


Mary Sollace Saxe

b. Feb. 23, 1865, St. Albans, Vermont; d. May 27, 1942, Montréal, QC



 Mary Sollace Saxe, n.d. Credit *A Jewel in a Park*.

Education:

Received private education in her youth in Montréal

1899 Trained in library techniques under Charles Gould at McGill University

1929 Took courses in librarianship at New York Public Library School

Positions:

1899 Training at Redpath Library, McGill University, under Charles Gould

1900-1901 Apprentice with Charles A. Cutter at Forbes Public Library, Smith College

1901-1931 Chief Librarian, Westmount Public Library

Publications:

Saxe, Mary S. (1904). "Westmount Public Library." *Public Libraries; A Monthly Review of Library Matters and Methods* 9, no. 5: 209.

Saxe, Mary S. (1910). "Popularizing the library." *Library Journal* 35, no. 8: 363-66.

Saxe, Mary S. (1911). "Classification of books." *Proceedings of the Ontario Library Association Annual Meeting* : 59-64.

Saxe, Mary S. (1912). "With the children in Canada." *Library Journal* 37, no. 8: 433-35.

Saxe, Mary S. (1915). "The Canadian library's opportunities to encourage the reading of Canadian authors." Proceedings of the Ontario Library Association Annual Meeting : 48-52.

Saxe, Mary S. (1916). "One hundred years ago - relatively speaking." American Library Association Bulletin 10, no. 4: 299-301.

Saxe, Mary S. (1917). "What seems to me an important aspect of the work of public libraries at the present time." Proceedings of the Ontario Library Association Annual Meeting : 35-37.

Saxe, Mary S. (1919). "Books and their classification." Canadian Bookman 1, no 3 (July): 56-58.

Saxe, Mary S. (1919). Our little Quebec cousin. Boston: L.C. Page.

Saxe, Mary S. (1920). "The Library from the inside, out!" Canadian Bookman 2, no. 2 (April): 16-17.

Saxe, Mary S. (1920). "What is the most important aspect of public library work?" Canadian Bookman 2, no. 4 (Dec.): 90-91.

Saxe, Mary S. Saxe (1927). "Libraries of east Canadian provinces." Library Journal 52, no. 10: 525-26.

Associations/Committees:

1914 Vice-president Dickens Fellowship Montréal Branch

1918-1923 American Library Association, Council member

1932-? Member, Quebec Library Association

Accomplishments:

In the course of 30 years Mary Saxe raised the Westmount Public Library, situated in a park setting, into prominence in the province of Quebec. She introduced an open shelf system for users in 1917, opened a separate Children's Room in 1911 and a Reference Room in 1914. The library was connected with a beautiful conservatory, the Palm Room, in 1926. When she retired, the library had a staff of six assistants and an annual circulation of more than 100,000 books. She wrote a book for children, "Our Little Quebec Cousin" and contributed columns to the Montreal Gazette. Saxe was active in the cultural life of Montréal through her membership in the Women's Art Society of Montreal, the Dickens Fellowship, the Canadian Authors Association, Montreal Art Association, Business and Professional Women's Club, and Canadian Women's Club. She also wrote a few one-act plays, such as "All is Discovered," "Just a Tip," and "Rainbows" that were performed theatrically.

Comments:

Mary Saxe believed education and training for all library staff was essential, stating in 1920: "But since no chain is stronger than its weakest link, so no library can give a better service all the time to its community than can be given by its poorest assistant. It is a fatal mistake to appoint one head librarian at an inflated salary and feel that any material will do for an assistant. If possible a library should have an all-star cast of assistants." — Saxe, "What is the most important aspect of public

library work?"

Sources:

George H. Locke (1931). "Retirement of Mary S. Saxe." *Public Libraries: A Monthly Review of Library Matters and Methods*, 36, no. 6: 256-57.

National reference book on Canadian men and women, 5th ed., 1936.

"Miss Mary S. Saxe, Author, Dies Here." *Montreal Gazette*, 28 May 1942: 4.

Elizabeth I. Hanson (1997). *A Jewel in a park: Westmount Public Library, 1897-1918*. Montreal: Véhicule Press.

Lajeunesse, Marcel (2020). "Mary Sollace Saxe et la Bibliothèque publique de Westmount." In *Pour une histoire des femmes bibliothécaires au Québec: portraits et parcours de vies professionnelles*, pp. 27-41. Montréal: Presses de l'Université du Québec.

ELA biography compiled by Lorne Bruce

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