



Whether Franklin ever replied to this letter or what he said if he did reply, we do not know. In his *History of the Town of Franklin*, Arthur W. Peirce, Headmaster of Dean Academy from 1897 until 1934 and husband of Lydia Ray, one of the donors of the 1904 building, reports that in June, 1789, the town meeting voted, "That the Rev. Nathaniel Emmons be Directed to lend the Books presented to this town by the late Dr. Franklin to the Inhabitants of the town at large, and until this town shall order other ways, they (the town) being accountable to him (Dr. Franklin) for the use and improvement of said Books.' " (Historical Book, p. 20.)

Peirce tells us that despite the June, 1789, vote, Emmons would not surrender his own position easily. Indeed, Emmons believed that the books should be part of the parochial library which had existed in Franklin for at least thirty years prior to the arrival of the donation. (Emmons described the earlier library in the sermon given when the books arrived.) And on December 24, 1790, according to Peirce, at a town meeting Emmons was again directed to allow all inhabitants to use the books. (Records of all the town meetings where use of the books was discussed no longer exist. Neither the Franklin town officers nor the Franklin Public Library has them. It is obvious, however, that Peirce did have access to the original documents, for the wording is precise and in keeping with town meeting warrants.) In all, Peirce says that between September, 1788, and December, 1790, the question of the books appeared on the warrants of the meetings *ten times*.*

Members of the December 24 town meeting acquiesced, however, in the maintenance of two separate groups of books; those given by Franklin to be used by all and those in the parochial library to be used by subscribers only. In any case, by the 1789 and 1790 votes, Franklin had its first public library and the first public library in America.

Unfortunately, the town meeting did not act upon an idea which was suggested in discussion during the 1790 meeting. According to Peirce, the question of adding to the library by taxes was proposed, but it was doubted "whether the town, without the aid of the General

*See pages 20, 21, and 22 for Peirce's discussion of all the votes.