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Leaders in Library Work with Immigrants:

Jane Maud Campbell, 1869-1947

Part III:

The Massachusetts Free Public Library Commission Years, 1913-1922

by

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By May 1913, the lobbying efforts of the North American Civil League for Immigrants (NACLI) were successful in getting the Massachusetts Legislature to appoint the 1913 Massachusetts Immigration Commission (MIC).³² The Massachusetts Free Public Library Commission (MFPLC), under the direction of Charles Francis Dorr Belden, was already one step ahead of the MIC. Approximately two months earlier, on 25 March 1913, Belden had reported to Governor Eugene Noble Foss that since the fall of 1912 the MFPLC had been investigating the possibility of providing statewide service to cities and towns serving immigrant clientele.

To put the statewide plan into effect, Belden recommended that the Massachusetts Legislature should appropriate funds for "the employment of a special field agent or secretary who can study the problems involved" and who would "select the books, cooperate with existing associations, and visit the local foreign societies in different towns, and interest the librarians, trustees, teachers, and others in the furtherance of their activities with the foreign population."³³ Belden reassured Governor Foss that "libraries are recognized as wholly non-political and non-sectarian, and therefore have a special opportunity to welcome newcomers to this country and interest them in all that pertains to good citizenship."³⁴

Foss saw in Belden's recommendation a politically expedient way to ward off the potential problems often associated with a large, un-Americanized immigrant population scattered throughout the state. Two days later, on 27 March 1913, Foss forwarded the MFPLC's request to the Massachusetts Legislature.³⁵ On 16 May 1913, the Massachusetts Legislature passed a law authorizing the

MFPLC to "appoint an agent or secretary to direct educational work for the benefit of the alien population of the commonwealth at a salary ... not exceeding two thousand dollars."³⁶

Belden began the search to fill this newly approved position. Campbell, having finished her work with the NACLI New York-New Jersey Committee, had relocated to Massachusetts and secured a temporary position as social agent at the Boston Dwelling House Association while she searched for permanent employment.³⁷ The timing could not have been more auspicious for either Belden or Campbell.

In late May 1913, the Massachusetts Library Club (later, the Massachusetts Library Association) held its annual meeting at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts. Belden listened with particular interest to the two speakers for this event, both having been engaged to speak

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on the topic of library work with foreigners: John Foster Carr of the Immigrant Publication Society of New York City, and Jane Maud Campbell, formerly of the Passaic Public Library.³⁸ Campbell's address, "What the Foreigner Has Done for One Library," recounted her experiences working with the immigrant population in New Jersey at the municipal level in Passaic and also on the state level with the 1906 New Jersey Immigration Commission.³⁹

On 30 June 1913, Belden wrote Edward F. Hamlin, executive secretary, in the State House in Boston, and asked that he submit to Governor Foss and the Massachusetts Legislature the name of Miss J. Maud Campbell. Campbell thus became the first person "appointed by any State to give her entire time and thought to immigration problems in their relation to the social problems of library work."⁴⁰

The 1913 Massachusetts Immigration Commission

Beginning her duties with the MFPLC in September 1913, Campbell was immediately called upon to share her expertise with the 1913 Massachusetts Immigration Commission (MIC), which had begun its investigation in May of 1913. Campbell conducted a statewide survey of library resources and services available to immigrants and presented the commission with an accurate but bleak description of the statewide situation with regard to library work with immigrants. She reported that "of 99 libraries reporting a foreign-speaking population in their territory, only 61 have any foreign books."⁴¹

Campbell's efforts were limited primarily to the small towns with a tax base of less than \$600,000, a figure soon upgraded to \$1,000,000. She determined that the best way to serve the needs of the scattered as well as shifting population of immigrants throughout the state was to establish traveling libraries of books, both in a particular foreign language and in English for beginners, that could be circulated on a rotation basis upon the request of libraries in towns serving immigrant populations.

Traveling Libraries

By early 1914, when the MIC's report was issued, nineteen traveling libraries in three languages, French, Italian, and Polish, had already begun their circuit throughout the state. In their final report, the MIC had recommended that the MFPLC "receive an increased appropriation, so that it may greatly extend the traveling foreign language feature of its work."⁴²

Campbell increased the number of traveling libraries

with the additional financial support of foreign societies, notably the Dante Alighieri Society and the Circolo Italiano; American patriotic societies, including the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America and the Daughters of the American Revolution; and the Boston-based women's organization, the Woman's Education Association. Included in the traveling libraries, in addition to primers in English and aids for immigrants preparing for naturalization, were foreign language and elementary English titles about American laws, history, government, and customs, including immigrant's guides in Italian, Polish, Yiddish, and English published by John Foster Carr's Immigrant Publication Society, pamphlets on child care and home economics issued by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, and textbooks on first aid and other health-related topics supplied by the American National Red Cross in Italian, Polish, Lithuanian, and Slovene. The donations of books by foreign governments also provided welcome additions to the traveling libraries, notably the King Oscar's Traveling Libraries of books in Swedish.⁴³

The traveling library service grew phenomenally from 19 libraries in three foreign languages, in 1913, to 60 libraries in eight foreign languages one year later. In less than ten years, there would be 280 traveling libraries, including books in twenty foreign languages, circulating throughout the state.⁴⁴ Campbell reported in the MFPLC 1913/14 annual report that "a start has thus been made in breaking down the prejudice that has existed against foreigners using the libraries."⁴⁵

Education and Publications for Library Work with Immigrants

Campbell routinely provided advice on the selection and acquisition of books, pamphlets, and periodicals in foreign languages through correspondence with individual librarians. She also wrote and compiled articles and bibliographies for small to medium-sized libraries that were published regularly in the *Massachusetts Library Club Bulletin*, the official organ of the state library association of which Campbell was a life member and active participant.⁴⁶ In 1916, the ALA Publishing Board published the *Selected List of Russian Books*, compiled by Campbell under the auspices of the MFPLC.⁴⁷

Also, beginning in 1916, the MFPLC, in cooperation with Simmons College in Boston, offered annual summer institutes for Massachusetts librarians. Campbell's round tables on Americanization and library work with immigrants were regular events at these gatherings.⁴⁸

Campbell addressed the lack of information in foreign languages on topics she defined as "the practical concerns of life in this country," by making contacts with

authors and encouraging speakers to deliver lectures in foreign languages to immigrant audiences in town halls and public libraries throughout the state.⁴⁹ In 1915, the MFPLC, in cooperation with the Old South Association, engaged Alberto Pecorini, editor of an Italian newspaper in New York, *Il Cittadino*, to lecture in Italian on the opportunities for Italians in America. Campbell's professional relationship with Pecorini eventually led to the publication in 1920 of his history of the United States. Written in a bilingual format, English-Italian, Pecorini's *The Story of America* became a popular textbook for the adult Italian immigrant learning English.⁵⁰ Her acquaintance with and encouragement of Corinna S. Canoutas, the wife of Seraphim George Canoutas, a Boston lawyer and writer, resulted in the publication in 1916 of a cookbook and handbook on childcare written in Greek.⁵¹

During the early years of her service with the MFPLC, Campbell lived in Brookline, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston. In 1914, Campbell's father, George, now a widower for the second time, came from New Jersey to live with her. When he died in December 1917, she moved to a residence on the north side of Boston's Beacon Hill district, two blocks from her office at the Massachusetts State House.⁵²

Library Work with Immigrants during World War I

During World War I, Campbell was given the additional responsibility for the administration of new services and programs for non-English-speaking soldiers who were temporarily stationed in Massachusetts. Confronted with troops who did not speak or understand commands or instructions in English, the armed forces personnel at Camp Devens intensified their efforts to provide courses in English for non-English-speaking recruits.

Although the MFPLC was unable to obtain books in some of the foreign languages needed, it was able to supply small quantities of English textbooks in twelve of the foreign languages spoken by the servicemen stationed at Camp Devens. The MFPLC supplied through its traveling libraries additional recreational and educational books and provided lectures in foreign languages for hospitalized soldiers.⁵³

National Service and Recognition

Campbell's services as a consultant were in demand not only in the Northeast, but also by library systems in cities serving large immigrant communities in the Midwest, notably Detroit and Cleveland. Her reputation as a consultant was undoubtedly a factor in her appointment in 1920 to the ALA Committee on Work with the For-

eign Born, which had been established in 1918 to raise the national consciousness on the rights and needs of immigrants for library service. Campbell would serve on the committee for only two years.⁵⁴

National recognition of Campbell also came in 1920 with the publication of John Daniels's *America via the Neighborhood*. Daniels, a member of the Carnegie Corporation of New York's task force on Americanization, was responsible for identifying the most successful social agencies and organizations in the campaign to Americanize the immigrant. Daniels singled out Campbell's library service in Passaic as "a convincing demonstration" of how libraries could cooperate with the immigrant community to affect its Americanization.⁵⁵ By the time Daniels's study was published, Campbell had already applied the same methods at the state level in Massachusetts with equal distinction.

By 1921, Campbell, at the age of fifty-two, was in the throes of a midlife crisis. Her grueling schedule, demanding constant travel and numerous speaking engagements, presented an impossible situation for her to continue. She shared her concerns with family members in Virginia and West Virginia, who were anxious to find her employment in the South.⁵⁶

Resignation and Move to Virginia

In September 1921, the employment opportunity surfaced: the Jones Memorial Library in Lynchburg, Virginia, was searching for a director. Although in her letter of application she emphasized the professional challenge offered by the position, it was apparent that she was also anxious to return to Virginia, where she had been raised and where most of her relatives lived.⁵⁷

When offered the position in Lynchburg, Campbell accepted immediately. She made it clear to Belden and the other commissioners that she was resolute in her decision to leave Boston effective 31 December 1921. Even the possibility of an increase in salary was not sufficient to dissuade her.⁵⁸

Her MFPLC colleagues as well as librarians, trustees, leaders of immigrant communities, and "new Americans" across the state expressed their concern that Campbell would be impossible to replace.⁵⁹ Undoubtedly Belden came closest to fathoming the magnitude of their collective loss. In the official announcement of Campbell's resignation, which appeared in the MFPLC 1921/22 annual report, Belden recognized that "under her able leadership the educational work in libraries for aliens attained a high standard."⁶⁰

By the time Belden's paean appeared, no replacement for Campbell had been found. She had completed her

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first of a twenty-five-year tenure as director of the Jones Memorial Library in Lynchburg, Virginia.⁶¹ Campbell was thoroughly involved in the improvement and extension of library services to working-class southerners. She had discovered quickly that many of them, because of the color of their skin, had suffered the same prejudices and discrimination as northerners who did not speak English. In Lynchburg, as in Passaic, Valhalla, and Boston, Campbell had set about once again to demonstrate "the ability of the library to keep our community happy and good-natured, even if we cannot hope to reform the universe."⁶²

NOTES

32. Hartmann, *The Movement to Americanize the Immigrant*, 73–76.
33. MFPLC AR 1912/13, 16.
34. *Ibid.*, 17.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*, 17–18.
37. *Ibid.*, 18.
38. MLCB 3 (May 1913): 53–54; and MLCB 3 (July 1913): 86.
39. Campbell, "What the Foreigner Has Done for One Library," 100, 106.
40. Charles F. D. Belden, Chairman, MFPLC, to Edward F. Hamlin, Executive Secretary, State House, 30 June 1913; Campbell Papers; "Libraries for the Immigrant; Plans to Reach Foreign Part of Population; Miss J. M. Campbell Made Agent by Commission for This Work," *Boston Globe*, 25 Sept 1913, Campbell Papers; and Belden, "Library Commission Work in Massachusetts," LJ 42 (Jan. 1917): 5–10, an address before the New York Library Club, 26 Oct. 1916.
41. MLCB 3 (Oct. 1913): 136–37, 141–42; "Libraries for the Immigrant," Campbell Papers; and MFPLC AR 1912/13, 18–20. See also *Report of the [1913] Commission on Immigration on the Problem of Immigration in Massachusetts* (Boston: Wright and Potter, State Printers, 1914), 5, 17, 151–52.
42. *Report of the [1913] Commission on Immigration*, 17, 152; and MFPLC AR 1912/13, 18–20, 24, and AR 1916/17, 18.
43. MFPLC AR 1912/13, 19–25, AR 1913/14, 19, and AR 1915/16, 25–26; MLCB 4 (July–Oct. 1914): 98; and Campbell, "Americanizing Books and Periodicals for Immigrants," *ALA Bulletin* 10 (July 1916): 271.
44. MFPLC AR 1912/13, 20, AR 1913/14, 14–15, AR 1914/15, 22–23, AR 1915/16, 22–23, AR 1916/17, 18–20, AR 1917/18, 22–23, AR 1918/19, 20–21, AR 1919/20, 14, AR 1920/21, 15–16, and AR 1921/22, 12–13.
45. MFPLC AR 1913/14, 16.
46. MLCB 3 (Oct. 1913): 136; MFPLC AR 1912/13, 25, AR 1913/14, 17–18, AR 1914/15, 22; Belden, "Library Commission Work," 9; Campbell, "Foreign Periodicals," MLCB 4 (Mar.–May 1914): 67–69.
47. Campbell, *Selected List of Russian Books*, compiled for the Free Public Library Commission of Massachusetts, Foreign Book List no. 7 (Chicago: ALA, 1916), 3–4; MLCB 3 (Oct. 1913): 137, MLCB 4 (Jan. 1914): 38, 41–42, MLCB 5 (Mar. 1915): 35–36, MLCB 6 (Mar.–May 1916): 21–23, (July–Oct. 1916): 68, MLCB 9 (Mar. 1919): 14, (Oct. 1919): 13; MFPLC AR 1914/15, 25, AR 1915/16, 24–25, AR 1916/17, 21, AR 1917/18, 24–25, 27, AR 1918/19, 21, and AR 1919/20, 15; Campbell, "Americanizing Books and Periodicals," 269–72, and Georgia (Waterman) Reed, interview by author, 12 Aug. 1987.
48. MLCB 6 (Mar.–May 1916): 20, (July–Oct. 1916): 67, MLCB 9 (June 1919): 3, MLCB 11 (Oct. 1921): 8; Belden, "Library Commission Work"; Campbell, "Americanizing Books and Periodicals," 271. See also "The Public Library and the Immigrant, Discussed by Mr. Charles F. D. Belden, Chairman, Free Public Library Commission, Miss J. M. Campbell, Educational Director for Work with Aliens, [and] Mr. William F. Kenney, Trustee, Boston Public Library," *Boston Globe*, 29 Mar. 1914, Campbell Papers.
49. Quote from Campbell, "Americanizing Books and Periodicals," 271. See also MLCB 5 (May 1915): 82–83; MFPLC AR 1915/16, 23–24, 27; Belden, "Library Commission Work," 9; and "Boston Woman Makes Citizens of Immigrants: Miss J. Maud Campbell of Massachusetts Free Library Commission Enlists Help of Foreigners Themselves in Library Experiments; Did Fine Work in New Jersey," *Woman's Journal*, 31 Mar. 1917, Campbell Papers.
50. Alberto Pecorini, *The Story of America*, prepared for the Massachusetts Society of the Colonial Dames (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1920). See also MLCB 5 (May 1915): 82–83; MLCB 11 (Oct. 1920–Jan. 1921): 6; and MFPLC AR 1914/15, 23–24.
51. MLCB 5 (July–Oct. 1915): 115–16; and "Boston Woman Makes Citizens of Immigrants," 31 Mar. 1917, Campbell Papers.
52. Georgia (Waterman) Reed and Fay Campbell (Reed) Kaynor, interview by author, 12 Aug. 1987.
53. MFPLC AR 1917/18, 25–27.
54. MFPLC AR 1918/19, 17–19, 22; CPL/BB Broadway Branch Publicity Scrapbook [1], clipping, *News Notes Broadway Branch*, 17 Dec. 1919, Ledbetter Papers; *ALA Bulletin* 14 (Oct. 1920): 380; and *ALA Bulletin* 15 (Sept. 1921): 281.
55. John Daniels, *America via the Neighborhood*, Americanization Studies: The Acculturation of Immigrant Groups into American Society, republished under the editorship of William S. Bernard (New York: Harper Brothers, 1920; reprint, Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith, 1971), vii, 273–84 passim.
56. Georgia (Waterman) Reed and Fay Campbell (Reed) Kaynor, interview by author, 12 Aug. 1987.
57. Campbell to Executive Committee of the Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, VA, 18 Sept. 1921, Campbell Papers.
58. Campbell to Willie Campbell, Charles Town, WV, 22 Nov. 1921, photocopy of letter in possession of Kaynor.
59. MLCB 12 (Jan. 1922): 3; typescript initialed E. K. J. [Edith Kathleen Jones], 27 Dec. 1921?, Campbell Papers.
60. MFPLC AR 1921/22, 4–5. See also, Charles F. D. Belden to Armistead R. Long, Lynchburg, VA, 30 Dec. 1921, Campbell Papers.
61. Kaynor, "A Most Progressive Woman," 50–51.
62. Campbell, "The Small City Library," 52.

