

## Samuel Swett Green (1837-1918)

Samuel Swett Green, a nephew of Dr. John Green, the founder and prime benefactor of the Worcester Free Library which opened in 1860, was appointed director of the library in 1867 and assumed the title librarian in 1871, a position he held until 1909. He is also considered to be the "father of library reference work," because of his work on proper techniques of cataloging. Below are two links to websites regarding the man and his work.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel\\_Swett\\_Green](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Swett_Green)

<https://upclosed.com/people/samuel-swett-green/>

# SAMUEL SWETT GREEN DIES AFTER LONG USEFUL LIFE

Widely Known as Head of Worcester Free Public Library Founded  
Thru Gifts of His Uncle, and as Librarian Emeritus Since 1909

Samuel Swett Green, aged 81 years, 10 months and 18 days, librarian emeritus of the Worcester free public library since 1909, and widely known in this country and abroad because of his career as a librarian, died last night at 7.20 o'clock in Maple hall sanitarium, 19 King street, where he had been a patient the last 10 days.

Mr. Green's home, 12 Harvard street, had been his home the greatest part of his life, except when he was away at college. It was there he delighted to live in the reminiscient memories of his long and interesting life, coupled with association which was close to the heart of the best in the welfare of Worcester. He leaves a brother, James Green, an attorney, whose home is at 61 Elm street.

The venerable man became so ill that it was deemed best to remove him to a sanitarium, and the everything was done to prolong his eventful life, his death last night was not unexpected. It will be learned with sadness, not only in Worcester but in the wider circles throuout the country where his name and work had become known to multitudes.

Beside the brother, Atty. Green, Worcester, Mr. Green

### leaves a nephew

and niece, Dr. John Green, Jr., and Miss Elizabeth Green, children of Dr. John Green, a brother, who died in 1913 in St. Louis. Mr. Green was never married. His mother died in 1901. Mr. Green had always kept the family home.

Samuel Swett Green was born in Worcester, Feb. 20, 1837, a son of James and Elizabeth (Swett) Green. The family of which he was born was descended from Thomas Green, who came to America from England in the 17th century. The family was connected thru the years most prominently with the life of the community.

His uncle, Dr. John Green, founded in 1860, thru liberal gifts of books and money, the free public library and it was opened to the public in 1860, the next year oc-

## Samuel Swett Green (1837 - 1918)

Telegram Dec-09-1918

cupying the building erected for the purpose on Elm street.

The late Senator George Frisbie Hoar once said: "There is no city so great or renowned that it does not wear its library as the chief jewel in its crown," and this sentiment well expresses the feeling of the people of Worcester toward their free public library, of which Mr. Green was so much a part and with which he was so long and so brilliantly associated.

When Mr. Green took charge of the library in 1871, it was still in its infancy and had

### made little impression

on the community. In nearly every section of the country, but especially in Worcester county, the Green family made history to which the venerable librarian pointed with pride.

Members of the generation, second to Thomas Green, early settled in Worcester county and for more than two centuries its members have made their abode within the county confines. One of them, Capt. Samuel Green, who was born in 1670, was one of the founders of the town of Leicester. Green hill, Worcester, was named for another.

Dr. Thomas Green, born in 1699, was one of the famed surgeons of his time. His son, grandson and great grandson, were each among the foremost surgeons of the state, and Dr. John Green, St. Louis, brother of Samuel S., became one of the foremost eye surgeons of the Mississippi valley. The son, Dr. John, Jr., referred to above, is a successful practitioner of medicine in St. Louis.

Samuel Swett Green was a cousin of the New York financier and engineer, Andrew

Haswell Green, a native of Worcester, who became fondly known as "the father of greater New York."

Mr. Green's grandmother was a daughter of Dr. John Sprague, Boston, whose descendants came to Charlestown in 1629 from Unway, Devonshire, England, about 36 years before the

#### first Thomas Green

landed in the United States. Mr. Green first attended a school taught by Mrs. Levi Haywood, this being discontinued early, and he was sent for several years to a school managed by Mrs. Sarah B. Wood.

It was from this private school that he passed into a public grammar school on Thomas street, which during his studies there was under the care of Caleb B. Metcalf. He went next to the only high school then in Worcester, graduating in 1864, to at once enter Harvard college.

Mr. Green graduated from Harvard in 1868. In the early summer of the next year he sailed from Boston for Smyrna, being a passenger on the barque Racehorse. He visited Constantinople on this trip, among other places in the itinerary, and returned home on the same vessel. Remaining in Worcester for two years, he then resumed studies in Harvard university in the autumn of 1861, and three years later was graduated from the divinity school.

Mr. Green was a student in the divinity school at Harvard when he was drafted for service in the Union army, but because of delicate health, he was

#### debarred from entering

the army. In 1870 he took the degree of master of arts at the university, and June 28, 1877, was chosen an honorary member of Phi beta kappa society by the Harvard chapter.

He made another trip to Europe after ending his college course, and he made trips, also, to the old world in 1877, 1892, 1903, 1904 and 1906. Mr. Green's travels included extensive visits in numerous sections of the United States and Alaska.

He became bookkeeper in Mechanics national bank, Worcester, in 1864, and a few months later was appointed teller of Worcester national bank, occupying this position several years. He declined a proffered position as successor to John C. Ripley, cashier of Citizens national bank, also declining about the same time a position with the Worcester county institution for savings.

His first connection, officially, with the library was Jan. 1, 1867, when he became director, and Jan. 15, 1871, he became librarian of the institution. The history of the library under his directing hand and care is one of the traditional contributions to the history of Worcester.

From its quiet and modest beginning, Mr. Green witnessed and participated in

From its quiet and modest beginning, Mr. Green witnessed and participated in the rapid

#### growth of the library

in size and efficiency, its scope was widened and its methods were constantly im-

## Samuel Swett Green

Telegram Dec-09-1918

Part 2 of 3

proved during his long administration, so that it before long became recognized as one of the foremost libraries in the country.

Few availed themselves of its advantages in the early days of Mr. Green's association with the library, people generally did not know what use they could make of it, but steadily under the care of Mr. Green the institution changed in this respect. It was Mr. Green who first began to instill into the minds of the people that a library is not merely a receptacle for books and an opportunity for students, but a place for all people to obtain information and help on questions on every possible subject.

He began early the campaign that found fruition in increased equipment, multiplying books of reference, making the reading room attractive and above all, his effort was directed toward making the library popular thru a spirit of cordial and hospitable welcome for every visitor.

Mr. Green became a recognized authority among librarians. He was a pioneer in bringing about inter-library loans and the large use of photographs and engravings in supplementing the value of books. He won unbounded favor

#### thru his success

in bringing the library in closer touch with the school system.

These were some of the things into which was struck the keynote of the policy of Mr. Green in his early days as a librarian. No better indication of his signal fitness for the position was found than in his clear preception at the very beginning of his official career of what the chief aims of what a library should be.

Mr. Green led the field of his fellow-librarians in recognizing the awakening need of such development as he inaugurated in the Worcester institution and in 1876, at a meeting in Philadelphia, where the American library association was formed, he read a paper advocating closer personal relations with the people. In it he described the practice which had been followed in Worcester several years.

This paper made a profound impression at the time and it became one of the important documents having to do with the

#### early development

of the library system in this country. Almost at once, it is stated, the recommendations suggested by Mr. Green were put into practice in many libraries of the country, the discussion being a subject of large consequence in the literary world and many of the leading newspapers of the country commented on it.

Mr. Green's ideas, then outlined, have since been followed in Worcester, with the consequent result that Mr. Green's early predictions have borne rich fruit. The feasibility of Mr. Green's ideas in connection with close and helpful relations

between the library and the public schools, was questioned for a time, but time has revealed that the demonstration of his

Samuel Swett Green  
Telegram Dec-09-1918  
Part 3 of 3

plan proved of great benefit, both to teachers and to pupils.

The idea has found big result thru the placing collections of books in the schools to guide the students in their work, and the plan has worked so well, as originated by Mr. Green, that it has become an accepted principle of library economy in great library centers abroad, as well as in the United States.

These and countless other contributions were the part which Mr. Green took in his long

**years of demonstration**

in aid of the library movement, not only in Worcester, but in other parts of the United States and abroad. He was one of the founders of the American library association, of which he was a life-fellow. For many years he was chairman of the finance committee of that body, and for two terms was vice president of the association.

He was president of the association in 1891, and that year he presided at the annual meeting in St. Francisco.

The Library institute as a society of which he was an original fellow. The institute was founded in 1906 for only the most distinguished librarians of the United States. He was a delegate to the international congress of librarians in the early 70's, before the close of which the Library association of the United Kingdom was formed, and Mr. Green was chosen an honorary member. He presided for a day over the world's congress of librarians in 1897, in London.

In 1890 he was appointed by Gov. John Q. A. Brackett, an original member of the free public library commission, to which he was reappointed in 1899 and 1904. Among his other offices about that time

**was on the committee**

of overseers of Harvard university, who select the library for the college, and a similar position with the Boston public library.

The fame which he gained for the Worcester library has extended over the world. The library methods of Worcester have been studied in the department of the Seine. Mr. Green's advice was sought by the educational department of the English government. "The free public library of Worcester" was a theme taken by a German professor in advocating the introduction of popular libraries in his country.

This is a list of societies with which Mr. Green has been connected; Royal historical society of Great Britain, of which he was a fellow, the American antiquarian society, American historical association, Colonial society of Massachusetts and of the national organization known as Descendants of colonial governors; New England historical-genealogical society of which

**he was a life member.**

Archaeological institute of America, from

which he withdrew; a former member of the School for classic studies at Rome; a corresponding member of the National geographical society; a member of the American social science association; he was a manager of the Sons of the Revolution; has been a charter member and was the first lieutenant governor of the Society of colonial wars in Massachusetts, presiding at its first general court and the dinner which followed; a member of the University club of Boston since its organization; original member of the Worcester club and the Worcester economic club; member of Worcester association for mutual aid in detective thieves; member of the board of trustees of Leicester academy; assisted in formation of the Worcester high school association, and was its first president; former president of the Worcester Indian association.

Mr. Green has been a member and president of the Worcester art society. He was a member of the committee of three asked by Stephen Salisbury to

**consult with him.**

about arrangements for starting the Worcester art museum and to help in the choice of the list of corporators. When the museum was organized he was offered the position of trustee but declined it.

At two different times for several years he was treasurer of the Worcester natural history society and has been for many years a trustee of the Worcester county institution for savings. In 1903 he was made second vice president of the Worcester Harvard club, and in 1904 a first vice president. He has been a member of the corporation for the administration for the home for aged men.

To the literary world he has also added his mite. Hundreds of papers presented by him have found their way into book form, his pamphlets are familiar to all librarians and he has written many long stories pertaining to library affairs.

"Library aids" and "Libraries and schools" are two of his most famous books. At the request of the secretary of the state board of education

**he wrote an appendix**

to his 48th annual report on "Public libraries and schools."

"The use of pictures in public libraries in Massachusetts" is the title of another of his books. "Personal relations between librarians and readers," a paper presented before a meeting of librarians in Philadelphia was made the subject of editorials in New York and Boston newspapers.

He has written sketches of many famous persons of which "The father of greater New York" is a notable one. The papers which he has presented in every section of the country and the number of books issued by him would make a list several times as long as the number of societies with which he has been connected.