3-29-1939

Letter to William Roalfe regarding law library funding, March 29, 1939

James Merrimon

Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://uknowledge.uky.edu/seaall_cor

Part of the Law Librarianship Commons

Repository Citation
Merrimon, James, "Letter to William Roalfe regarding law library funding, March 29, 1939" (1939). Correspondence. 1475.
https://uknowledge.uky.edu/seaall_cor/1475

This Correspondence is brought to you for free and open access by the SEAALL Archive at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in Correspondence by an authorized administrator of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu.
March 29, 1939

Mr. Wm. H. Roafse, President
Carolina Law Library Association
Durham, N. C.

Dear Mr. Roafse,

I am just in receipt of yours of the 28th, and regret that it will be impossible for me to attend the meeting on April 7th - our court is in session.

I have been interested in a Law Library for our Bar for years. Many years ago I organized a co-operative plan by which each member of the Bar would contribute $1.00 a month. We bought the West Publishing Co. Series, and some other books, and started out very bravely and hopefully, but by the end of about the third year there were only about 10 or 15 members paying their monthly dues, and the amounts due from some of the members had been running for a year or two, though they continued to use the books. The books of course were bought on credit, and the amounts received from paying members were insufficient to pay the installments. I became disgusted and let the whole thing go by the board, and the West Publishing Co. took the books back - we had spent nearly $1,000.00, which we lost.

Quite a while afterwards I met a Judge from California, who was visiting here, and he told me under their plan $1.00 of costs in the Clerk's office was allocated to library purposes, so I started again and finally got a Bill passed about 1925, I believe, authorizing the allocation of $1.00 costs in each case paid into the Clerk's office for library purposes, and the Bar Association organized a committee to handle the matter. Then we got all the lawyers who would do so to contribute as many books as they would from their libraries, and we started again. We were bothered about drawing a Bill that would probably be upset, and therefore made the dollar to come from the costs of the Clerk's office, the Clerk being on a salary. Later, for some unknown reason, and without consulting anybody, about '29 our legislators amended the Bill and made the library fee of $1.00 chargeable as part of the costs. I have always doubted the validity of the Act as amended, but nobody has ever complained about it.

When the new Court House was built, we got the County Commissioners to allot us a large room, and later they added another large room. We also got them to allow us a deputy clerk as Librarian. So it costs us nothing in the way of rent or Librarian services, the Librarian being a young woman who is paid, I believe, $60 or $70 a month. She takes considerable interest in it, although of course she knows virtually nothing about such matters except what she has picked up. We have been receiving an average of about $1,000 a year from all sources, and we have been fortunate in having a great many books donated or loaned, particularly the Roadley Library of about 2,000 volumes, somewhat antiquated now of course as to $ext books, as in many instances new editions have come out.

With the exception of about four years, I have been Chairman
of the Library Committee, and am practically the whole Committee, because the others take no great amount of interest in it. I handle all the funds, and all the correspondence, and pay all bills. Of course all this work of mine in regard to it is gratis. I am delighted to serve and aid in the establishment of a real worth-while Library — and we have one. During the four years I was not on the Committee they ran heavily in debt, buying the Digests from the West Publishing Co., new, when they could have been bought second-hand for half the money. I have made it a practice of picking up books at second-hand, and have saved many, many dollars by it. To illustrate: I bought McQuillen on Mun. Corp. for $50 at an Administrator's sale, Thompson on Corp., last Edition, at $60, Thompson on Real Prop., at about the same price. All these are first editions. The late Mark Squires of Lenoir had an enormous law library and from the Administrators I bought many books at an average of $2 a vol., books like Winmore on Eq., Restatements of the Law, Jones on Eq., Page on Will's — and all first-class books. I am in touch with law book sellers all over the country and whenever a set of books is offered at a greatly reduced price, or I learn of lawyers who have died in the State, or even elsewhere, and their libraries are for sale, I get prices. Most of the books look as if they had never been used. We subscribe to N.C.Repts. — we have 2 sets — Supreme Court Repts. U.S. — one complete set and one set up to about 256, part of the Sandley Library: Fed. Reporter, 2nd, Fed. Supp., N.C. 8.E. Reporter, Mag. & Comp. Co., West's Digests, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and annuals; C.J. Secundum; Amer. Jur., all the N.C.Laws with one or two exceptions; 2 sets of Fed. Laws, one by Mason published in 3 or 4 vols., and the other the little red volumes of about 35 or 40. We have 1st & 2nd A. & E. Encyc. of Law, Cyc., J.J., R.C.L., Encyc. of Eq., Amer. Dec., Amer. Repts., Amer. St. Repts., about 60 volumes, L.R.A., L.R.A. (NS), A.L.R. We have text books on almost every subject, except taxation, most of them late editions. I do not have the figures before me, but I think we must have at least 3,000 volumes available for use. We have several hundred extra volumes which we want to exchange or swap, and if you can't get rid of them any other way, I suppose we will have to give them away for shelf room — have one or two sets of Cyc., one or two sets of A. & E. Encyc. of Law, possibly 40 or 50 extra volumes of N.C.Repts., and a great quantity of N.C.Laws, misc. volumes of Amer. Dec. and Amer. Repts., etc.

In addition to this library, the Circuit Court of Appeals, as you know, meets here and in the Post Office Building is their library consisting of many works on Federal subjects, Codes of various States of the Fourth Circuit, the entire West Publishing Co.'s publications, together with the entire L.R.A. Series and the Amer. Dec., etc., also N.C.Reports and Supreme Court Repts. of the U.S. So this town, as you can see, is pretty well supplied with facilities for work, if the lawyer want to work. The books are used by quite a few lawyers in the community of studious habits, but I regret to say that many of the young lawyers seem to think their legal education is entirely finished when they get a license and as my old school teacher, Judge Dillard, used to say, they "practice by ear".

I have endeavored to get other counties in the immediate neighborhood to install libraries, and they have a bill for such in Haywood County, and I think probably in Henderson, but they take no care of the books
in Haywood, no library facilities, show very little interest in it, be-
cause what is everybody's business is nobody's business. I doubt very
much if the library here would have been as successful as it has been,
had it not been a hobby of mine, and I had not devoted so much time to
it, because it is the hardest matter to ever get the Committee to meet and
do anything - they simply say "you go ahead and do what you think best,
and it is all right with us". Our greatest trouble for some time has been
the abuse of the books by the students of Mr. Love's School - that is the
reason we bought an extra set of N.C. Repts. It cost us last year about
$30 to have books rebound. I have found that where things cost people
nothing, they pay very little attention or give very little care to them.
I have had correspondence with Greensboro and other Cities about the
matter; and I really think that we have a better working library than they
have in Charlotte, and it costs the lawyer's nothing.

I trust that this letter will tell you all I know about
libraries without my presence at your meeting, which I regret I cannot at-
tend.

Yours very sincerely,