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Dear John:

The subject of a proper book list, broached in my letter, is rather difficult to explain with fullest benefits, through correspondence.

I'll however attempt to drop a few more ideas along the proposal in mind.

The books would be those deemed most important to Washington history. In other words, they would be books that the history student or the more serious student of Washington history, would gain the most accurate background for his developing and continuing study of history, or his general reading.

As you know from your past studies, what books pertaining to Washington history were included in your study course? Then compare that list mentally with the books you have since become acquainted with that you realize you would have gained much from, had they been known to you at the time.

Compare too how shallow or shabby some of the prescribed or required books might stack up compared with your later own discoveries.

Such a list would not be one to be found in every library, but the fundamental books would be there.

Such a list would not be within the reach of everyone, but enough would be readily procurable that they could be secured and at a reasonable cost.

Such a list would set a standard for "reprints" not only for the committee but of publishing houses, thereby bringing scarce books back onto the market and within the reach of more people than is now the case. Cathlamet on the Columbia by Thomas Nelson Strong is one such example.

But one of the greatest assets would be that a proper authority, the Historical Society, contributed toward the compilation and was joined in the effort by those with knowledge of books and those entrusted to impart the knowledge.

I don't know whether you are familiar with The Zamorano Eighty

published in 1945 by the Zamorano Club of Los Angeles.

This publication itself, in limited number, has become a desirable item and its price has risen from a few dollars to \$12 and \$15.

Dawson's catalogue concerning it states:

"This is a list of 80 distinguished --not necessarily the rarest--books, which are significant in the History of California. Each volume has had to pass the critical examination of and be accepted by all members of the Zamorano Club.... Among those who have contributed to this book are Leslie Bliss, librarian of the Henry E. Huntington Library; Homer Crotty, president of the club; J. Gregg Layne, historian and editor of the Quarterly of the Historical Society of Southern California; and Henry Wagner, historian and bibliographer."

Now you will find catalogues all over the country, when they list one of the Zamorano books, noting that it is one of the Zamorano Lighty. Or you can go into any book store, even most here in Washington, and procure one of them for a few dollars. Others are so rare that they would cost \$80 to \$200 or more. But the point is that a guidepost has been established, and how we need something like that now.

Or there is the publication: Libros Californianos, or Five Feet of California Books, by Phil Townsend Hanna. This, although paper bound and printed at a small price, is now selling for \$5 or more, simply because it is a guide to a standard set of acceptable, sound books concerning Californiana.

He states:

"...As year follows year, books well forth from numberless printers in a surging flood that plunges all but the most hardy bibliophiles into confounding bewilderment. Library shelves creak painful protests but the wide and deepening stream continues. Of a certainty the greater measure of all literary products that find print are forthright trash. But so, too, are the majority of paintings that reach canvas, the musical confections that decorate the hearthside piano, and the cuisine that issues, as a rule, from our public and private kitchens. And so it will until the canon of good taste becomes better codified and less fugitive.

"...And this explains, in a measure, the extraordinary fact that while upwards of 3,000 books relating to California--to a greater or lesser degree--have been published, not more than fifty continue to have any measurable worth if we exclude fiction, and not more than a hundred all told are worthy of general circulation if we include it. Of twenty five that I deem essential for this purpose only fifteen are in print or readily available. The balance are relatively rare. Only fifteen good books accessible from a category of more than three thousand! What a mortality in this business of lovely letters!"

The point is also well made that the collector seeks the rare book; the student seeks the important one. Henry R. Wagner has put it thusly:

"There is no such thing as the twenty rarest and most important works relating to any subject, for ~~xxxxxxx~~ the reason that the most important books on any subject are usually ~~xxxxxxx~~ not rare, and the rarest books on any subject are usually of but little importance except from a collector's point of view.

It would be easy to make a list of the 20 rarest books, but extremely difficult to make one of the twenty most important books.

Another guidepost or reason for selection would be:

For the benefit of the person who wants to learn of Washington from the most authentic and entertaining sources.

It would not be easy to reach a common ground for such a selection, but it would have the advantage, if properly carried out, of enlisting the support of a widespread field and of gaining help of that field in society endeavors.

I know of one case where the classification was grouped roughly in eight fields: 1-Historical writing; 2-sea voyages, early and late; 3-Narratives, diaries, letters and journals of overland journals and life in the Northwest in early days; 4-memoirs of pioneers including biographies and autobiographies; 5-Modern interpretive writings of early events and scenes; 6 Handbooks and guides to the natural sciences 7-Humorous and lurid books and pamphlets mainly of the American period; and 8 Substantial fiction and poetry.

As an example of the "listing", and a book you may be familiar with, this is what one of the publications says or rather how it is handled:

"Idorado: Or Adventures in the Path of Empire, Bayard Taylor, London, 1850. A competent journalist's story of a voyage to California during gold-days, via the Isthmus of Panama, scenes of life in the mines, and a return trip to the Atlantic Coast through Mexico. Important and very well written. There were numerous editions, any of which will do. The first edition, and several subsequent ones, contain gorgeous colored plates of California scenes. Out of Print."

This book in its original state, has gone to \$25 and \$35, or more. It was reprinted about two years ago, as I recall, at \$5 so is thus available to the collector and the student or general reader. I doubt that this would have been reprinted had it not appeared on such a list, and would gradually have become even more rare and scarce than the present "first edition" with colored plates. Hence its value as an "important book" and an enduring contribution to history and the mass upbuilding of proper history, would in time become lost.

By placing emphasis on "distinguished" books, a great purpose is served. By asking the assistance of librarians, historians, dealers etc., inviting them to submit suggested lists, we gain a wider following. No easy matter, but once accomplished, a truly worthwhile achievement.

I think these remarks might clarify or make more solid the general proposal, which is still, only a proposal. It would familiarize many people with available and scarce books, focus attention on the Society's developing library and should result in donations of more library material to the Society than I have yet observed. By that I mean what has been brought about in one area, can be brought about in another.

By evoking criticism of certain books, one purpose has been served.

No one person can be expert on all books, but many people can cover the field thoroughly and satisfactorily.

Sincerely

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