NOTE:
For a copy of the original Booklet of: The History Of The Pettes Memorial Library please visit the Pettes Memorial Library during regular business hours.

The following document includes the original text, but not all the tables, found in the original booklet. The French booklet text is also available at the Pettes Memorial Library and on this website.

The History Of The Pettes Memorial Library
Knowlton Quebec, 1894 - 1983
The Oldest free Public Library in the Province of Quebec
(From Historical Records and Minutes of Meetings)

By
G. A. Rotherham
Past Chairman, Board of Trustees

Acknowledgements
The Pettes Memorial Library
for Access to the Original Minutes Books;

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The Pettes Memorial Library

On April 23, 1858 the “Advertiser and Eastern Townships Sentinel,” which was published in Waterloo, announced that $50 yearly grants were made to some 125 small libraries throughout the country. There were few grants made to the Townships and none in the District of Bedford.

This announcement was probably the cause of the first stirrings of interest in the Knowlton area, and about this time a number of “Literary Associations” were formed, many of which proved to be short lived. The Brome Library Association (BLA) could have been numbered among these but its later effects were more substantial.

The Brome Library Association (BLA)

The Brome Library Association (BLA) was formed in 1858, the first meeting taking place on December 11 of that year, at Knowlton Academy (now part of the Museum). The meeting was small but the prime movers seemed to be: Mr. L. M. Knowlton and Mr. J. W. Marsh, the new Principal of the Academy, who appears to have been the main driving force.

The Sentinel newspaper noted the appointment of Mr. Joseph Marsh, to be the new Principal of the Knowlton Academy on the May 14, 1858, calling him an excellent teacher. He came from the University of Vermont in Burlington, his family being residents of that State. At the same time his appointment was not without opposition as one subscriber signing himself “Justice” complained that his predecessor, Mr. Laing, also of the University of Vermont, whom he likewise calls an excellent teacher, had been “dismissed.” Mr. Laing, however, went on as Principal of the Shefford academy at Frost Village, described as “a famous institute of learning.” Laing then went to Waterloo when the school was moved and later to Wisconsin. He was instrumental in forming the Library Association of Shefford which became the “Mechanics Institute and Library Association of Waterloo.” They were, however, a year behind Knowlton. We appear to owe much to young Vermonters educated at their University.

Mr. Marsh was evidently a “go getter.” While in Knowlton, though young, he was prominent at the Teacher’s Convention of the District of Bedford, and in the fledgeling BLA. He later went on to Oregon.

The first constitution of the BLA contained the following Articles:

“iv. The duties of the Secretary (Marsh was the first Secretary) shall be to keep a record of the proceedings during all Meetings of the Association, to record all books taken from or returned to the Library, to inspect the same when returned, and if found damaged assess the value of the same on the person who last took the same from the library.

“v. Any person may become a member of the Association by paying 2s (shilling). 1d (pence) per year, and any member of the School by paying 7½d per year, both in advance.
“vi. Only one book sale be taken from the library at one time on each subscription and the books shall not be kept over one month under a penalty of 3d. for each month that it shall be so retained.”

It is interesting to note that while the BLA talked in terms of pounds, shillings and pence, Mr. Marsh advertising in the Sentinel of 19/8/1858 for pupils used dollars and cents as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Fees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common English</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher English and Mathematics</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classics and French</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The charges covered an 11-week-term commencing on August 30, 1858.

The first meeting appointed John Honeyman, R. Lindsay and Israel England to be the Book Committee for the ensuing year. Mr. Marsh was instructed to obtain information as to the best method of forming the Association into a Corporate Body, to be know either a “Mechanics Institute” or “Library Association,” with a view to obtaining help from the Government.

The next meeting was on December 17. Mr. Marsh’s report was apparently satisfactory and a strong committee consisting of R. Lindsay, J. C. Pettes, J. W. Marsh and Col. Knowlton was appointed to draw up a constitution and bylaws. It is clear that the Pettes family had an early interest in library affairs. Their report was adopted and on January 14, 1859 Rev. Lindsay (the Rector of St. Paul’s) and Mr. Marsh were appointed to draft a petition to the Legislature and “see to its transmission.” The Honourable P. H. Knowlton, at whose principal expense the Academy had been built, was chose Patron of the Association, and a declaration was drawn up for registration to be filed in the Registry office.

By the November 26, 1859, the Association had progressed to the effect that the Honourable. P. H. Knowlton — Patron, Mr. James Hall — President, John MacFarlane — Secretary, Joseph Lefebvre — Assistant Secretary, Rev. Robert Lindsay, Israel England, and L. M. Knowlton — Treasurer were elected for the ensuing year. The Knowlton Academy, today a part of the Brome County Historical Museum Compound, was used for the library.

A programme of lectures was instituted, the Association meeting every fortnight through the winter. Lectures were given on the following subjects: Light Literature, Canadian Nationality, Napoleon the First, Daniel Webster and his contemporaries, Shakespeare, Milton, Man, Mental Discipline, History, History, Moral Discipline in Schools, Scientific Agriculture, Falstaff, etc. The lecturers were mainly school teachers and clergy, but included a Mr. Fessenden (later to be ordained), presumably Elisha Joseph Fessenden, possibly of Fessenden Falls, Fulford, who taught at the Academy and was the father of R. A. Fessenden, the Wireless Telegraphy.

In November 1859, a sum of twelve shillings and six pence was paid to Messrs Reidon & Morris for benches furnished by them for the Council Room in which the Association met. This would have been the new Court House on St. Paul’s Road which was completed that year by Mr. T.
Chamberlain Contractor. And by 1860, it was found necessary to purchase a lock for the library cupboard and two lamps suitable for the Lecture Room.

At a meeting of November 13, 1861 when the BLA appeared to be at its zenith, a motion was passed as follows:

“A Resolution was then drawn up in the following terms: Resolved that it is expedient that a building be erected in this Village for Public Meetings and general purposes. And we proceed by forming a Joint Stock Company and appoint a committee to investigate the matter and elicit subscribers for shares to be held at $10 each. The amount of said subscriptions to be under the control of a committee appointed by the shareholders according to the shares taken by each.”

Moved by J. W. Marsh and seconded by Mr. A. T. Foster. The committee formed was Mr. A. T. Foster and Mr. T. Chamberlain. One cannot help noting that the latter was a building contractor.

The Members of the BLA at this time covered a broad cross section of the community:

• Patron: the Honourable P. H. Knowlton, Founder of Knowlton;
• President: J. W. Marsh, School Principal;
• Librarian: J. Lefebvre, Deputy Registrar, later Notary, Mill-owner and Chair Manufacturer;
• Treasurer: Wm. Lynch, Farmer;
• Secretary: Wm. N. Peters, Storekeeper;
• Members: Rev. R. Lindsay, Rector of St. Paul’s;
  • S. W Foster, Judge & Railway Promoter;
  • H. C. Knowlton, School Teacher and Farmer (Represented Canada at the World’s Fair, New Zealand);
  • Wm. Moses, Blacksmith – A.T. Foster, Merchant (Advertised in the Sentinel as “Cheap Cash Store”);
  • T. Chamberlain, Contractor;
  • R. Steele, ?, – J. C. Pettes, Hardware Merchant;
  • T.E. Foster, ? (The Fosters were brothers).

At this time the population of the village was only two hundred.

Unfortunately, Joseph Marsh left Knowlton in 1862 and the lack of his leadership seems to have had a disastrous effect on the BLA. The last regular Annual Meeting which was recorded in the Minute Book was that of the November 11, 1863 and the only names quoted as attending were Rev. R. Lindsay, H. S. Foster Esq., and the Secretary, John MacFarlane. It was adjourned "sine die." Perhaps the idea in 1861 of a general subscription to build a “Meeting Place” which would have hit their pockets hard and been too much for the Members; however, it is probable that the loss of Marsh in 1862 was the cause of loss of interest. How often the loss of a driving force has such a result.
The Pettes Family

The Pettes family, who were of English and Scottish ancestry, became “Men of good property” in Massachusetts, but had their property confiscated during the American Revolution when they sided with Britain. Mr. Pettes with his sons, Charles and James, came to Canada. Charles went to Ontario. James went to Nova Scotia and married Katherin Olney. They then moved to Rhode Island, then New York State and eventually to Dunham and then West Brome in 1805. His son Charles, who died in 1876, married Desire West, of West Brome, and had a son Nathaniel in 1816. Nathaniel later married Narcissa Farrand of Brome Corners (Brome Village).

In 1844, Nathaniel started a General Store in Brome Corners in partnership with his younger brother Jeremiah, who had been born in 1820. In 1855, they moved to Knowlton where they built their own store on the corner of Mt. Echo, and the Bolton Pass roads; opposite the future library. This building was later the Print Office of Louis Pagé and is now occupied by Gordon Bailey Inc. There was a great deal of difference of character between these two men and this partnership broke up. Jeremiah was a poet, whose many writings were concerned with social justice; while Nathaniel was a tougher and more ambitious man who went on through Real Estate dealings to become a Member of the School Committee, Secretary-Treasurer of the Municipal Council, Warden of the County, a Director of the South Eastern Railway Company (he was one of the promoters), and the Canadian Central Railway. He was also M.P. for Brome County between 1874 and 1876. He died in 1887 leaving a considerable fortune which enabled his widow Narcissa Farrand Pettes to carry out many of the benefactions for which she is remembered. He owned 1650 acres of land.

Before joining Nathaniel in partnership, Jeremiah was a School Teacher for some years, his first appointment being to the Vail neighbourhood, southwest of Sweetsburg in 1839. He married Susan Wheeler and continued the General Store in Knowlton, later taking his son Austin into partnership.

He was a working member of the BLA while his brother Nathaniel was not mentioned. His partnership with his son was later broken. In 1903, we find the following description of his activities:

“Jeremiah C. Pettes settled here (Knowlton) when there were only about twenty settlers in the now large village .... now the sole proprietor of one of the finest and largest merchants establishments in Knowlton. His store carries a complete line of hardware, salt, boots and shoes, scythes, forks, rakes, shovels, and in fact, a line of everything to be found in a general store, besides flour and feed.”

The Ferrand Family

The Farrand ancestry is believed to be as follows: Daniel Farrand (Farrande) fled to England from France in 1660 as a Huguenot (Protestant Calvinist in France), and his grandson Nathaniel emigrated to Milford, New England, in 1645, where he “held considerable land” and was
prominent in local affairs. Narcissa's father, Samuel Farrand, moved to Brome and married Mary Platt 1821. He died in 1842.

Narcissa Ferrand Pettes, who built the library in memory of her husband, has been accorded the great honour of being included among the two-hundred-and-forty ladies remembered in the volume “Women of Canada,” where her photograph and record of her benefaction is given. Coming as she did, from a small village in a rural area of the Eastern Townships, and being listed among those who were numbered among the great families of the land is honour indeed. Even more remarkable is her vision in deciding what was best for the people of the area. When her father moved to Brome Townships in 1830, 15 years after the Pettes family, the population of the Township was 1,314. There were only 15 houses in the one village; while in 1890 when her thoughts must have been centred on the possibility of a library the population of the village of Knowlton was under 1,000. A place of little importance in the Province of Quebec, yet this small village was to get the first free public library in that Province. In this venture it is easy to believe that Narcissa was well advised by her brother-in-law Jeremiah, who it is understood was of great assistance to her in the actual construction of the building.

**Land Purchase**

The land on which the library was to be built was purchased by Jeremiah Pettes on May 29, 1891 from the family of David McLaughlan who had recently died. Jeremiah was the highest bidder at a Sheriff’s sale to defray a mortgage on the land on which McLaughlan had built a small store. In the deed it was noted that notice of the Sheriff’s sale had been posted “on the door of the Parish Church of the Parish of St. Edward de Knowlton.” The notary for this deed was Notary E. Fleury, later Mayor of Knowlton. Jeremiah acquired the land with its buildings (though these apparently were of no great value) for the sum of $1,500. Later on the same day he “sold” this property again to Narcissa Farrand for a similar sum. Strangely, no cash passed at this second sale though Jeremiah showed a receipt purporting to state that he had been paid prior to coming to the Notary’s Office. Many explanations for this procedure can be thought up but one wonders whether he intervened to act as an actual donor of this land for its future purpose, but in any case it clearly shows that he was closely involved with the future plans for a library. He was made President for life by Mrs. Pettes. It would appear that his part in the conception, construction, and continuance of the library has been underplayed in the past. He died in 1914.

**The Construction of the Building**

Austin W. Pettes who was mechanically talented and an excellent musician and a later Mayor of Knowlton became Narcissa Ferrand's financial adviser and the supervisor for the work of construction. Plans and specifications were supplied by Mr. George D. Storey, Architect, “of Newport, County of Orleans, State of Vermont (one of the United States of America),” as he was described in the eventual contract. Unfortunately, the plans have been lost, but we suppose that the building remained unchanged until alterations were made in 1961. All papers were witnessed by either father or son and Judge Lynch, Austin's brother-in-law helped with suppliers. Storey
had obviously been informed pretty clearly what was wanted and how much Narcissa Farrand wanted to pay because in a letter of 10/1/93 he suggested the following savings:

• a wood second storey;
• using local field stone instead of granite for the “underpinnings;”
• front steps to be of wood;
• etc.

The cost of the building she wanted would obviously have exceeded her budget. However, she went for the best and we must be grateful for her generosity.

Negotiations must have started in December because in a letter of January 21 Mr. Storey is travelling at Mrs. Pettes’ expense, $5 for a trip to Sherbrook, Stanstead and Fitch Bay, to investigate for materials, and January and early February were taken up obtaining bids for stone, granite, lumber, doors, plumbing, etc. On February 16, he came to Knowlton to meet contractors who might bid on the building. At the same time he wrote, “I will come prepared to give on the whole job or any part you wish.”

In Mr. Storey's letter of 23/2/93 he tendered to Mrs. Pettes as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For the whole job completed (excluding library furniture), the sum of: six thousand eight hundred dollars</td>
<td>$6,800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding for all stone window sills and lintels</td>
<td>$175.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$6,975.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The same day he wrote to Austin with explanations obviously feeling that he would have some influence. He also offered to help (as Architect) if the contract went elsewhere. He wrote: “you will without doubt get bids from other parties within a week or so. As soon as convenient, let me know the result, as I have received the offer of a summer job which will be held open till March 11.” He also pointed out that local contractors should be able to make more money than he could. However, if local bids were made, they were clearly rejected in favour of Mr. Storey’s. By March 5, his mode of address to Austin gradually changed from “Dear Sir” to “Dear Friend.”

The contract with Storey was signed on April, 27 1983 and tough provisions were made enabling Narcissa Farrand, the “Proprietress” to take over at any time and terminate the contract should the Contractor “refuse or neglect to supply a sufficiency of materials or of workmen, or cause any unreasonable neglect or suspension of work, or fail or refuse to follow the drawings and specifications or comply with any of the Articles of Agreement.”

Disputes were to be referred to a representative of each party who shall name an UMPIRE and the decision of any two of these in writing shall be binding. And, finally, should the work not be finished as agreed, the Contractor shall pay the “Proprietress” by way of liquidated damages the sum of five dollars per diem for each and every working day thereafter the said works remain incomplete. This agreement was witnessed by J.C. Pettes on behalf of all parties, as were all other agreements.
With the Plans, strict specifications were laid down in great detail to ensure that the building would be well constructed and properly equipped, such as the following:

1. Bricks to come from the kilns of D. G. Loomes of Sherbrooke. (They were just in time before his whole year’s production was sold down South).
2. “Exterior walls to be tied to main walls with 30 penny steel wire nails every 16” each way.”
3. Mortar to be coloured deep red.
4. “All walls to be finished with a coat of best hair, sand, and lime mortar and finished same with a sand coat without admixture of calcine plaster. Laths to be best spruce…”
5. “Two water closets of short hopper pattern. With coper lined wood tanks, trap and local fent to chimney…”
6. “Two lavatories to be 14” basins earthenware common overflow... to be set in mould marble tops...”
7. The kitchen fittings were fully specified.
8. Heating: Low pressure steam heating apparatus to heat all rooms including the Main Hall “to warm the same to a temperature of 70 degrees with the temperature outside at 10 degrees below zero.”
9. Walls and Roofs: to be enclosed “with a good quality of planed and matched spruce boards not more than 10″ wide and nailed with three 8 penny steel wire names on every bearing.”

It was specified that steel wire nails were to be used throughout the building (not square nails which had been used in early buildings). And the Contractor was to allow Mrs. Pettes $100 to pay for special glass for windows, and $50 to spend on the door and window trimmings of her choice.

The Donation of the Building to the Township

On March 7, 1894, Dame Narcissa Ferrand made her Deed of Donation, giving the Pettes Memorial Library to the people of Knowlton of Brome Township, again before Notary Mr. Ernest Fleury. An Act had previously been passed by the Legislature in Quebec on 6/1/1894 incorporating the Trustees under “An Act to Incorporate the Pettes Memorial.” The first Trustees were:

- Jeremiah C. Pettes, President;
- The Honourable William Warren Lynch, on of the Judges of the Supreme Court for Lower Canada;
- Hiram Sewell Foster, Registrar of the County of Brome;
- Rufus N. England, Member of the Legislative Assembly of the said Province of Quebec, Trader;
- Austin W. Pettes, Trader (son of J.C.) all residing in the said Village of Knowlton;
- Azro-H. Chandler;
- Sydney Fisher; ... the later both farmers, residing in the Township of Brome.

Judge Lynch was the son of the Wm. Lynch, Farmer, of the B.L.A. H married Ellen Forence Pettes, Jeremiah's daughter, whose family was well represented.
The donation was described in the deed as follows:

“Whereas the said donor is earnestly desirous to perpetuate for all time the name and memory of her late husband, the said Nathaniel Pettes, who and for so many years prominently associated with the public affairs of the said Village of Knowlton, and of the said Township of Brome and County of Brome, and also in loving remembrance of her only child Mary Louise Pettes, deceased now for many years, has determined that her wish in these respects can best be accomplished by devoting a portion of the means with which it had pleased God to bless the labours of her late husband and herself, to the improvement and advancement intellectually and morally of her fellow citizens; and to that end she has during the past year caused to be erected in the said Village of Knowlton, a building known as the Pettes Memorial, which forever hereafter is destined for a free public library, with the useful adjuncts of a reading and conversation room and of a Lecture Hall, to be open to all honest and respectable person whomsoever, of every rank and condition in life, for the diffusion of useful knowledge.” Mary Louise died in 1866 aged 19 years.

It was stipulated in the deed that future Trustees should:
1. Be resident proprietors, either male or female, in the present Municipalities of said Village of Knowlton or of the said Township of Brome, or in the territory at present covered by said two Municipalities; and,
2. Be of good moral character and profess the Protestant faith.

This later provision was pretty standard at the time, but was probably also promoted by her family past, they were Huguenots and forced to flee from Roman Catholic wrath in France and because the Catholic Church in Quebec at that time tried to dissuade their congregations from visiting libraries where they had no control over the books which could be read. In any case, the number of French in Knowlton at that time was minimal, but one of the few, Joseph Lefebvre, had been Secretary and Librarian of the BLA, in which Jeremiah Pettes took a prominent place. They took their part in the community. It is clear therefore, and this is important in view of recent racial antagonisms, that this provision was definitely religious and not racial; and was to provide against possible interference by Church Authorities in the affairs of the library. It was, however, to inhibit the work of the Trustees some 80 years later.

It was stipulated that the Trustees “should not allow the Hall to be used for any exclusive purpose which would have the effect of preventing the general public from attending, nor for any entertainment, lecture or concert not in harmony with the objects of the Institution, but this is not intended to prevent said Trustees from charging for the use of the said hall or for admission thereto.”

Mrs. Pettes also committed herself to pay for the Librarian and all maintenance and running charges during her lifetime and to leave a sufficient “capital sum which when invested, will give an annual revenue sufficient to meet such charges.” The library was fully equipped and Mrs. Pettes also committed herself to “levelling and grading the grounds around the building and of erecting a suitable fence to enclose the same.”
Altogether, a wonderful gift for a small village. The donation was recorded by a marble table in the entrance-way, as was the death of young Jerry C. Pettes, age 22, in France, during the 1914-19 War. He was a grandson of Jeremiah C. Pettes.

Fortunately for the future viability of the library, Mrs. Pettes in a letter to the Trustees, which is set out in the first Minute Book, made the following provisions:

“The Act of Incorporation should provide that the Reading Room and Lecture Hall are mere accessories to the Library to be used only in connection with it and for such purposes only as will promote its usefulness making always the acquisition and maintenance of a library the leading object to be kept in view.” Later when her generous donation of funds became insufficient to cover all costs, and before Provincial and Municipal Funds came available, this provision enabled the Trustees to feel justified in Lecture Hall, now little used, into two revenue generating apartments.

The Opening of the Library

The opening ceremonies took place on March 7, 1894 at 7 p.m. The program was as follows:

The Davies Gift

Frances Jane and William Allen Davies gave the entire library of their late father W. H. A. Davies, consisting of over 900 volumes. The intention was that this collection would “be known in the records of the Pettes Memorial as the Davies Collection” to be used as other books but at the same time they stated: “We further desire by this action to avail ourselves o the beautiful depository so generously supplied by Mrs. Pettes... to safeguard and preserve therein for the free use of all admitted to its benefits, this our father’s library (the collection and the pet object of a lifetime)...”

This generous donation was accepted but in 1909 the Trustees sold a number of rare books from this collection to the Public Service of the Dominion for Reference, for the sum of $246, the cash proceeds being given to the Davies family. The number of books is not recorded, however, the sum realized was 25 per cent more than the Librarian’s salary for a year.

The Knowlton Reading Club

The Knowlton Reading Club was organized in October 1892 shortly before the library commenced building. It started with 46 members and had 30 books and magazines. The books were deposited with the library and they actioned their magazines off annually. One of its objectives was “to interest the young people in good reading and wholesome amusements.” But an attempt to form a “Literary Society and Debating Club” failed.
They also aimed to raise money for the library and the proceeds from their first concerts went to purchase portraits of Mr. & Mrs. Nathaniel Pettes. Over time its fortunes fluctuated as did its membership (between 12 and 26) despite entertainment at the Stage Coach Inn and a Reception by Mrs. Pettes. Regardless, it lasted 47 years.

In 1927 they attracted their first French speaking member Mlle Annette Fleury who selected a French Magazine for the Club.

During 1900 Jeremiah gave two lectures, one on “Canada.” In 1901 a large meeting was called by Mayor Feury to mourn the death of Queen Victoria. There were French and English speakers, and the Oath of Allegiance was made by the Justices of the Peace, Mayors, and Municipal Councillors after which “God Save the King” was sung by the “vast gathering” accompanied by Geo. Robb Jr. (later librarian) at the organ.

Testimonial Dinner

An event arranged in 1903 was surely the library's “Tour de Force.” It was a testimonial dinner with toasts and music, given to Mrs. Pettes at the Lakeview House Hotel. The menu was memorable:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overture</th>
<th>The Lighthousekeeper's Daughter</th>
<th>Orchestra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading of the Founder's Letter</td>
<td>Mr. Chandler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Chorus — Festival Hymn</td>
<td>Harmony Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading of the Act of Incorporation</td>
<td>Judge Lynch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Gung'l Waltzes</td>
<td>Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading of the Davies Gift</td>
<td>Mr. Fisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Song — Amelia</td>
<td>Mr. Stevens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Mr. President (J.C. Pettes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Chorus — The Miller's Wooing</td>
<td>Harmony Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Mr. O'Halloran Q.C. Batonnier, District of Bedford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Heather Rose</td>
<td>Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Good Night Beloved</td>
<td>Harmony Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>God Save the Queen</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Visit of the Governor General

In 1909, Earl Grey, the Governor General of Canada visited Knowlton and was entertained at a Garden Party on the library grounds.

The Library

After the excitement of the creation of the first Free Public Library in the Province, and this in a small English speaking village was over, the future of the library depended on the people who ran it. In the early days there was the elderly Jeremiah Pettes, a good and worthy man, but who allowed meetings to become annual or bi-annual affairs, instead of quarterly as laid down in the bylaws. Then on his death in 1914, his son took over and immediately meetings became quarterly again and excitement reigned. In 1918 they started a mobile library, moving out to areas which in those days were cut-off from Knowlton. It used schools as centres and was most welcome. Old books were used for this purpose.

During this whole period, until Austin’s incapacity through illness, books were bought, books were given and left in Wills, and the Provincial Government was asked for grants to help Free Public Libraries. Their sights were not high, only grants of $50 were requested. And they volunteered to match these amounts themselves. But there is no record of such help being received.

Librarians came and went — some obviously successful — and some clearly misfits. George Robb and Miss N. Agnes Robb were there during a period of steady development, from 1907 to 1923. Nothing succeeds like success and with an enthusiastic Board and a good Librarian, the library bustled and progressed. So fully did the Trustees use their available books that in 1924 when Magog started a library and asked if Knowlton could spare any old books they were told that all old books were fully used in the Mobile Libraries, of which were there several.

Up to 1926, when Austin Pettes resigned, there were other highlights.

When Mrs. Pettes died in 1912 leaving an endowment of $15,000. for the library, which when invested at 5 per cent brought in about $750 per year; then an adequate sum to maintain the building and services. In 1894 a Librarian’s salary was approximately $200/year. By 1920 the salary had risen to $430.

In 1910 the first recorded appeal for funds was made to the “Friends of the Library” presumably for books. A public meeting was called for 8 p.m. on November 28, and a list of all books was made which showed a total of 1740 volumes, of which 65 were French.

It was presumably a lack of funds which closed the library from January 15 to March 1, 1923 because of a shortage of coal.
Little change occurred up to 1942. The travelling libraries were reported to be doing well, particularly serving young farmers who could spare little time, for the then, long trek into Knowlton. In that year a children’s hour is mentioned for the first time. And Filmore and Madge Sadler started their local theatrical career in the Library Hall before building their own successful theatre on St. Paul’s Road.

From this time the Minutes are sketchier. Reading records of circulation were not kept and it fell from a high of 10,044 in 1941 to a low of around 2,000 in 1956; this being the nadir of the library which was then virtually bankrupt. So much so that about $450 that had been raised by a dedicated Ladies Committee to buy books, had to be spend on the coal bill. Something had to be done and a decision was made to take action. The tasks before the Trustees were:

1. To render the library financially stable;
2. To find out just what books the library had, and to ensure that in future there would be books the public wanted to read;
3. To repair the deteriorating fabric of the building;
4. To develop the library to serve, what was to become, a fast expanding area.

### The Economy of the Area

At the time the library was built, Knowlton was the centre of a prosperous farming community with local industries such as a Tannery, Grist Mill, Saw Mill and Furniture Factory, and good shopping facilities. The influx of a number of United Empire Loyalists of means must have given a boost to the area. Among these were the Pettes and Ferrand families.

The arrival of the Railway connecting the area to Montreal and Boston did much to encourage export of farm products. Prominent Montreal families started to develop the area around the lake for large country summer holiday properties. This development started with Knowlton and extended to Bondville and Foster, which catered to less wealthy families. In these early years the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soups</th>
<th>- Oyster or Clam Chowder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entree</td>
<td>- Pigeon Pie or Scalloped Oysters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meats</td>
<td>- Choice of: Turkey, Beef, Lamb, Pork, Tongue and Ham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salads</td>
<td>- Chicken or Lobster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>- Celery and Cheese with Rolls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cakes</td>
<td>- Choice of Seven varieties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice-Cream</td>
<td>- Vanilla or Chocolate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
shopping facilities were so good that many families even bought their linens from the local Williams' Store to take back to Montreal.

The basis of the economy, however, rested with the farms. This situation remained until the later 40's and early 50's. At this time deterioration set in as local creameries and cheese factories were giving way to centralized industries which were designed to meet the demand of modern sanitation standards. Contributing to this was the development of more economic farms on flatter lands to the north. The loss of the Boston Market, through a refusal to allow U.S. Health Inspectors to examine conditions on Canadian Farms. This caused the operation of small hill farms, whose thin soil was slowly deteriorating, to become uneconomic. By the mid 50's the average age of farmers in the area was approximately 65. And the younger men, who should have taken over these farms, had left to find their living elsewhere.

The Montreal summer visitors brought prosperity for only 3 months of the year. So local interests promoted the development of the Bolton Glen for skiing. The Glen Mountain opened in 1962, bringing all year round use of the area for outdoor recreational purposes. This resulted in an increased prosperity as housing and shopping facilities developed and the area moved towards its natural vocation as a recreational, holiday and residential area.

It is interesting to watch the use of the library and the interest in its development, which rose and fell with the economy of the area. There was a peak in 1940 when farming was at its best, then falling to a low in 1955. It was fortunate that the Trustees, with an eye to the future, decided to act so that the library was able to compete with the future prosperity of Knowlton.

**Conversion of the Hall to Apartments**

Public meetings were held, and organizations were consulted asking the people of Knowlton if they still want a library? It was clear that they did, so the Trustees developed a reformation plan to make the library financial sound. A new Librarian was appointed. Miss Clynes of the McLellan Travelling Library and Miss Mennis, B.A., B.L.S., of the Adult Education Staff of MacDonald College looked over the library and made a comprehensive report which led to the reorganization of the books as well as recommendations for the future. Some books were discarded, some were retained and others were sold. Still more revenue was needed. The upstairs Hall, that had served a useful purpose in its earlier years with meetings, concerts and theatrical events, recently had seen little use with the advent of radio, movies and TV. So remembering Mrs. Pettes' words in her letter to the Trustees that, “the Reading Room and Lecture Hall were accessories to the library to be used in connection with it and for such purposes only as will promote its usefulness making always the acquisition and maintenance of a library the lading object to be kept in view,” the Trustees felt justified in converting the Hall into two revenue apartments. These conversions were completed in 1961, resulting in a considerable net gain in revenue for the library.

The creation of the two revenue apartments and some essential building maintenance (shoring up supporting posts in the basement as cracks had appeared in the library walls) was paid for by a blank loan of $11,500 secured by the Endowment Fund of $15,000. By 1966 the amount owed
had been reduced to $5,000 thanks in part to conservative money management, fundraising efforts, generous donations and volunteer help. At this time the remaining loan was written-off by the sale of bonds still leaving $10,000 in reserve. During this period book purchases were maintained, increasing from $300 to $800 per year.

Fundraising

Fundraising was accomplished through many initiatives. The Golf Club allowed the library the use of its Club House for a dance. The Lions Club ran the bar and local ladies donated food. This earned the library $800. A local homeowner allowed the use of their home for an Art Sale and Auction that earned the library $700. Many good people gave annual donations to the library. In addition many benefactors asked for donations be given to the library in lieu of flowers at their funerals. Annual donations ranged between $1,000 and $4,000. In addition, 1963 the library received grants of $831 from the Provincial Government and $150 from the Village.

Increasing French Book Volumes

By 1963 an increase in the local French population resulted in the library seeking out the assistance of two local French woman to assist the library by joining the library’s book selection committee; as well as the committees such a book repair. All of this work was volunteer.

Librarian

In 1963 the Trustees first began thinking seriously about hiring a professional librarian. However funds were still low. In 1966 the Province announced a subsidy of $5,000 a year for Public Libraries employing a professional librarian. This enabled the Trustees to hire Catherine Fraser on May 15, 1967. The year Catherine Fraser took over as librarian the circulation surpassed its earlier record of 10,044 in 1941.

The installation of a professional librarian was the first real step in the future development of the library, and knowing that additional space would be required in the near future the Trustees took the precaution of advising Miss Fraser that they might need to take over part of her apartment. This had been the most cost effective way of obtaining space in the past, and had been the arrangement with previous librarians.

Expansion

Over the next few years donations were maintained and although Government and Municipal grants only amounted to approximately $1,000 per year, over and above the grant for a professional librarian, the Trustees felt encouraged to do over the basement to provide more library space, as well as stabilizing the building at the same time. This option allowed for more library space without encroaching on the librarians living accommodations. This work was done during 1969 and 1970, at a cost of approximately $10,100. This expansion allowed for the
Children's and Reading Rooms to be relocated downstairs, freeing up space for an Office and a Reference Book Room. In order to help with the per capita Provincial Grant, Foster, Brome Township and West Bolton were each persuaded to give $25 annual and Brome Village $5 annually, expanding service into these areas. In fact, people came from as far away as Sutton and Mansonville.

The original cellar floor was only damp with earth with cedar posts to support this large building, in addition to a coal furnace. The cellar had to be dug down further before a cement floor could be installed. The basement walls had no proper footings, however the cement floor now supplied the extra strength required to support the building. The cedar posts were replaced by steel and an oil furnace replaced the coal. And two much needed toilets were installed relieving the librarian of having to make her's available to the public. The work continued into 1972 with shelving, tables and chairs (a set given by Roxton Mills) in addition to roof repairs, for a total of another $4,800. In 1976 $7,800 was spent on new windows, frames and storm windows. Fortunately by this time grants were increasing to help defray costs.

It is impossible to go on without mentioning the names of those dedicated people who made it possible for all this work to be done when so little public money was available and the Endowment was so small by modern standards. These were: Carl McClay who masterminded the upstairs apartments, Mrs. Doris Feasey who work hard on reorganizing the books, Stuart McLeod and George Jenkins who coordinated the construction, Jocelyn Call who organized the Art Show and Peter Erdos the Fundraiser. Besides these people there were also a great number of devoted volunteers serving of the Book Selection, Book Repair and general library work; giving their time generously as needed. The only paid person in the library at this time was the librarian. In 1963 the number of volunteers, including Trustees, totalled thirty.

By 1976, the total circulation was 19,700 of which 2,000 was French. The librarian Miss Fraser needed help and it was decided that a bilingual assistant was needed, so Mme Bourret was engaged. However, the Trustees were concerned with a provision, not in the bylaws, but in Mrs. Pettes' instructions that all Trustees were to be of the Protestant faith. Previously this had ruled out French speaking Trustees. Fortunately new legislation in Quebec had outlawed such provisions and the library's lawyers gave their opinion that despite Mrs. Pettes' instructions the Trustees were justified in changing this mandate on their own authority. There was a further consideration, in that, the Catholic Church, at least in our area, had relaxed their attitude to the library. The Trustees therefore accepted the lawyer's advice and the first French speaking Trustee, Mme Suzanne Cliche, was appointed in 1977. The only previous French representation had been on the various library committees.

In 1978, emulating a short lived branch library in Bolton Centre, a pilot branch was started in the Post Office in Foster at a cost of $1,000. However it saw little use and was discontinued. It is probable the improvement in mobility of the population made it easier for readers to travel to Knowlton where the selection was better. The branch library in Bolton Centre also eventually closed because a replacement volunteer could not be found when the initial volunteer quit. Such are the difficulties of volunteer organizations without a driving force at the top.
Provision of French Books

In 1979 and 1980 the circulation of French books had risen to over 6,000. In addition, great thought had been given to the overall expansion of the number of books. At this time consideration was given to joining the Bibliothèque Central de Prêt which had been formed by the Province to serve new small Municipal libraries. If adopted this would have immediately effected a large increase of French books. However, at this time the English selection at the Prêt was largely made up of books from the McLellan Travelling Library and were largely out of date. Furthermore, the change in system would have further burdened the current library staff with exchanging and cataloguing a considerable number of books, periodically, in addition to threatening the library's individuality. So it was decided not to join the Prêt and instead the French reading selection was largely increased by spending $18,000 over two years (1980 and 1981). Then in 1982 the $12,000 book budget was divided evenly between English and French books.