

[Paige, Josephine]

LIBRARIAN DIES AT CANTON HOME
WAS LARGELY INSTRUMENTAL IN ESTABLISHING LIBRARY THERE
MISS PAIGE PASSES AWAY

Twenty-Five Years Ago She Was Selected to Assume Charge of the Reading Room, and She Followed the Work for Quarter of a Century.

Canton, Aug. 20. —Miss Josephine Paige died at the home of her sister, Mrs. Mary F. Conkey, on Court street in this village, Thursday morning. Miss Paige was an old resident of Canton having resided here all her life. She was the daughter of Isaac C. and Fannie Fitch Paige. She leaves surviving her four sisters, Mrs. Mary F. Conkey, Mrs. George Copeland and Misses Ellen B. and Kate L. Paige all of whom reside in Canton. Miss Page was a lifelong member of the Universalist church and an earnest worker, in her younger years, in that denomination. The funeral will be held from the home of Mrs. Conkey at 3:15 Saturday afternoon, Rev. J. [James] M. Payson officiating. The remains will be interred at Fairview.

About 25 years ago, when a little company of Canton gentlemen decided to start a reading room, Miss Paige was selected to take charge of it. A room was rented in the town hall and in this little room[,] now used as a dressing room for the opera house[,] a few newspaper and periodicals were installed. Miss Paige kept these in order and spent a few hours each day in the room. Four or five years later the reading room was removed to the small building which at that time stood on the site of what is now the library building and Miss Paige had commenced to accumulate a few books, the gifts of friends, which she had placed on shelves, catalogued and loaned out for a small fee. The money obtained from this source was carefully invested by her in new books and in this small way the nucleus of the present splendid free library was formed.

Finally the Reading Room Association became financially embarrassed and it looked as if the start that had been made toward a public library would end in failure, but Miss Paige interested some of her lady friends in [this] enterprise. The men who had started the reading room were glad to get out and the ladies took on the infant library and the Women's Library Association was formed. Miss Paige continued to be the librarian.

She was a great reader and possessed a fine and discriminating taste for literature, which made her an admirable librarian. Added to this she had intense interest in the little library, so that she was willing to sacrifice her time and energy to its welfare, for the small stipend that could be paid by the association to its libraries was slight return for her services. No high salaried librarian ever gave more faithful service than did Miss Paige. She became personally acquainted with those who came for books and came to

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know the books they would like and so was able to be of material assistance in making selection[s] of books. As she became feeble in health she was unable to perform all the duties of the office, and was furnished assistants. It was a sad day for all when she was compelled by bodily infirmity to sever all connection with the duties of librarian. It was given to Miss Paige the rare privilege to be connected with an important public institution from its inception until it has grown to become so important [a] factor in the life and progress of a town. It is a far cry from the little handful of books in the old reading room to the present free public library with its thousands of volumes and from the little room in the little old wooden building to the present \$20,000 marble library, the gift of Mrs. Benton. Canton owes much to Josephine Paige, more indeed than can ever be appreciated except by those who have followed the fortunes of the library from the early days to the present time.

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Transcribed on 7 Dec 2023 by Karen E. Dau of East Rochester, NY