant record of who appointed such assistants or their duration of office. With the employment of Miss Anna Elsbree, a professional librarian, however, there begins a definite record of appointments. Notwithstanding the fact that many reports indicate that a tight book control had been established previous to her appointment, it is obvious that professional librarians found that methods of cataloging, lending, inventory control, obsolescent volumes, thefts, and so forth, were all loosely handled. Employment of high grade professional librarians was first made possible through public contribution to library expenses.

On January 15, 1939, a new group, the Library Expansion Committee, was authorized, and it was reported that an architect had prepared a complete set of drawings for a new library building. The County, however, was not interested in reviving the plan which had been in force previous to the referendum, giving its reason an unwillingness to increase the tax rate. When the Expansion Committee called on the Board of Supervisors, they were undoubtedly reminded that several Towns had voted against it four years earlier. The City was not interested, either. So, it was recommended that the City be requested to remodel the library building, in so far as possible, with the assistance of men employed under the Federal Works Progress Administration; the depression which had commenced at the end of 1929 was not yet entirely over. The principal item in the remodeling as

planned by the Trustees, the removal of the Library to the first floor and the space occupied by the City to the second, was under the circumstances unrealistic, since the City, being in possession of the first floor, could not be expected to move up a long flight of stairs, nor the public either. The old banking rooms with a vault for safe-keeping made an ideal place for the City Chamberlain, easy of access to taxpayers. The Trustees realized in time the futility of this approach to the City and instead authorized the remodeling of the Lecture Hall as a general reading room at a cost not to exceed $3,000. Funds for the purpose were to be withdrawn from an unrestricted endowment and repaid at the rate of $500 per year. The remodeling cost $4,363.

By 1941, the Minutes of a meeting on June 5 state, the portrait of the Founder had suffered from the erosion of time, and Professor Walter King Stone of Cornell, an artist, was thanked for doing the needful restoration.

During 1941-1942 progress on library projects gave way to demands of the Second World War. On January 11, 1943, it was reported that 3,000 books had been sent to soldiers overseas; other books followed as the war continued.

It will be remembered that some years previous there had been talk among the Trustees of disposing of the Audubon Birds of America. At a meeting on June 6, 1944, it was ordered that the Collection be sold to the Newman Print Shop for $14,000, less a 10 per cent commission to an agent. The Resolution recites that of necessity the books had to be kept in storage at the Trust Company, refers to the payment of insurance premiums, and cites lack of facilities for exhibiting the Collection at the Library, since handling the volumes caused deterioration. Indeed, the value of the Collection had been affected to the extent of $1,000 by someone's tearing of the "turkey plate." In other respects also the set was not in good condition. Proceeds of sale were added to the endowment as the Ezra Cornell Book Fund. It will be remembered that Ezra Cornell had

purchased these books in 1865 for $1,075 and included them in his original donation to the Library.

For the year ending December 31, 1946, the city paid $7,224 to the Library Association including rent of $2,000 for the space on the first floor of the library building. The number of books was 49,036 and circulation, 83,388. The Library Committee recommended that a group to be known as The Friends of the Library be formed—a move which has turned out to be one of the most constructive actions taken in the Library's whole existence. The Library was rated by the State Librarian as 90 percent efficient.

At some time during 1947 the Division of Miscellaneous Records was set up. The Director of the Library reported that during the year 66,911 people visited the Library, circulation amounted to 78,713, 5,249 books were sold or discarded, and total active borrowers numbered 8,535. Borrowers were classified as follows: Cornell students, 995; Ithaca College, 964; high school young adults, 623; non-residents of Ithaca, 1,550.

In January 1948, Louis P. Smith was elected President of the Association to succeed Charles E. Cornell, who had died on January 29, 1947. Action was taken to lease two rooms on the third floor to Ithaca College for use as a student library. It was reported, also, that the City had been persuaded to increase its payment to $10,124, including rent, as usual. Miss Thelma Harrington, Director of the Library, reported that the number of books actually on the shelves was 31,368, about 20,000 less than the previous estimate. Apparently, up until the time of Miss Harrington, no actual inventory was taken, and the number of books reported had been estimated by some rule of thumb.

A Phonograph Record Division had been installed through gifts by Mr. Nellis Crouse and the Friends of the Library. The Friends now numbered 141 members.

Year by year as the Library's operating income climbed, so did expenditures. By 1951 the City was paying $11,500 including rent; and the County was contributing its usual $3,000. Sherman Peer was elected President, succeeding Louis P. Smith, who had resigned.

On August 14, 1951, the Board was faced with a need for "rainy-day" money as never before. The reading room rented to Ithaca College was in danger of collapsing under the stress of weight of books and students. The Trustees were told that the floor could give way any time and precipitate thousands of books and a number of people into the main Reading Room (the old Lecture Hall) on the second floor, a drop of upwards of twenty-five feet! The prospect was staggering! Ithaca College was immediately notified and as promptly as possible vacated the space affording Trustees a breathing spell in which to ascertain the actual conditions above the second floor.

At the August meeting Trustee Barker brought up the subject of a Federation of Tompkins County Libraries under Chapter 273 of the Laws of 1950. As applied to Tompkins County, the new law would permit and subsidize a federation comprising the libraries of Dryden, Groton, Newfield, Trumansburg, as well as Cornell Public Library and the County's Traveling Library. During the next five years, frequent attempts were made by the Cornell Library Association to bring about this federation but without results. Friends of the Library now numbered 190; their sale of books donated by townspeople netted $450, and the money was spent largely for phonograph records.

The Director of the Library reported circulation of 99,820, "the highest to date." Of this figure, 64,649 were adults; 30,706 juveniles.

The principal business at the meeting on August 21, 1951, was that of the structural condition of the third floor, roof, and cornice along the topmost layer

of bricks fronting on Seneca and Tioga Streets. Extensive repairs to the roof and trusses supporting it were necessary as was also removal of the cupola fronting on Tioga Street. In addition, a new ceiling and new electric fixtures were a must in the main Reading Room. Other matters might be discovered as work progressed. The cost was estimated to run somewhat in excess of $16,000. Obviously, the city as tenant should not be asked to expend public funds in restoring a privately owned building. The Association had no alternative but to raise the amount. Mrs. Frank L. Morse of Ithaca gave $1,000; the rest was ordered taken from the Brown-Howland Trust, which was nonrestricted above the sum of $40,000, originally fixed under the Will of Ai Brown.

On January 10, 1952, the Treasurer reported that in the previous year $11,500 had been expended in repairs. The winter weather had held up construction. Later in the year about $4,500 more would be expended.

At the annual meeting on January 14, 1953, the Reverend Reginald E. Charles, Rector of the Episcopal Church, was elected President to succeed Sherman Peer, who resigned because he was customarily away from the state during the winter months. On October 16 of the same year, Miss Thelma Harrington resigned in order to accept a position as Librarian at a well-known library in Western New York. Mrs. Elisabeth Jenkins of Ithaca was appointed Director of the Library to succeed Miss Harrington.

Circulation had climbed steadily during Miss Harrington's administration. By December 31, 1953, it had reached 117,459; books on hand numbered 32,955.

In January 1954, the Reverend William S. Hicks, Pastor of the Baptist Church, was elected President to succeed the Reverend Mr. Charles, who had died during the previous year. The city was now paying $14,600 for rent and subsidy; other revenues from the building included $550 from the Sons of Veterans for use of

the old Drill Hall and $600 from Shepherd's Bike Shop located in the basement fronting on Tioga Street. Total operating costs amounted to $21,829.10 for the year; $3,068.40 was spent for books, magazines and newspapers. Circulation had by now totaled 121,125.

On January 11, 1955, hope of a new library building on a fresh site was again revived. Informal discussions with the Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Common Council indicated that there was a definite possibility that a new Civic Service Center would eventually be selected by the City and in this Center a new City Hall and possibly a new Library would be erected. The City's administrative body had grown along with the population, and the City's personnel were scattered among the City Hall, the Library Building, and various other places. Over the years the City had steadily been increasing its rent and subsidy to the Library and seemed to have accepted Ezra Cornell's original benefaction as a public charge. The Trustees authorized a Committee of three to meet with three members of the Common Council designated by the Mayor to study development of a plan for a Municipal Library.

The Trustees' Committee immediately set to work drafting a plan for the purpose of informing the city fathers what was wanted, how a municipal library should be administered, what disposition the Association would be prepared to make of the old building, and various supplemental data. This plan was completed and submitted to the Library Trustees at a meeting held on April 27 and thereupon adopted unanimously and submitted to the Finance Committee of the Council and circulated among the Aldermen. If the plan approved by the Trustees is compared with the proposition submitted earlier, they are seen to be similar in all respects and so certainly would have been approved by Charles E. Cornell and Franklin C. Cornell, II, speaking in common for their ancestor.

Inasmuch, however, as the City was not in a position to select a new site nor in agreement as to the disposition of the old City Hall and many other inponderables involved, the plan was held in suspension.

It was reported at this meeting also, that the third annual book sale held by the Friends of the Library had netted $1,500. The Trustees passed a resolution changing the term of membership of Associates from an indefinite number to two years.

At this meeting, also, Sherman Peer was elected Librarian to succeed Harry G. Stutz, who had died the previous November.

For some years past a Committee, composed of delegates from the libraries of Dryden, Groton, Ithaca, Newfield, and Trumansburg, had been hearing about an idea relating to a county federation of libraries from representatives of the State Library Service and speakers from libraries in Elmira and Erie County, in both of which municipalities the system had been adopted. Little progress toward setting up such a system had been made in Tompkins County, notwithstanding liberal grants-in-aid which would be provided under the statute. An attitude of fearing Greeks bearing gifts hampered serious consideration of the idea for several years: there was fear of losing local autonony, of dictation by the State Librarian, of "snooping public officials," and of other unsavory prospects which might be hidden in the Act.

The plan, if adopted, contemplated the exchange of costly books between member libraries, the combining of all book purchases in order to secure maximum discounts, as well as central cataloging, and wider distribution of books in the rural areas. All the libraries involved had been established in the horse-and-buggy days when transportation between areas was difficult if not at times impossible, and it seemed to many that with the arrival of modern roads and

automobiles and the expansion of suburban areas as well as the growing custom of living in one town or hamlet and working in another, the facilities of all local libraries had been outstripped. Such federation would, however, require favorable action by the Board of Supervisors and an annual grant from the County of not less than $5,000 in addition to the State subsidy.

At a meeting on September 15, 1955, the Library Association went on record as favoring the plan of federation in principle. All other libraries in the county, exclusive of that in Dryden, also approved in principle. It was thought inadvisable, however, to approach the Board of Supervisors until Dryden had joined forces in order that the approach might be unanimous.

CHAPTER IX

The Secretary's Minutes for the year 1955 show little change in the affairs of the Association. At the Annual Meeting on January 24, 1956, the resignation of Mrs. Elisabeth Jenkins as Director of the Library was accepted with regret. Mr. Howard R. Brentlinger, formerly of the Rochester (N. Y.) Public Library, was elected to succeed Mrs. Jenkins on the recommendation of the Library Committee. The financial statement shows that the County of Tompkins had increased its donation from $3,000 to $6,000; the City of Ithaca, from $14,000 (exclusive of rent) to $17,000. These increases made possible the raising of the salaries of the staff from $17,192 to $22,801.

It was reported also that the Library had received a gift of fifty-four volumes of The Great Books of the Western World from the American Library Association.

On September 12, 1956, a reception was held in the library rooms to welcome Mr. and Mrs. Brentlinger and Miss Joyce Turner, new members of the staff, and to say good-bye to the former Director and others who were leaving. At this reception an exhibition of photographs pertaining to the Dead Sea Scrolls and a lecture about their discovery and the implications resulting from their antiquity was given by Professor Henry Detweiler of Cornell University.

At the Annual Meeting on January 23, 1957, Mrs. Robert A. Polson of Ithaca was elected President, succeeding the Reverend William S. Hicks, who in the fall of 1956 had been called to new duties by his church, necessitating his moving from Tompkins County. Under the Constitution of the Library his trusteeship had become vacant. During the balance of the year William L. Gragg, Vice-President of the Association, had assumed the duties of President, but in Mr. Gragg's opinion, his position as Superintendent of Public Schools in Ithaca precluded his being elected President of the Library Association. Mr. Gragg was re-elected Vice-President, and

Mr. Brentlinger was elected Secretary of the Association.

The year 1957marked the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the birth of Ezra Cornell. For months the University had been making elaborate plans to celebrate the event. The Statutory Librarian sensed the importance of the anniversary in providing an opportunity to dramatize the need for a municipal library building which would not only give the Association adequate facilities but also commemorate what Ezra Cornell's library and university had done for Ithaca. For some thirty years past the Association had (as this History reveals) tried, without success, to get the City or the County to build a new library. Mr. Peer believed that a new approach was needed and this approach should be in the form of money given with the aim of assisting the City in erecting a new building on city property. He discussed the idea with Mr. Stanley C. Allyn, president of the National Cash Register Company, with the result that the National Cash Register Foundation gave the plan its endorsement.

At the close of the Annual Meeting in January 1957, Mr. R. G. Fowler, manager of the Allen-Wales Division of the National Cash Register Company loacated at Ithaca, announced that the National Cash Register Foundation, having its headquarters at Dayton, Ohio, had contributed $25,000 to help implement the idea. He handed a check for the amount to Paul Bradford, Treasurer, saying that the money was given to the Association with "no strings attached." The gift, however, was made with the understanding that, if the Association desired, the sum could be turned over to the Tompkins County Trust Company in trust, and held by the trustee on the following terms:

> The principal amount and any increase thereto is to be invested in bonds approved under the Statutes of New York State for investment of trust funds.

> The income derived from such investments is to be paid to the Cornell Library Association as often as provided in present trust agreement for the Library's uses and purposes.
>
> However, in case the City of Ithaca shall prior to January 1, 1967, erect within city limits, a new public library building in substitution of the office building and library quarters erected by Ezra Cornell in 1864, having public library facilities, then and in that event the trustee is to liquidate said investments and pay the net amount to the City of Ithaca, less its statutory commissions for services rendered, for the purpose of assisting the City of Ithaca in financing the project.

Treasurer Bradford then announced the following additional gifts to be held in trust under the same provisions as those proposed for the gift of the National Cash Register Foundation:

Dr. Charles H. Webster of Cayuga Heights.....	$ 500.00
Mrs. Frank L. Morse of Cornell Heights.....	10,000.00
Sherman Peer of North Lansing, Tompkins County	5,000.00 *
Tompkins County Trust Company to commemorate Paul Bradford's services as Treasurer of the Library Association for the past twenty-five years, and for his services on the Board of Public Works of the City.....	2,500.00 *
Total	$43,000.00

Mr. Peer stated that the amount to be raised should be not less than $50,000 in order to put the Tompkins County Trust Company as Trustee in position to pay the City this sum when the new library would be built. "Of all the many substantial gifts," he said, "I recall none which has been given to a privately run welfare institution in Ithaca and also as a benefit to the taxpayers who eventually will be asked to vote in favor of a new public library as a city-owned project." He concluded his remarks by saying, "The fact is that Ezra Cornell set up in 1865, when he founded Cornell University, a chain reaction, cumulative in effect, whereby one business or industry, one family enterprise, brought another to enjoy this wonderful city, its public schools, and its

*At the time, the gifts of Mr. Peer and the Tompkins County Trust Company were announced as anonymous.

cultural advantages." The Trustees took appropriate action.

On May 20, 1957, the President and Statutory Librarian prepared for presentation to the Mayor, Common Council, Board of Public Works, and Planning Commission, a statement of principles for discussion in connection with a new public library, mainly as follows:

1. That the City of Ithaca build a new library in a centrally located area to be owned and maintained by the City.

2. That when a plan satisfactory to Ithaca and the Library Association is found the Association would ask the Legislature of New York to amend the charter to permit it to convey its real estate either directly to the City or to an outside purchaser, as the City may decide.

3. That it is immaterial to the Library Association whether the new building be adjacent to a new City Hall or located adjoining some other public or private building.

4. That the Association ask for library facilities only, but if the City desires to add additional facilities of a public nature, the Association would welcome such proposal.

5. That the new City library be named the Ezra Cornell Library.

Clearly in its endeavor toward the procurement of new facilities, the Library Association was prepared both to transfer to the City real estate valued at upwards of $100,000, as well as money in the amount of $43,000, and to convert the library from private to municipal ownership. Nothing was said about the future status of the Cornell Library Association, nor was there any hint regarding future ownership of books and library equipment. The Board of Trustees had gone on record to the effect that for a variety of reasons it was asking for adequate library services to Tompkins County, the city included; the lesser details were left to be worked out through consultation with the city fathers.

On June 12, the Garden Information Center, a new organization sponsored jointly by the Friends of the Library and the Garden Club of Ithaca and aimed

at stimulating interest in gardening and civic beautification and at acquainting "citizens of the city and county with the educational facilities available to them on all phases of gardening, landscaping, and conservation at the Cornell Public Library," opened headquarters on the third floor. For years past the Garden Club had made a point of providing flower arrangements for the main reading room. The presence of the newly established club was welcomed, rent free.

In July the City's Finance Committee under the chairmanship of Clinton R. Stimson reviewed the Library's proposal. The Chairman stated that the Planning Commission had already suggested a number of possible locations for a city hall and new library. In principle, the report and review seemed to meet with acceptance by the Finance Committee.

All in all, 1957 was a critical year in the annals of the Cornell Library Association and the Library. At the time, the Association had no idea of the legal, financial, and public reaction which its proposal would entail. Rather, after thirty-odd years of frustration, it had burned its bridges and plunged, prepared to wade for a dimly-seen, distant shore.

CHAPTER X

THE LAST YEARS IN EZRA CORNELL'S EDIFICE: 1958 - 1964

The year 1958 was principally spent in exploring the legal and financial problems which had to be solved before real progress could be made. The City was reluctant to designate a site; therefore the Association was unable to estimate costs; and in consequence the Common Council was noncommital. The Association was reluctant to get its Charter changed until the City officially accepted the plan and designated whether it would take title to the real estate or authorize its sale to private parties. Nor would the City say whether it would manage as well as own the new library or whether it would designate the Association to perform its usual functions as agent for the City. During the early months of 1958, the Association lived from day to day, waiting for events to indicate the next move.

At the annual meeting in January the Director reported progress in library service. Circulation had increased by 8,248 items loaned and had reached 142,604 during 1957. Registered borrowers had grown to 11,330, an increase of 1,637. The Director also reported that per capita income from the County, the City of Ithaca included, amounted to $1.22, whereas in adjoining counties it ran from $1.35 to $3.03. The State Library listed Tompkins County in twentieth place among free, public libraries of the State, exclusive of heavily endowed associations. The Building Fund, begun in January 1957 by the contribution of the National Cash Register Foundation of $25,000, had grown in a year's time through generous gifts to $45,000.

In January 1958, the Finance Committee of the Common Council approved in principle support of a muncipal library as a city function. On the strength of this and previous responses by certain aldermen and in the hope that the Council would be moved to take a more positive position, the Association decided that the

time had come to employ a professional library consultant and an architect to prepare preliminary drawings of a proposed new building. Mr. Joseph Rounds, Director of the Buffalo and Erie County Library System, was employed as consultant, and Mr. Richard Metzger, Architect, was engaged to make preliminary drawings. Donors willing to finance the expenses involved in both cases came forward, although the City had taken no positive action either toward designating a site or agreeing to build a municipal library.

On February 5, the Council passed a resolution which in effect approved a cooperative project between City and Association for the location and construction of a new public library to be owned and managed by the City. It was understood by the Council that this was a commitment "in principle only."

Meanwhile, various committees had been appointed: site, building, and so forth. While the architect's drawings were in preparation and suggestions regarding the layout were being awaited from Mr. Rounds, certain City officials began looking around for some existing facility which might be used for library purposes at considerable savings to the City: the high school at the corner of Buffalo and Cayuga Streets was to be replaced eventually by facilities erected on what was formerly Percy Field on North Cayuga Street. The post office at the corner of Tioga and East Buffalo Streets and, later, the Eagles Building on East State Streets were both considered. To meet the argument concerning the expense to the taxpayers, the Association suggested that the City-owned Thompson Park, located on the west side of North Cayuga Street, would be a suitable site. The City, however, backed away from the suggestion of using a city park as the location for the new library, even though both the Association and Consultant Rounds had approved of Thompson Park. One by one each the various buildings suggested was rejected as not suitable by reason of location or the cost of adapting it to library use or, in the case of the Post Office, because its

availability was too indefinite and also because its floor space was inadequate. In every instance a conclusion was arrived at only after careful study on behalf of the Association and City.

In August, Mr. Metzger, in consultation with Mr. Rounds, finished a preliminary layout based upon an estimated population in Tompkins County during the next decade of upwards of 75,000. To serve such a population, the Library should have 20,650 square feet and seating capacity for 125 readers at a time. Circulation was estimated at 300,000 volumes annually.

In April 1958, however, the State Legislature had voted to set up an arrangement whereby a group of counties could form a library system so organized books would be furnished on a loan basis without charge to the individual libraries in the group. As a result of this enactment, a library system was applied for by the counties of Tompkins, Cortland, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tioga, and a group was chosen to apply to the Regents for a Charter. Mrs. Robert A. Polson of Ithaca was elected President and seventeen libraries from the five counties joined. Next, Ithaca was selected by the trustees as the central location for the new system, and when the Charter was granted by the Regents, details of the working of the system became known. It then seemed desirable that headquarters for the Finger Lakes Library System be located in or near the Cornell Public Library and eventually be incorporated into the proposed new municipal library building. Indeed such a plan was proposed by the Finger Lakes Library System and met with enthusiastic reception by the Cornell Library Association. Under the plan, the Cornell Public Library's present collection of some 38,000 books plus the new system's collection would be increased over a period of ten years to 100,000 volumes; the Cornell Public Library was to provide 1,200 fiction and the Finger Lakes Library System 4,800 nonfiction per annum; ownership of the Finger Lakes Library books, although they were to be housed in the new library, was to

remain with the Finger Lakes Library System and the books were to be loaned only to established libraries in the five counties.

On October 21, 1958, the Cornell Library Association accepted the proposal, and on December 30 a contract was entered into between the Association and the Finger Lakes Library System implementing the proposed county-wide service, although no commitment had been made by the City to build adequate facilities to house the new System, and the only available space in the library for housing was temporary and makeshift, a group of rooms at the east end of the first floor.

Accordingly, it became necessary to re-plan the proposed new library, re-figure space, interior arrangement, finances, and costs, and to make a new approach to the City. Meanwhile, the public was informed of the new arrangements through news releases and the changes were discussed with individual members of the Common Council. The year closed with the hope of great events to come but precious little to support fulfillment.

The first months of 1959 passed with little progress indicated on the surface of events other than a steady increase in circulation reported by the Director along with other routine matters which followed the usual pattern. Mr. William T. Weitzel, a professional librarian, was selected to be Director of the Finger Lakes Library System. A gift of $1,000 from Professor and Mrs. Robert A. Polson and other generous gifts were used to finance Mr. Rounds' and Mr. Metzger's services. Later, an offer of $15,000, annually, was made by the Finger Lakes Library System, to assist in financing operating expenses on condition that it would be housed in the proposed new library building.

Early in March the First National Bank and Trust Company of Ithaca offered $90,000 net for the Association's real estate; since the area was to be made into

a parking lot for use of bank customers, the offer entailed demolition of the building. This sum plus the $50,000 already in the Building Fund would enable the Association to help finance the proposed new building. Sale of the Association's real estate had years earlier been authorized by the State Legislature, but no authority was given in the statute by which the proceeds could be turned over to the City. Before this could be done, the Association's charter would have to be amended. The bank had asked that action by the Trustees of the Library Association be taken within six months. The Legislature was due to adjourn in April, however. How could such an amendment be introduced and passed? It so happened that Professor Robert S. Pasley of the Cornell Law School had, for some time, taken a friendly interest in the library and its negotiations with the city. He offered to explore legal possiblities, and the offer was accepted by the Trustees. Subsequently, he reported that the Regents of the State of New York had power to amend the Charter, and as the Board of Regents was in continuous session, he would prepare a petition to it. This move was promptly made, and in due time the Board gave its consent.

The Trustees realized that acceptance of the bank's offer meant that the Cornell Public Library would have to go into temporary quarters for the period between the date of conveyance of the real estate and the opening of the proposed new library building. Obviously, the City had to be informed of the bank's offer and had to obtain its consent to the sale, and to the removal of the Library to temporary quarters. Obviously, too, a decision by the city fathers including the Board of Public Works was necessary before the Trustees could take action for or against the bank's proposal.

To sell or not to sell! This was as crucial a matter to the City as to the Trustees and Library Association. Whether the answer was yes or no would be the key to the future.

On July 1, 1959, the Common Council took notice of the stalemate and passed a resolution which in substance reaffirmed its desire to work with the Library Trustees in finding a site and toward constructing a library building. The Common Council authorized the Public Works Relations and Finance Committee to proceed immediately with the formation of definite plans and to report to the September meeting of the Council, at which time, it was noted, the bank's offer was due to expire. Furthermore, the bank had stated that it had another suitable property in mind for a parking lot. Haste was essential. Dr. Ralph P. Baldini, chairman of the Public Works Relations Committee, was designated as chairman of the new committee, and the City Attorney was asked to draft a proposed management contract acceptable to the State Department of Audit and Control.

The Association's attorney thereupon, by way of assisting, prepared a brief of the law applicable to private corporate management of a municipal library. In the brief, however, it was indicated that the Association had in mind a lease of the new city premises when ready for occupancy. The word "lease" had slipped in by inadvertance. The City Attorney reported to the September meeting of the Common Council that a lease would be illegal. The bank made a further extension of one month on its offer.

At the October meeting of the Common Council, a Trustee of the Library Association stated that the Trustees of the Cornell Public Library had never considered a lease or operation of the library as tenant. It simply desired to be constituted the agent of the City, confining its duties to customary business of running a public library as it had done heretofore for over ninety years. The Council accepted the explanation as satisfactory; again the bank extended its offer for a month, as matters seemed to coming to a head.

Finally, on November 4, 1959. the Common Council took action. In substance it approved the selecting of a site and the construction of a new library building

to be managed by the Cornell Library Association for the City, subject to the approval of the State Department of Audit and Control. The cost involved was to be financed over a period of twenty-three years, providing that the cost to the city did not exceed $25,000 per year for amortization and operating expenses, and that the Association contributed $150,000 toward the project and transferred to the City its books and assets (presumably its library equipment). Eleven aldermen voted in favor, one against, and three members were absent. Other details of financing included in the resolution were subject to change as the project developed and so are omitted. The Trustees noted that four aldermen were either opposed or noncommitted.

The enthusiasm resulting from the Common Council's action was somewhat dampened both by the need to raise an additional $10,000 in order to enable the Association to meet its money offer of $150,000 and by the reception which the project would receive from the Department of Audit and Control since legislation would probably be required to get its approval. Examination of the statutes of the State and court decisions and Opinions of the Attorney General's office failed to disclose a situation "on all fours" with what the Association proposed to do. It was well settled that in any event the Supreme Court would have to pass on the proposed sale and approve it, irrespective of proposed changes in the Charter, because the Association was a private membership body. It was obvious that legal and financial problems had to be solved by the Trustees, and time was running on.

In November 1959, also, the Friends of the Library conducted their thirteenth sale of books donated by residents in the area. The sale netted $2,250, the highest sum recorded to date. The co-chairmen of the Friends reported: "We have been rewarded...thanks to the help of the entire community"—those who donated books, The Explorers of Coddington Road, Troop 6, and the Cayuga

Heights Troop, as well as by several Cornell students, who carried books from the first to the third floor of the library building where the sale was held. "Sixty-two women cooperated in making and maintaining a daily schedule of sales, eleven hours a day, five days a week for six weeks."

In January 1960, a political change took place in Ithaca: Ralph C. Smith, Republican, replaced John F. Ryan, Democrat, as Mayor. The new Mayor began his term with definite objectives; chiefly, merger of the Town of Ithaca with the City, a new Central Fire Station, and a new Cornell Public Library. Promptly, the new Mayor revitalized the Library-Coordinating Committee, naming as its members R. G. Fowler, representing the Library Association, Dr. Ralph P. Baldini for the Common Council, William M. Egan for the Board of Public Works, H. Stilwell Brown for the Planning Board, and George F. Rogalsky for the public at large. He himself would act as ex-officio member. Furthermore, he stated that he wanted action before January 27, when, as he pointed out, "The Association has got to decide whether it is going to sell its building property to the First National Bank and Trust Company." The bank had previously set February 10 as the final date for an answer.

As a result of correspondence and the appearance of Library and City officials before the Board of Audit and Control at Albany, it was discovered that enabling legislation must be passed by the Legislature before a management contract could be signed by the City and authority given to permit the Association to transfer and the City to accept the Association's assets.

At the annual meeting of the Trustees and Associate members of the Association held on January 27, the Trustees voted unanimously to accept the offer of $90,000 made by the First National Bank and Trust Company for purchase of the

Association's real estate, subject, of course, to consent of the Supreme Court of the State of New York.

To the credit of the Board of Trustees, it had now definitely burned its bridge. This action was taken with knowledge of it by the City; not yet, however, had a site been selected or costs of building and land more than roughly estimated. Nor was it known whether a City Hall and Library would be combined or built separately.

In the meantime temporary quarters had to be leased by July 1; all books and equipment had to be moved; and the Library set up so it could do business until a new building should be ready for occupancy. Now as never before, the future of the Library rested in the good intentions of the city fathers and unforeseen events. The Trustees had confidence that ultimately their objective would be reached — but when was anyone's guess.

At the Annual Meeting in January 1960, the Director reported that circulation had gone up by 20,435 over the previous year. Director Weitzel reported that on September 1, 1959 the Cornell Library had been designated the Finger Lakes System's Central Library.

Early in February a bill was drafted for submission to the Legislature permitting the Association and the city to contract for management of the Library when the municipal library should be occupied, as well as allowing transfer of the Association's assets and their acceptance by the city. The Council was informed by an alderman that at the meeting of November 13, 1959, the City Attorney had been requested to submit to the Department of Audit and Control enabling permissive legislation which did not bind the city to act if passed by the Legislature. In spite of this comment, however, the Council endorsed the following procedure for the Library - City Coordinating Committee:

1. To establish a building program (indicating square footage allotments for the various elements of the new library).
2. To weigh capital costs of new construction versus conversion of existing structures.
3. To indicate annual operating costs of desirable alternatives.
4. To ascertain advantages and disadvantages of alternate sites.

At this period the Eagles Building as the future home of the Library was seriously debated among engineers, city fathers, and Library members. After much investigation and debate, it was decided to purchase this building for municipal purposes.

On February 8, a contract of sale of the Association's real estate to the bank was executed, subject only to consent of the Supreme Court, a hurdle which was expected to be easily taken.

During February, the Association was able to announce additional gifts to its building fund, raising the total to $60,000. This sum plus proceeds from the sale of its real estate would enable it to turn over to the City a total of $150,000 when a site was purchased and construction started.

By the end of March, the Legislature had passed the enabling act which was promptly signed by Governor Nelson A. Rockfeller. In effect, the bothersome legal road blocks had been eliminated. On March 16, the Council requested the Planning Board to submit "immediately" recommendations on sites for a new City Hall and new Library and appropriated $20,000 for preliminary studies. The study was referred to Dr. Ralph Baldini's Committee. The Association meanwhile had signed a lease for temporary quarters with the Italian Society of Mutual Aid at 417 West State Street for two years at an annual rent of $7,500 with renewal privileges, and the proviso that at the end of each year the Society would deduct $625 as a good will donation.

In May the Supreme Court consented to the transfer of the Association's real estate to the bank. Eventually, the Court would be asked to approve the turning of the Association's assets over to the City.

At the May meeting of the Common Council, Dr. Baldini reported that a number of sites had been studied and that an area at the southwest corner of Court and North Cayuga Street was recommended. He reported further that the Association would need to purchase approximately $12,000 worth of wooden stacks in order to operate in the temporary quarters, that it was not practical to rip out permanent shelving in the old building and to re-erect it in the Sons of Italy Hall. As the stacks to be purchased would become municipal property, it would be proper to agree that their cost be deducted from the sum eventually to be paid the City. The Association was to buy and pay for the stacks and take credit for the actual amount expended.

Because of the moving from the old building to the temporary quarters, in many respects June 1960 was the most strenuous month in the Library's ninety-six years. Yet, the Director of the Library and his staff, with the assistance of a committee to coordinate the job and of residents of the area, accomplished an amazing task without accident or delay. About 3,000 new cartons were lent for the purpose: in these the staff and helpers packed all books, labeled the contents, sealed the containers, and got them ready to be carried to a shute built on the fire escape on the east side of the building, by which they could be slid down to a waiting truck. Some one-hundred eighty persons had volunteered to assist in the moving, in groups of twenty-five at a time, for as many days as needed to complete the job. The actual moving began on June 17, and by July 7 some 39,000 books as well as much library equipment had been reassembled in the Sons of Italy Hall, and the Library on that day reopened for public service. All labor and expense of

moving was donated, excepting only the transportation of heavy equipment which had to be handled by professional movers. The moving operation comprised an outstanding example of public support for the Library and evidence of what can be done by civic-minded residents.

Meanwhile, on June 20 the Association deeded its real estate to the bank. Demolition of Ezra Cornell's "edifice" began the second week in July.

On June 28, the Board of Trustees held a final meeting in the browsing room which had been stripped of all books and furniture. Here and there refuse littered the floor. The huge 7 by 9 foot portrait of Ezra Cornell, which for so many years had kept watch on the comings and goings of his library, had been removed and presented to Cornell University; it was too bulky to be hung in the temporary quarters. Arrangements had been made to have Mrs. Alison Kingsbury Bishop paint another protrait of the Founder of a suitable size for the future home of the Library. At this final meeting, the Trustees adopted a resolution, as follows:

> Although the Trustees of the Association are glad that the books and staff are now in safe, temporary quarters, they are sad to note the abandonment of the faithful old building which has served the residents of Tompkins County for ninety-six years. However, the building erected by the generosity of Ezra Cornell in 1864 has for years been dying in the top. Deterioration began years ago in the roof beams supporting the roof, which circumstance resulted in closing the two top floors, and, finally, this decay has extended to the ceiling of the library's west room. The "erosion of time" has rendered the building obsolete and unsafe from top to bottom.

EPILOGUE: 1960 - 1968

By Mary Tibbets Freeman

Mary Tibbets Freeman, a native of Bethel, Maine, is a graduate of Gould Academy and of Wheaton College, summa cum laude, and holds the M. A. and Ph. D. degrees from Cornell University. She taught classics and comparative literature at Smith College and has published articles. She is a member of the Board of Associates of the Cornell Public Library. She and her husband, Barron Freeman, a free-lance writer and former teacher, are the parents of two sons.

Epilogue: 1960-1968

When the Cornell Public Library opened the doors of its temporary quarters at the Sons of Italy Hall, 417 West State Street, to the public on July 7, 1960, it opened them also to a period of continuing and greatly accelerating growth. The annual report by the Director in 1961 called the year "highly successful in terms of increased service to area residents" and reported the largest circulation year in the Library's history. Total loans of 249,186 were, he said, just one day's circulation short of a quarter million and represented a 300 percent increase since World War II. New circulation records had been set, and the Director named March 11 as the "busiest day thus far in our history, when 1,727 items were loaned."

Reference questions also increased markedly during 1961, exceeding 2,000 for the first time, and other departments reported comparable growth. The Director listed several conveniences afforded by the Library's new temporary location, especially the availability of parking and ground floor situation, together with the improved book collection and a more stable and experienced staff, as factors largely responsible for the notable and continued heavy increase in use of the Library by area residents. For the most part, however, the convenience of the Library's temporary quarters stopped with the door, and the Director's summary of "Reasons why the new library is so urgently needed" succinctly describes by implication the crowded conditions which from the very start characterized the interim quarters.

> The old Cornell Public Library had ninety seats for readers: the temporary library has barely sixty seats. The program recommendation of eighty-five seats for adults, fifteen for young adults, and twenty-five for children is surely modest enough. We do, however, seek additional breathing space so that the frightful congestion can be reduced far below the present levels, and so that browsers will not constantly be brushing against readers. We would,

> in short, like the library to be inviting, and we find that this is less and less possible now.

There was indeed little "breathing space" in the new quarters. All available space was utilized to best advantage and the Italian Society of Mutual Aid went out of its way to be helpful and cooperative with the new tenants, but the Sons of Italy Hall had never been designed with the thought of adequately housing the many needs of a well-equipped, steadily growing, and expanding modern library. Consequently, from the very beginning, space allocated to the several departments placed one more or less on top of another and in several instances spilled them over into browsing, reading, and stack room as well. The Director's office was contained in the southeast corner of the stacks where a sign and an expanding wooden gate of the sort used to keep toddlers from falling downstairs secured for him a modicum of privacy. The reference librarian's office was a desk placed between two sections of the card catalog. Three library assistants rubbed elbows at desks crowded into a tiny office made even smaller by the five doorways which were cut into its walls. The service librarian's office was an area in the northeast corner of the main room behind some card catalogs. A passage way to serve as a storage area for librarians' supplies was created by using bookcases to wall off an original kitchen area at the back of a small front room which now constituted the children's library. Largely by virtue of its solid oak construction, the main circulation desk in the northwest corner of the main room maintained its position against librarians and patrons passing on three sides. Even the hallway leading into the library was crowded into use as a place where books contributed to the Friends of the Library's annual autumn booksale could be deposited throughout the year.

Equipment needed for the adequate functioning of a modern library and added during the eight years of the Library's occupancy of its temporary quarters --

more wooden stacks, more card catalogs, a coin-operated copying machine for the convenience of the public, more reading benches in the children's room -- cut annually into breathing space already in short supply and privacy of which there was none. "Rooms" were made for the record and film departments by rearranging bookshelves so that nooks and crannies would symbolize seclusion and a place in which to browse. Each year more less frequently used books were stored in "annexes," in space rented from Alcor, Inc. and Ithaca College, where on one or two days' notice they could be available for borrowing, until by 1968, one third of the Library's collection of books was so housed. Gradually, too, additions were made to the Library's staff. At the close of 1967 the Director noted that the staff numbered forty and that the Library was able "to approach more closely than ever before the standard stipulating that a qualified librarian be on duty at all times the library is open." Constantly, too, use of the Library increased. The circulation record for items lent in a single day set in 1961 fell to another in 1962, and regularly almost yearly thereafter a new record was set, until on Saturday, February 3, 1968, 1,932 transactions were recorded.

The manifold and varied functions which comprised the Cornell Public Library's weekly program during the 1960's are succinctly described by Mrs. Edward F. Hall:

> Not even the keen mind and expansive vision of a Cornell could be expected to foresee the extent of the service demands which the modern library is called upon to meet...,
>
> While the primary purpose of the library remains the bringing together of people and books, many other services are now essential in supplying the needs of the community. In the children's room a story hour is held regularly every Saturday morning, with story telling by members of the staff and Cornell University students. Each year in observance of the Spring Book Festival and Children's Book Week a special invitation is extended to pupils and teachers of the fourth grades of the City and nearby towns to attend and receive library instruction. A Summer Reading Program has been

designed for beginning readers and their special requirements. Assistance has been extended to teachers at Cornell University, Ithaca College, and the public schools as well as to Sunday School teachers, and to those dealing with the problems of exceptional children, the retarded child, and the child suffering from cerebral palsy.

Among special services and display offered by the Library may be mentioned the loan of long-playing records, reviews of motion pictures currently playing in Ithaca, displays of books and other materials of special interest to Senior Citizens, religious books and materials, travel books, and crafts -- in cooperation with the New York State Craft Fair. In the past the Library has provided a special corner with books and materials for the garden lover. During the war books on defense training and the needs of the armed services were featured.

During these busy years the Library was able to meet the needs of an expanding program largely through the help and generosity of the Friends of the Library. Starting out in 1947 as a committee wanting to do something, the group in the next twenty years more than lived up to its objective. There is hardly a phase of the Library's operation which has not benefited from the activities of the Friends. Equipment added through their generosity ranges from book trucks, electric typewriters, librarians' chairs, storage cabinets, a duplicating machine, a file cabinet for the magazine check-in, and ten thousand book marks. In addition, in 1968 the Friends contributed $31,000 to the building fund for the new library building. Under their auspices the Memorial Book Program was inaugurated; for years they sponsored a Great Books Discussion Group initiated by the Ithaca Branch of the American Association of University Women, and, with the Library and the Finger Lakes Library System, celebrated National Library Week with a series of open houses and programs. Their annual booksale is a community event and in many respects serves as a book exchange for central New York as well as the Friends' principal money-raising endeavor. Through the activities of their Volunteer Service Committee, among other things, worn books are mended, library shelves read, the condition of phonograph records tested,

and thousands of book pockets pasted in. Noting in 1963 that they have "again responded to our expressed needs with extreme generosity," the Director further commented: "Surely Ithaca is unique among all American communities of our size and compares very favorably with many large cities in the size of the contribution made by its Friends." Less easily chronicled are the many ways in which the Friends have brought the condition and needs of the Library to the attention of a great many people, and one can only say, as did the Director in 1966, "This is truly one of the outstanding Friends of the Library organizations of the entire country."

December, 1966 marked the one hundredth anniversary of the dedication of the Cornell Public Library, and the event was observed fittingly by an all-day celebration and ceremony on January 24, 1967, in the Women's Community Building. Distinctive exhibits illustrating the many ways the library serves the community or representing such associative organizations as the Finger Lakes Library System, the DeWitt Historical Society, the Friends of the Cornell Public Library, and the Garden Information Center largely filled the auditorium. Notable also was a display of regional stamps and covers from the collections of Henry E. Abt, William J. Hassan, and Royden H. Lounsbery. A model and plans for the new library building were exhibited and elicited much interest and comment. Laurel garlands and arrangements of red and white carnations comprised the decorations, and a portrait of Ezra Cornell occupied a prominent place on the podium. Hundreds of adults and school children visited the exhibits during the day; an equally successful evening program featured the Ithaca High School Madrigal Singers and an address on the "Early History of the Cornell Public Library by Professor Morris G. Bishop, Kappa Alpha Professor of Romance Literature, Emeritus.

Meanwhile gargantuan efforts continued to be expended toward bringing a new library building into being. Essentially, the years from July 1960 to

July-August 1967 were years of planning, promises, and frustrations, as library Trustees and Associates worked first with the City, then with the City and County, and finally with the County to solve the baffling problems spawned by legal complexities raising barriers against joint ownership or contributions by one toward an enterprise owned by another. Hopes rose high, crashed in disappointment, and phoenix-like rose again. Alarums and excursions abounded, as indeed they had for nearly forty years, and few were the months in this period which did not find area residents talking over a new rumor concerning the Library's status non quo. Two facts are, however, notable: first, the unfaltering resolution felt by many dedicated citizens that somehow, sometime a new library building must be achieved; and, second, the slow, steady increase in support and adherents that the cause of the new library gained for itself each time it lost an endeavor. Few public libraries have come into being with the ease and dispatch which, thanks to Ezra Cornell, characterized the establishment of a public library in Ithaca and Tompkins County, New York, in the 1860's. Much more usual are the trials and tribulations, uncertainties and anxieties which attended the accomplishing of a new library building a hundred years later.

For, in spite of all, the new building was accomplished. In August and September 1967, the County's Board of Supervisors voted to build a new $1,700,000 county library building, to operate the new library, and to appoint a board of seven trustees to supervise its day-to-day administration. The trustees of the Cornell Public Library, in turn, promised to donate to the new county library its book collection, library equipment, income from trust funds, and monies from building fund and bank accounts, and it was agreed that as soon as all its obligations had been met, the Cornell Library Association was to be dissolved. In addition the new county library was also helped into being by grants toward construction and operation from both the federal and state governments.

The new Tompkins County Library, situated at the southwest corner of Cayuga and Court Streets in Ithaca, contains approximately 40,000 square feet and has a capacity of 200,000 volumes and 175 seats. The building itself, of handsome functional design, is the result of state and federal criteria, professional consultants' and staff recommendations, and suggestions from the architect and the Library Committee of the Board of Supervisors. A circular area adjacent to the main reading room houses the children's room; space also is set aside for the reference, young adult, music, new book, local history, genealogical, and historical books collections. Separate areas are assigned to loan desk and cataloging departments, and there are a conference room and a meeting room as well as an office and and staff room for the professional staff. Once again the Library is properly housed; once again there is breathing space. The new Tompkins County Library moreover houses the headquarters of the Finger Lakes Library System, including garage room for the Bookmobile and for the station wagon which is used to deliver books to the System's twenty-seven member libraries.

Through the years, the relationship between the Cornell Public Library (now the Tompkins County Public Library) and the Finger Lakes Library System has been happy and mutually beneficial. In January 1968, Mrs. Robert A. Polson, first president of the Finger Lakes Library System, in giving a capsule history of New York State's multi-county library cooperative systems and the Finger Lakes Library System in particular, summed up the situation as follows:

> For nearly ten years the services rendered by the Cornell Public Library have helped to make the Finger Lakes Library System effective, and the resources of the system have broadened and strengthened the performance of the local libraries. Finger Lakes feels fortunate indeed to have such a strong Central Library. It extends thanks to Director Brentlinger and his capable staff, to Mrs. Helen Bull Vandervort and her trustees and associates for their unfailing efforts to develop good library service in this area.

> It is with gratitude that the system sees a new building rising. At last the splendid books of the central collection, now scattered in three locations, can be assembled under one roof and made easily available to users. Browsing again will be possible, along with faster access. The System wishes to add its thanks to those of the citizens present today to the Supervisors of Tompkins County for making possible the new building and the continuation of the Central Library under its legal form as the Tompkins County Public Library.

In the new Tompkins County Public Library there are, with few exceptions, no plaques or brass markers commemorating individuals. The names of the many people who over the years have contributed money or service to the Library are recorded all together in a commemorative book prominently displayed and easily accessible. Appropriately there is a plaque in the lobby honoring Ezra Cornell, the Founder, and stating briefly the Library's history:

> Ezra Cornell, far-sighted pioneer of Ithaca, built, endowed, and on December 20, 1866, dedicated to his fellow citizens the Cornell Public Library.
>
> His building stood until July 1960, and served as the site of the first classes of Cornell University and the Ithaca College Library.
>
> The Tompkins County Board of Supervisors continued this generous legacy. On September 11, 1967, they created the Tompkins County Public Library as successor to the Cornell Public Library and in 1968 erected this building to house it by adding county, state, and federal funds to the assets of the Cornell Public Library Association.
>
> The Tompkins County Public Library, in its own right and as the Central Library of the Finger Lakes Library System, is dedicated to serve the public. As Ezra Cornell said in 1866, "May God bless the enterprise and make it fruitful to this people in knowledge, truth, and virtue."

ADDENDA: 1969

Dedication of the spacious new Tompkins County Public Library and the Finger Lakes Library System Headquarters took place on Sunday, April 20, 1969, with approximately 450 persons in attendance.

The public library had been operating in its new home since February 3, and the Finger Lakes Library System had moved to its new headquarters in April. Following both the opening day ceremonies and the dedication, Friends of the Tompkins County Public Library acted as hostesses for tours of the building.

William B. Kerr, chairman of the special library committee of the Tompkins County Board of Supervisors, opened the dedicatory program by requesting a period of silence honoring the late Sherman Peer, champion and benefactor of the building campaign. Mr. Kerr announced that the library's meeting room would be named for Mr. Peer.

Next, James R. Graves and James H. Cortright, the other two members of the three-man committee, spoke briefly. Supervisor Graves introduced men and women who had contributed to the building effort, including Architect J. Victor Bagnardi. He pointed to County Treasurer Donald R. Stobbs as being instrumental in producing a debt-free library, and noted with gratitude the help received from Miss Jean L. Connor, director, and Mrs. Jacqueline Enequist, associate in Public Library Services of the Division of Library Development of the New York State Department of Education. He also honored the late Gerald A. Barry, who represented the Finger Lakes Library System on the building committee of the new library.

To Supervisor Cortright went the privilege of presenting the building to its trustees and "to all the people of Tompkins County and all those served by the Finger Lakes Library System."

Acceptance came from Mrs. John Vandervort, chairman of the library's board of trustees and former president (1958 to 1968) of the Cornell Library Association.

John A. Humphry, assistant commissioner for libraries in the New York State Education Department, praised the community effort that made possible the "attractive, vital, and functional" building -- the first new library in New York State to act as a central library and a library system headquarters.

Howard R. Brentlinger, director of the public library since 1956, spoke briefly, as did also William T. Weitzel, who became director of the Finger Lakes Library System shortly after it was established in 1959.

A plaque honoring Ezra Cornell, the Founder, was unveiled by his great-great-great grandson--another Ezra Cornell, a member of the class of 1970 at the university established by his ancestor.

Concluding the ceremonies, George Harris Healey, professor of English and curator of rare books at Cornell University, declared, "We are here to hang a garland on a memorable achievement."