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THE ATHENAEUM MOVEMENT:

ST. JOHN'S ATHENAEUM (1861-1898)

I

GENERALLY SPEAKING, Athenaeums, whether Literary or Scientific Society, Club, Periodical or Building, had their origin in and belonged primarily to the nineteenth century. Certain of these might have had their roots in the eighteenth century while some few have survived to the present day as Club and/or Building like those of Liverpool (1797), Boston (1807), Salem, Mass. (1810), London (1824), Manchester (1836), Reading, England (1842); and the "Athenaeum Libraries" of Boston (1807), Portsmouth, N. H. (1817), Providence, R. I. (1836), Glasgow (1847) are still known as such though the literary groups they once served are gone altogether or absorbed within other associations. This account does not claim to exhaust the list of all Athenaeums anywhere. However, enough examples are to hand to make clear the nature and scope of the Athenaeum movement.

A library would be indispensable of course to the Athenaeum as literary and scientific society, would be housed often in an Athenaeum building, could be found in the Athenaeum as club. Associated frequently with the library was a "publick Reading Room" in perhaps another apartment, the service to be subscribed for separately from that of the library; especially would it have a wide variety of periodicals catering to every taste. Travelling Bostonians, taking notes in 1806 for their projected Athenaeum found the institution of the Reading Room "very common in large and small cities of Europe".

It was through libraries that the Athenaeum movement could be seen to push back its historic beginnings into the previous century since subscription libraries harked back to the eighteenth century, to Benjamin Franklin's

Library Company of Philadelphia (1731), "the Mother of all North American subscription libraries", as Franklin himself declared. That library was invoked in the service of his literary society, the Junto. Similarly the Redwood Library and Athenaeum of Newport, R. I., "grew out of the need for books of a literary and philosophical society organized there about 1730". Here the literary societies were the primary realities.

It was a natural step then for certain of these early Library Societies, Library Companies and the like, progenitors of a sort, to be absorbed into the later Athenaeum groups. Probably the first, and certainly the most important, society in the United States to bear the name of Athenaeum grew out of an Anthology Reading Room and Library with a membership of the young literary élite, when it enlarged its scope in the direction of the arts and sciences and in so doing adopted "a name of more extensive signification" to become the Boston Athenaeum of 1807. The Portland, Me., Athenaeum of 1826 also absorbed a previous Library Society of 1765, as did the Providence Athenaeum.

The Boston Athenaeum had founded itself upon that of Liverpool. Travelling Anthologist Dr. Joseph Buckminster sent back regulations of the Liverpool Athenaeum, and William Smith Shaw "leading spirit of the Athenaeum" used them as the basis for setting up the Boston institution. Buckminster had reported enthusiastically on the cultural level of Liverpool, on its institutions of a literary character:

The first reading room, in my opinion, is the Athenaeum. . . . The collection of books is, I think, the most select I have ever known. . . . There is not a Library in America which contains so general a collection in *every* branch of knowledge. . . . The collection of maps too is admirable.

He sent back a catalogue of the books, but could not get a complete list of periodicals, and the list of newspapers he found too long for transcription.

The statement of aims or "objects" of the Boston Athenaeum then no doubt reflects to a great extent the organization of the Liverpool society. The Reading Room was to have seats, tables, pens, ink, paper and all American gazettes, literary and political journals of Europe and America, periodicals, maps, charts, books of travel. The Library would be in a separate apartment and contain works of learning and sciences in all languages, especially rare and expensive items not generally available in America. There would be encyclopaedias, dictionaries, general reference books, best authors, ancient and modern:

The READING ROOM AND LIBRARY being considered leading objects and

chief departments of the Athenaeum, it is proposed, as far as can be done without detriment to them, to join to the foundation a MUSEUM OR CABINET, which shall contain specimens from the three kingdoms of nature, scientifically arranged; natural and artificial curiosities, antiques, coins, medals, vases, gems, and intaglios; also, in the same or different apartment, a REPOSITORY OF ARTS, in which shall be placed for inspection models of new and useful machines; likewise drawings, designs, paintings, engravings, statues, and other objects of the fine arts, and especially the productions of our native artists.

Lastly, the plan of the Athenaeum includes a LABORATORY and an APPARATUS for experiments in chemistry and natural philosophy, for astronomical observations, and geographical improvements, to be used under the direction of the corporation.

By May 1807 there were 160 members to subscribe the annual fee of ten dollars. The Boston Athenaeum first occupied quarters in Scollay's Buildings, then certain Amory and Perkins houses until 1849 when it achieved its own building at 10½ Beacon Street, still the present site.

Next in line of the more famous Athenaeum societies would be that of Manchester, opened in 1836, launched by leading citizens like Cobden, Sir Thomas Potter, and James Heywood, who was its first president. It comprehended not only literary and scientific society but club, business exchange, mechanics' institute with recreational overtones, for on its closing in 1940 the Manchester Guardian commented,

. . . apart from its cultural and social activities, it has for years been a helpful centre for many businessmen, who have made it a sort of exchange in which they could meet and discuss affairs of mutual interest. It claims to have the oldest dramatic society in the country. It has one of the oldest debating societies and one of the oldest chess clubs. . . . It was also Manchester's first serious adventure into the field of further education, providing as it did accommodation in lecture and classrooms for a diversity of courses for artisans.

Presiding at one of its Soirees, October 5, 1843, Charles Dickens spoke of the Athenaeum standing for culture of the mind "while factories whir and rattle", spoke of "its pleasant and instructive lectures, its improving library of 6000 volumes, its classes for the study of foreign languages, elocution, music". It had temporary accommodation at the Royal Institution (the later City Art Gallery) until its own impressive Athenaeum building was opened October 28, 1839.

The Glasgow Athenaeum of 1847 aimed "to fill the great educational vacuum between the Mechanics' Institute and the University". Dickens pre-

sided at the opening Soiree of December 28 when it appeared that there were classes in language, music, mathematics, logic, grammar, as well as a lecture program; and it had a small library, a reading-room, coffee-room, news-room. Dickens found the Glasgow Athenaeum "nobly lodged" in the "New Assembly Rooms" of 1796; after 1888, however, the Athenaeum was transferred to "a large and still handsome" building in St. George's Place.

In Canada the Halifax Athenaeum, established December 1834 was apparently the first literary and scientific society of that name. It met in "Athenaeum Rooms" and was

To be open every evening to its members, for Social Intercourse and Literary and Scientific Recreation, and at least once in every week for the consideration of Literary and Scientific matters and the discussion of questions on all objects, with the exception of such as emanate from Politics or Religion.

Whist was the only card game permitted. Membership included Lieutenant-Governor Sir Colin Campbell, the Lord Bishop of Nova Scotia, T. B. Akins, later the first Archivist of Nova Scotia, Joseph Howe, T. A. Ritchie, Peter Lynch, W. Young, G. R. Young, T. C. Haliburton, A. M. Uniacke, J. B. Uniacke, and Dr. Sterling. The subscription fee for the season ending May first, 1835, was Two Pounds. Sub-committees of three were responsible, each for a month's operation of the Athenaeum, such as arranging for a lecture programme, one of the three taking charge of the programme for each of the public evenings in their month. There is no specific mention of an Athenaeum Library or Reading Room in material to hand. Halifax had already a subscription Library (1824) and a Mechanics' Institute Library (1831).

Almanacs of 1851 and 1861 mention an Athenaeum of the Sons of Temperance of no known connection with that of 1834. Officers named include a Curator or Keeper so that there might have been a Museum. The society met probably in the Temperance Hall, Poplar Grove, in the basement of which was its Reading Room.

The Toronto Athenaeum "A general association for the advancement of literature and science", according to a prospectus of 1843, was to include

. . . in the first place, a LIBRARY AND READING-ROOM, and PUBLIC LECTURES, open to all Subscribers of 10s. annually, and an Entrance Fee of 5s.; and secondly, SECTIONS or CLASSES, formed by the voluntary union of any number of members for any Literary or Scientific purpose: subjects connected with politics or religion being carefully excluded. Among the sectional features already in contemplation, may be mentioned Literary Discussion, a Natural Philosophy Class, a Chess Club, Music Classes;—besides others of an

Educational Character, such as Mathematics, Classics etc. . . . The establishment of a MUSEUM, for the reception of Geological and other Natural Productions of the Province, is also one of the principal objects of the Institution. . . .

The reminiscences of a prime mover, Samuel Thompson, tell of its inception. He interested several of the masters of Upper Canada College and of them Henry Scadding became president of the Athenaeum, Thompson himself being secretary and librarian. Weekly meetings for discussion of literary topics enlisted speakers, most of whom made their mark in later public life.

Members met in the old City Hall, another wing of which held the quarters of the Commercial News Room "and in course of time the two associations were united". When the old City Hall burned down, the Athenaeum "occupied handsome rooms in the St. Lawrence Hall" until the amalgamation of the Athenaeum in 1855 with the Canadian Institute (now the Royal Canadian Institute) of 1849 vintage. Mention of a collection of minerals along with books being transferred to the Canadian Institute testified to a certain amount of scientific interest.

The Fredericton Athenaeum and New Brunswick Literary and Scientific Association was instituted April 23, 1847, aiming to promote Literature and Science with special reference to New Brunswick and the North American colonies in general. In the Laws of the Society there is no mention of library or librarian. Original papers were to be presented monthly followed by discussion. Again, "all Religious or Political controversy" was barred. The Athenaeum was credited with preparing the 1849, 1851, 1852 editions of the New Brunswick Almanac and Register; in 1852 it had reported on the tides of the Bay of Fundy; while topics discussed in 1856 covered language, poetry, history, geography, land surveying, organic and atmospheric currents, Islamism, and the Crimea. The society met monthly in King's College (later the University of New Brunswick), and the subscription fee was one pound per annum. Lieutenant-Governor Sir W. M. G. Colebrook was Patron and Hon. N. Parker, President. Hon. W. B. Kinnear, Hon. Judge Carter, Rev. J. M. Brooke, and L. A. Wilmot, M.P.P. were Vice-Presidents. The Secretary and Treasurer was J. Robb, M.D.

The Athenaeum (1861) of St. John's, Newfoundland will receive attention later; Newfoundland was not then a province of Canada.

Farther west there would seem to have been no distinctive Athenaeum movement. British Columbia's Mechanics' Institute of 1864 sponsored reading-rooms and libraries. There was a Cariboo Literary Institute formed that year, while the New London Mechanics' Institute on Burrard Inlet began January

1869. Winnipeg had a Historical and Scientific Society incorporated in 1879 with rooms in the City Hall. As in the United States Athenaeum societies were more numerous in the east of longer settlement.

The Athenaeum as Club finds its most famous example in the London Athenaeum of Pall Mall, still in operation today. Sir Walter Scott and Thomas Moore were members of the original committee, appropriately so since the institution of 1824 had met a felt want

for the association of individuals known for their scientific or literary attainments, artists of eminence in any class of the fine arts and noblemen and gentlemen distinguished as liberal patrons of science, literature or the arts.

That it was more of a club than a literary society is seen in a description of 1871 when it had 1200 members. It was compared with a private hotel; its accommodation was palatial, its library and reading room excellent, its kitchen "the finest in London". An account of the Club in 1883 mentions also a Junior Athenaeum (1864) with 600 members, and adds that "A new Athenaeum with lecture rooms and music halls was opened in Camden road in 1873", but whether club or literary society is not particularized. The current secretary terms the Athenaeum of Pall Mall "a private Members' Club with a very fine Reference Library of some 70,000 books".

The Liverpool Athenaeum of 1797 and the Reading Athenaeum of 1842 are currently listed as clubs in Whitaker's Almanac: their annual fees of £25 5s., and 10 guineas also suggest the social club. New York apparently had an Athenaeum Club, for in February 1860 "At the Athenaeum Club five or six Republicans gave Lincoln a supper. . . ." In Canada the Montreal Athenaeum about which little could be ascertained is spoken of as club and one George Murray mentioned as a leading spirit therein. Also ". . . in February 1885, the Athenaeum Club issued invitations for an afternoon reception at the Windsor Hotel in honor of Mr. S. L. Clemens and Mr. George W. Cable". The Athenaeum had been established in 1876.

A Toronto Athenaeum of 1883 was purely an Athletic Club without literary or scientific pretensions. It did have a small library and stocked sporting publications, along with current periodicals. It leased the music hall in the old Mechanics' Institute and set up recreational equipment until in 1892 it acquired its own "handsome and costly structure . . . on the east side of Church Street".

The Athenaeum as Periodical finds its most distinguished example again

in London in the London weekly of that name (1828). It was founded by James S. Buckingham, English traveller and author, and solidly established under the editorship of Charles Wentworth Dilke. Like certain other *Athenaeums* it thrived on amalgamation, at that time absorbing the *Literary Chronicle* and *Weekly Review* (1819-1828) and the *Verulam*, also of 1828, while it was destined itself to merge with the *Nation* in 1921 which in turn merged with the *New Statesman* in 1931. A literary and critical journal, it dealt with literature, science, the fine arts, music and the drama. It was a weekly from its beginning to December 1915, a monthly then to March 1919, and again a weekly to February 1921, and constituted "A Mirror of Victorian Culture".

Other lesser periodicals of the name were more ephemeral. The *Athenaeum* of John Aikin was "a miscellaneous publication" issued from 1807 to 1809; it was a one hundred page monthly magazine, much like the eighteenth-century *Gentleman's Magazine*. An *Athenaeum Gazette* was undertaken by the Manchester Athenaeum in 1875. "It was intended as an organ of all the societies connected with that institution, but it did not have a long existence".

The name Athenaeum could stand also for a Building, often quite impressive and architecturally important, and which would have enhanced considerably the prestige of the institution by its very presence. Liverpool must have had an Athenaeum building, for the Chambers' Encyclopaedia of 1891 lists it along with Exchange and Lyceum, but gives no description or date. The classically styled building (1829-1830) of the London Athenaeum Club was designed by the architect Decimus Burton and cost £60,000. "This finely proportioned building has a delicate, Greek sculptured frieze and a double Doric entrance portico". An upper storey was added later. The Manchester Athenaeum building (1837-1839) was "Manchester's first sizeable piece of Victorian architecture". It was of palace style, designed by Sir Charles Barry, "a building of architectural importance", and cost about £9000.

The facade is the most important part. This is of two storeys of nine bays, with a little cornice over each window on the ground floor, pediments on those above, an unpretentious Tuscan doorway at the centre, and a noble frieze and cornice crowning the whole. It is all very regular and well disciplined, in the manner of the Farnese palace in Rome.

The Boston Athenaeum society though early established did not achieve its own Beacon Street building until 1849, as we know; it had been begun two years earlier and was another example of the palace style, an adaptation of Italian renaissance.

The Athenaeum of brown freestone, [is an] . . . example of a Palladian palace-front, with a high basement of rusticated piers and round arches carrying an order of Corinthian pilasters, with lofty windows between, embellished with pedimented caps.

The architect was Edward C. Cabot. \$55,000 was paid for the land and the building cost \$136,000. The building was enlarged and rebuilt in 1913 by Henry Forbes Bigelow. The sculpture gallery and two reading rooms were on the first floor, the library on the second, and the picture gallery on the third, which last was the nucleus of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (1870).

St. John's Athenaeum society occupied a handsome building of its own by 1879, of which more anon. The type of accommodation occupied by other Athenaeum societies where known has been indicated earlier. Probably comparatively few could afford the luxury of an impressive Athenaeum building but rented "Athenaeum Rooms" in a local public hall, for the most part.

The Athenaeum as literary and scientific society was probably the high water mark of an age when literary institutes flourished, from the mechanics' institutes purveying adult education for artisans to those aiming at "the advancement of literature and science".

Athenaeum societies were likely to be endorsed and launched by the socially prominent in church, state and education, frequently at the instance of one or two enthusiasts. Their underwriting of libraries and reading rooms alone justified the existence of Athenaeums in the era before free libraries. For programme certain societies offered the opportunities of classes, but the typical universal feature was likely to be the weekly or monthly lecture with or without discussion, of course free from "all Religious or Political controversy", and leaning more to the literary than to the scientific.

Though the literary and scientific society had succeeded to earlier literary and philosophical societies in a transition natural to an age of scientific discovery, it was less than committed to science. True, there might be a Museum of miscellaneous curios or a collection of minerals—later usually absorbed by some Museum proper—while there is occasional mention of models, apparatus and projected experiments, but little evidence exists of substantial scientific activity or any enduring contribution. On the literary side there are still a few "Athenaeum Libraries" in existence today, as earlier mentioned, of which the most outstanding is the Boston Athenaeum Library of over 400,000 volumes.

The Athenaeum literary and scientific society did not itself long endure.

Conceived in a more leisurely age of fewer distractions, dedicated to "moral and intellectual improvement" in the Victorian sense, finding to hand the admirably adapted medium of the lecture in particular, the Athenaeum ran its nineteenth-century course. The spread of education rendered increasingly unnecessary its own liaison efforts in that direction. The stronger tax-supported really free library put an end to subscription libraries of voluntary associations. Competition came with the proliferation of like-minded groups, as other literary institutes, lyceums and the like. Its own outlook and aims were not keeping pace with the climate of opinion generated by a changing world.

Certain Athenaeum groups capitulated in amalgamation, others lingered, dwindled, occasionally to be perpetuated in libraries of importance. An exception, perhaps because of its many-faceted versatility, the Manchester Athenaeum operated until 1940 when it was liquidated, a war casualty. Of old-time Athenaeums no mere survival, the London Athenaeum of Pall Mall still fills a felt need apparently as a feature of London's enduring and exclusive club life with upwards of 2000 members, entrance and annual fees of 50 and 40 guineas respectively. When subscription fees run from shillings to guineas, we can be sure that clubs rather than literary societies are in question.

II

To take one Athenaeum in closer study from a background of the Athenaeum movement as a whole will fill in and round out the general picture. The history of the St. John's Athenaeum of 1861 shows broad resemblances—surprisingly so considering Newfoundland's isolation—as well as individual differences. It began as did others by absorbing an early Library Society; it also amalgamated with two existing literary societies. It was non-sectarian and non-political. Its statement of aim followed quite closely along the lines of other Athenaeum societies.

The Institution shall be denominated the ST. JOHN'S Athenaeum and its object shall be the cultivation and diffusion of knowledge by the establishment and maintenance of a Library and Reading Room, providing for the delivery of popular lectures on Literary and Scientific subjects, organizing Classes for the instruction of young men, the collection of Books of reference of Chemical and Philosophical Apparatus, and of a Museum of Natural History, Models, Drafts, Specimens etc.

One of its three constituents, the St. John's Library Society, was founded in 1823 with Chief Justice Tucker as President; it contributed its Library and Reading Room. Another component, the Mechanics' Institute of 1849 origin-

ated with the Library Society, a somewhat literary offshoot, not to be confused with the Mechanics' Society of 1827. The Mechanics' Institute contributed the feature of an annual course of lectures together with beginnings of Museum and Apparatus. Though still functioning in 1860 it was giving ground to a Young Men's Literary and Scientific Institute, launched in 1858 by Rev. Moses Harvey, who was to be one of the most tirelessly active supporters of the Athenaeum. This second Institute, more literary than scientific, had also its series of lectures, set up for itself "a large and commodious Reading Room" having over forty publications; its evening classes in languages, drawing, music did not carry over in the final synthesis, the Constitution to the contrary notwithstanding.

There were already observable resemblances before amalgamation even to overlapping in programme and personnel. In the latter the same names occurred and recurred among the officers of the three groups. Thomas McConnan and William Pitts belonged to all three runners-up of the Athenaeum while John Bowring, William Boyd, Robert Kent, Daniel W. Prowse, Charles Ryland, Adam Scott and James Seaton are to be found in two of the three. All of these except Seaton, together with others from the two Institutes like Edward L. Moore and James McKinley of the Mechanics' Institute and Robert J. Pinsent, Nicholas Stabb, Alexander Taylor of the Young Men's Institute found their level as officers of the Athenaeum. Overworked Lecturers would now have their labors lightened when one and not two Institutes claimed their services.

The launching of the Athenaeum was accomplished apparently at a meeting in Temperance Hall on the 20th of March, 1861, "when the Report of the Committees of the respective Institutions, recommending that they be amalgamated into one Institution will be submitted and its adoption moved". The January 17th issue of the *Newfoundland Express* had advertised a proposal from the St. John's Library and Reading Room and the Mechanics' Institute to amalgamate the three societies, which proposal the Young Men's Institute was asked to consider at a meeting. With whom the idea of amalgamation originated is not known. The annual subscription fee was set at "twenty shillings currency" covering fees for Library, Reading Room and double ticket for lectures. Officers included President, two Vice-Presidents, Secretary, Curators of Museum and Apparatus, and a Committee of nine.

Of certain known officers mentioned R. J. Pinsent (later knighted) and Robert Kent (later Speaker of the House of Assembly) were lawyers and members of the House of Assembly, as was Daniel W. Prowse, Judge of the

Central District Court and eminent Newfoundland historian; Rev. Dr. Moses Harvey was Presbyterian clergyman and historian of Newfoundland affairs; Adam Scott was Principal of the General Protestant Academy; Thomas McConnan was bookseller and publisher, and James Seaton Editor of the *Express*; and John Bowring, William Boyd, William Pitts, Hon. N. Stabb (a Member of the Legislative Council) were heads of mercantile firms.

For most officers the union of the three component societies must have been natural and logical, while the idea and name of Athenaeum had been to the fore since 1851 though chiefly as a building to house the Library and kindred societies. "Rules of the St. John's Athenaeum"—provisions relating to the projected building—were published in 1851 but difficulties about the site, and further postponements "Owing to the depressed condition of the Colony" supervened and the new society had to wait for its own building. By 1871 the operation of a joint stock company raised half the needed funds. In 1875 the contract was signed and the cornerstone laid by Chief Justice Sir Hugh Hoyles on the site of the present Library and Museum on Duckworth Street. The Architects were Stirling and Dewar of Halifax, Contractors the local firm of Southcott Brothers. The cost was \$58,000. The Athenaeum Society moved to its new quarters in 1879.

The new Athenaeum building housed not only the Institute, the Library and Reading Room—the expensive embarrassment of the Museum had been disposed of in 1871—but also various Government offices, and provided a public auditorium seating 1000. The building was in the ornate Victorian style and the hall particularly splendid. Its cupola-shaped ceiling was laid out in eight panels, surrounded by painted stucco mouldings:

These panels contain large designs representing ornamental griffins, supporting a slender vase on the top. This vase is filled with painted flowers *au naturel*. The other four panels, having large ornamental frames, contain portraits of four men of world-wide renown.

Shakespeare, Raphael, Sir Walter Scott and Edmund Burke were painted larger than life size. The horizontal part of the ceiling was in gold and colours, and encircled with a wreath of roses and leaves. The walls were "Ashes of Roses" in colour, handsomely bordered under the cornice and above the wainscotting. The woodwork was grained walnut. There was a gallery. The front door was grained in Burl, Walnut, and Dark Oak. A. Pindikowsky "Fresco, House and Decorative Painter" was responsible for all this embellishment.

Previous to 1879 the Institute had continued Library and Reading Room in the Library Society's premises, already too cramped for space, on the site of the later S. Milley, Ltd., Water Street. It took over from the Young Men's Literary and Scientific Society. The night of meeting, Monday, and the place, Temperance Hall, the former Congregational Meeting House of 1789, which was serving as auditorium for more than one group. When it became unavailable in 1874, lectures were held in the Court House until 1879. After the catastrophic fire of 1892 had destroyed the Athenaeum building, unspecified new rooms were to be ready February 1, 1893. But in 1896 the Institute was looking for rooms once more. Temporary rooms were had in the upper part of the *Evening Telegram* building for Library, Reading Room, Smoking Room, and Ladies' Reading Room. In 1898 lectures were held in St. Patrick's Hall, but by that season's end the Library had been sold "to defray some existing liabilities" and the Athenaeum bowed out.

The Museum and Apparatus had bowed out long before. They had never really been assimilated by the Athenaeum Institute, had been for it only inherited repositories and an expense. Nevertheless, these departments constitute a link with the larger Boston and other Athenaeums and with the cultural times. In 1855 and 1862 contributions had been sent to exhibitions in New York and London, and medal awards given, but the Institute was less than enthusiastic about the value of the departments and kept pressing for the sale of the Museum, the maintenance of which strained its budget. In 1871, then, the Museum was sold to the Government for £50 sterling. Part of the proceeds went towards the purchase of a Grand Piano for the Institute's musical programme, a project much more congenial to the Committee mind than a Museum.

The indispensable departments of Library and Reading Room constituted the public library of the time, though available only on a subscription basis. Their amenities were open to all who would subscribe 12/6 and 7/6 respectively per annum. The policy was democratic of necessity since subscription fees were largely depended upon to keep the Athenaeum in operation. Subscribers averaged about 270 in the 1870s, and about 320 in the 1880s, when the population of St. John's might be under 30,000. The Librarian, who was also Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, and Superintendent of the Rooms was paid £80 per annum.

The Athenaeum had taken over in 1861 some 2500 books from the St. John's Library Society, which had had "nearly 2400" in 1855. The Institute aimed at a well-rounded Library.

New works were chosen to suit all tastes from all departments of literature . . .

[so that] the Library is the best furnished within reach of the public. . . . [It has] over 6000 well-selected volumes of History, Science, Art, Travel, Fiction, General Literature and Books of Reference. (1891)

It was necessary to keep up a supply of new books "lest subscribers fall off". The reference department of 1882 received "a handsome donation" of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* from Committee member William Pitts. The Athenaeum issued perhaps its first catalogue in 1877, "The catalogue published this year fills a long felt want". Many of the names sound strange today: histories by Alison, Arnold, Carrel, Bissett; travels of Gerstacker, Huc, Hoskins, Ruxton; fiction by Richie, Roche, Ruffini; in science O. S. Fowler, J. Goodman, J. S. Henslow as well as the better known Guyot and Herschel.

After the fire of 1892 the Library had to start from scratch, as it had not to do in 1861. New and second-hand books were ordered, donations made, English and American publishers came forward, and by April 1893 one thousand volumes of history, biography, travel and "light reading" by Clark Russell, Lord Lytton and Miss Braddon constituted a new beginning. By 1896 there were 1800 volumes in the Library, but by 1898 "it is mooted that it may be closed down for want of funds in the spring". This forecast was all too true, and St. John's had to wait nearly forty years for another public library, the modern rate-supported Gosling Memorial Library of 1936.

The institution of the Reading Room was current in St. John's throughout the nineteenth century, and a subject for comment in 1813 by visiting Lieutenant Edward Chappell. Subscribed for separately by patrons of the Athenaeum it was necessarily located in a room of its own, and proved popular from the first. Its "miscellaneous newspaper literature" included "English, Scottish, Irish, American and provincial newspapers and periodicals". The reckoning in 1881 listed 60 newspapers, of which 11 were local; there were 22 Reviews and Magazines. In 1882 the Committee reported having placed a set of Keith Johnstone's fine Library Maps in the Reading Room.

A most interesting addition to the amenities of the Reading Room and an important public service was the inception about 1880 of a daily telegraph summary of foreign news "established . . . by the forethought and energy of that President to whom the St. John's Athenaeum owes a deep debt of gratitude", which tribute belongs probably to Rev. Dr. Moses Harvey (1876-1880). The news service proved "a distinctly indispensable requisite to the general public" and endured in spite of financial setbacks; the Commercial Society's one-third contribution could not be depended upon, and the bank crash of

1894 further crippled contributions. The mainstay of the Athenaeum lasted only until 1898.

The Course of Lectures ran usually from January to March or April in weekly meetings, interspersed after about 1880 with alternate evenings of Readings and Music ("Solid instruction combined with what is interesting and amusing"); the latter was a feature not found in other Athenaeum societies examined. The whole concluded with a concert on Easter Monday Night. Season tickets for the Course were 2/6; for a lady and gentleman 5s.; for a single lecture 6d., and were to be had at the bookstores. Members' tickets were obtainable at the Library on payment of the annual subscription.

Of some 150 topics listed a rough estimate shows one-third quite miscellaneous, a sixth each biographical, geographical, a tenth historical, a dozen or fewer each of the philosophical, purely literary, of the topic Newfoundland, and of Science. Plainly, the Athenaeum had not incorporated the scientific bias of the Mechanics' Institute.

For lecturers the Athenaeum could and did call on lawyers, clergy and educators for the most part. Most of the legal lights were at some time Members of the House of Assembly, occasionally Speakers of the House, Legislative Councillors or otherwise occupying highest positions in the government of the day. Again, at a time when education was less widespread than it is today the clergy were relied on heavily, and for the non-sectarian Athenaeum these were drawn from all denominations. A list of clerical lecturers would probably include most of the clergy stationed at St. John's over the years, and not the least distinguished. Education delivered its quota of lectureres, calling especially on headmasters of the local colleges.

The Athenaeum cashed in on the era of lectures while yet they were in the ascendancy and for long years was the acknowledged leader in the field, of admitted influence in promoting intellectual culture among the community at large. In its palmier days the membership would be over 300 and the annual receipts over \$2000. But literary institutes were proliferating with programmes strongly imitative of the example set by the Athenaeum, which did not appreciate the competition offered and insisted on its non-sectarian superiority: it was an intellectual centre of literary life "without regard to class or creed". In 1889 it made its position clear:

This year we do not anticipate the ephemeral rivalries and transient competitions with the solid literary and healthy intellectual entertainment which this Society has afforded to the public of St. John's for over a quarter of a century.

The Athenaeum may have been "the oldest and most broadly conducted

literary society in the colony" but its younger rivals had taken more and more to debating and were exerting a stronger hold on the young people. By 1891 Athenaeum membership was falling off and yet the Institute was unwilling to depart from its founding tradition of the lecture platform. ". . . from the nature of the present constitution of the institute and the conservative tendencies which have always governed it, the suggestions [of countervailing the attractions of the other groups] were not cordially received". The losses of building and library in the following year hastened the decline despite heroic efforts of loyal supporters to set the Athenaeum on its feet again. A successful lecture of 1895 in a rival group brought the press comment "The lecture last night reminded many of the days when the St. John's Athenaeum was in full swing". The year 1898 saw the last of "The usual Winter Course of high class Lectures".

The entertainment of Readings and Music probably had its rise in an endeavor to lighten the Course of Lectures and has not been encountered as indigenous to other Athenaeums; in form these entertainments reflected contemporary fashion. Readings, popularized by Dickens and others, were very likely found to provide an interesting variation on the standard Recitation, while the mixed grill of musical selections would depend on the quality and range of local talent, the best being *none too good for the Athenaeum*.

"Entertainment" evidently ranked second to "solid instruction", judging by the publicity accorded each. Lectures were advertised in advance and the more outstanding reviewed in a column or more of summary and eulogy. Readings and Music were not particularized in advance and seldom commented on later. Readings might be from Sydney Smith on female education, the Trial of Warren Hastings, selections from Dickens, from Mark Twain, from the Ingoldsby Legends. Music leaned heavily on solos for the voice; "The Soldier's Farewell", "The Death of Nelson", "The Little Mountain Lad", "Robin Adair", "We'd better bide a wee", "A Bird from o'er the Sea", "The Lighthouse Light", "Lo! the Gentle Lark", "The Old Lock", "In Sweet September", "Oftentimes", "Sing Sweet Bird", "Whispering Hope", "It was Beautiful", and "Calvary". After 1879 the St. John's Choral Society would contribute an occasional item like Mozart's "Calm was the Glassy Sea".

A long line of Annual Concerts began with that of 1862, held in Temperance Hall; others took place in the Masonic Hall, or the Total Abstinence Hall, until after 1879 when the Athenaeum Institute had its own Hall. A few notices give an idea of content: "A choice selection of Songs, Glees etc. will

be given by the members of the institute". The latter might be assisted by the Queen's Own Rifle Band, the Avalon Glee Club, the St. John's Choral Society, by performers on the pianoforte, violin or clarinet in solos, duets, trios from compositions of Abt, Anditi, Balfe, Caldicott, Gambert, Halton, Lohr, Pearson, Pinonti, Raff. The Easter Monday Concert of 1898, held in St. Patrick's Hall, ended unprecedentedly with "the amusing farce" "Freezing a Mother-in-law" and in so doing perhaps set the pattern for many future St. John's concerts which would conclude their miscellaneous offerings typically with a "sketch".

The St. John's Athenaeum had gathered up in itself various scattered strands of the country's culture, viz. library, lecture, entertainment, and maximized all, giving greater continuity, more conscious total direction to the culture of the century.

It had incorporated three existing groups, themselves continuous with earlier tradition, mobilizing their energies in a related but new overall pattern, and in that operation exercising a much needed leadership in the cultural backwaters of nineteenth-century St. John's. It not only supported and extended the valuable public services of library and reading room, not only provided "solid instruction combined with what is interesting and amusing" in lectures and entertainments of a high order, but gave direction and impetus to younger groups.

The Athenaeum could usefully maintain and raise the level of culture for its day and generation because it commanded the allegiance and enlisted the cooperation of the leading professional and business men of St. John's, a roster of whom would constitute a "Who's Who" of the time. Its officers and lecturers—not a few were both officers *and* lecturers—formed a hard core of dedicated workers. Many of them were by turns, President, Vice-President, or on the Committee, holding one office or another for years, their labors for the Athenaeum ending often only with their death.

Length of tenure in office was characteristic of the age and while it promoted continuity of direction and stability, it bred also the danger of increasing conservatism, a lack of flexible adaptation to changing conditions, which was probably one considerable element in the decline and final closing of the Athenaeum.

Nevertheless, St. John's is to be congratulated on having qualified for "a name of more extensive signification" in its cultural life in the nineteenth century, on having achieved the high water mark of Athenaeum.