

Ex Libris

TO BUILD A LIBRARY

SOMEONE HAS LIKENED the new Essex Library project to an ascent of Everest. Ever since the decision to make the ascent was made some twenty or more years ago, the mobilization of resources has invariably been an eager and determined, but somewhat attenuated, often difficult, occasionally frustrating, process. Several strategic camps have been firmly established on the slopes; some, in great disappointment, have had to be abandoned. As in most enterprises of great pith and moment, there have been differences of opinion about ways and means. Which route shall we take? Which face of the mountain shall we attack? However, the effort has always been featured by the thoughtfulness and generosity of many dedicated people in the community who have contributed time, money, and hard work to the adventure. At no time has anybody said: Let us give up. At no time have the auguries been more propitious than they are now. Before relinquishing the metaphor, may we say that in great hope and confidence we are now dug in on the North Col, ready to make the final assault on the summit.

You are familiar with the recent course of events, because you are interested in them and because they have been faithfully recorded in the press. In brief, however, five companies submitted bids for the construction of the new building on November 9th, at which time the trustees were in clear sight of their goal. All of the bids exceeded expectation, one of them by over \$100,000, and they brought home the realization that, within the inflationary spiral, building costs must surely lead all the rest.

Unable to meet even the low bid of Kristian B. Larsen (\$299,868) of Hamden, Connecticut, with funds-in-hand plus pledges received to date, the trustees asked the three lowest bidders to resubmit estimates after omitting or modifying some forty-two construction units, all of which had been and still were considered desirable ones, but which perhaps are not absolutely necessary at the outset.

Again, on November 28th, Mr. Larsen was low man; his bid of \$243,680 took into account the deduction and/or modification of such items as the following:

- omit brick paving at two exterior entrances
- omit post-top lighting fixtures, poles, and foundations
- omit bituminous concrete paving and curbs
- omit (except necessary foundation work) air conditioning
- change colored mortar to standard
- change wood roofing shingles to asphalt

Manifestly, omission of certain items could be rectified in the future. Users of the new library would have to wait patiently for such things as the carpeting, the air conditioning unit, and the exterior book depository. Of course a shift to asphalt shingles would be irremediable, or virtually so.

In any case, time was beginning to run short. The trustees decided to negotiate further with Mr. Larsen, and requested the building committee to make a final recommendation in a week's time, after consultation with Mr. Larsen and Richard Schoenhardt, our architect.

On December 5th, upon recommendation of the building committee (which, incidentally, restored several of the forty-two items considered to be of highest priority), the trustees voted unanimously to accept Mr. Larsen's low bid as amended and to enter into formal contract with him at a figure that should iron out at \$252,000. A new library is now assured.

BUT WE SHALL NEED YOUR HELP

In round numbers, against an anticipated total investment of \$353,000, we have \$125,600 in cash and \$105,400 in unpaid pledges. Or a total of \$231,000.

We lack \$122,000, of which approximately \$60,000 lies in the promise of transfer of the present library to Robert Gunn, whose purchase of the property is contingent on the Zoning Board's approval of his opening an art and antique store in the building.

The remainder, or \$62,000, must be raised forthwith - from those of you who have not yet contributed and from others who are willing to boost their pledges.

IN MEMORIAM

Alice Rosencrantz died at Lawrence & Memorial Hospitals, New London, on Sunday, December 3, 1978. She had served as Assistant Librarian for thirteen years and as Librarian for the past three years.

No one has given more than she to the cause of the Library; it is impossible to think of the Library, old or new, without thinking of her great contribution to letters and learning in our town. No one had greater faith than she in the effort to which we are all committed. To us and to all her many friends the loss of her is inestimable.

- Henry D. Towers

GROUND-BREAKING

Ground-breaking ceremonies for the new Essex Library will be held on Sunday, December 17, 1978, at noon on the new Library site at the corner of Grove Street and West Avenue.

All residents of Essex are invited to attend. Refreshments will be served and some surprises will be on hand.

THE FRIENDS OF THE ESSEX LIBRARY

The Friends of the Essex Library was formed in April, 1978, when a large number of Essex people gathered to join the organization of volunteers to expand the activities of the library and the cultural interest of the community at large. There have been three formal meetings; three more are planned in the first three months of 1979.

Volunteers are needed badly, never more so than now, to help with the filing and shelving of books, and to this end, Friends are urged to sign up on the calendar behind the librarian's desk for times when they can help.

If any Friend has a collection of small things (autographs, first editions, rare books, souvenirs, etc.) or can put together an interesting display, presumably, but not necessarily on one subject, he or she is asked to get in touch with Debby Fuller (767-1782), who is in charge of the library's display case.

If you are not now a member of the Friends, all it takes to be a member is a \$1.00 membership fee (to cover mailing costs) and a willingness to help. Get in touch with any of the officers: Joan Duys, president; Janet Miller, vice-president; Janet Prann, secretary; Engie Syme, treasurer; Jean Byrne, volunteers; Laura Fairburn, projects; and Linda Ward, youth projects.

On December 1st and 2nd several hundred books in utmost variety changed hands when the Friends conducted a book sale under the direction of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Bininger. Approximately 90 people donated books; others devoted their time. A total of \$450 was raised at the sale.

On January 19th (Essex Town Hall, 8pm) John Jay will narrate one of his well-known ski films. We do not have a title yet, but as he operates all over the world, the showing promises to be an exciting performance.

On February 9th (Essex Town Hall, 8pm) the Friends will present an informative and amusing film on surfing to take your mind off our Connecticut winter.

On March 16th (Essex Town Hall, 8pm) the Friends will show two films from Mystic Seaport's Film Library. One, a story of man on deep waters, contains historic footage of clipper ships as well as more contemporary glimpses of life at sea. This will be followed by a film about an America's Cup Race off Newport.

A donation of \$4.00 will get you into each performance, or, for a \$10.00 donation, you may come to all three. Do help us build and equip the new library.

The Essex Library Association

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