

The History of the Springfield, NH Library

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I. Introduction

By Hayden Keene

I first began my research in September 2017, when I agreed to compile a history of the Libbie A. Cass Library for my high school senior project. The history is to be presented during Springfield's 250th Celebration. Most of the research required using primary sources in our small town of Springfield, NH. As I analyzed old town reports, flipped through photographs, perused newspaper clippings, and read letters, I began to weave together an understanding of the Springfield Library from its humble origins in 1895 to its current status as a community hub.

Throughout my research, it became apparent to me that the history of the library was quite intertwined with the history of Springfield and its people. The first librarian was Ruel L. Heath, who at the time was also the owner of the West Springfield Country Store, the postmaster, the Master of Beaver Grange, a member of the School Board, and the Town Clerk. This trend of active involvement in the community continued throughout the evolution of the library, as the librarian and the trustees constantly sought ways that the library could better serve the people of Springfield. The library became the epicenter of community in Springfield, and continues to be a gathering place for citizens through its regular programming.

What struck me most as I researched was the pivotal role of volunteers in the operation of the library. In every aspect of its function, our town library would not be possible without the countless volunteer hours provided by numerous Springfield residents throughout the years. From the group of willing citizens who moved the entire collection of books from the Cass House to the Center School on one cold, blustery day in 1955, to the roster of eager volunteers who allow our library to be open for thirty-two hours per week, Springfield residents have offered their help. Looking through albums stored in the New Hampshire Room of the current Memorial Building, I saw photographs of volunteers lending their talents in every manner - whether building shelves to extend the capacity for books, painting and decorating the children's space, or leading regular craft and children's programming at the library, volunteerism has been a steadfast hallmark of the Libbie A. Cass Library throughout the years - and that willingness to help is what makes our library a true community library.

Lastly, I would like to thank the individuals and organizations that helped me with my research: at the library, Cheri Haire, Barbara Cooper, Janet Hendl, and Laura Pauling; Trudy Heath at the Historical Society; and Steve Klein, Alice Nulsen, Susan Cutting, and Cheryl Patten for offering their knowledge and memories. If you are interested in further research, or are curious about your genealogy, the Springfield Historical Society is an excellent resource, and maintains a room downstairs in the Libbie Cass Library containing past town reports, Springfield history, and New Hampshire history.

II. Timeline

1892 - \$6.40 first appropriated for a library but not used

1895 - Ruel L. Heath became librarian in his country store; paid a salary of \$5

1906 - Library moved across the street to the Cass House; Lucia F. Goodhue, daughter of Dr. David P. Goodhue, became librarian

1909 - Lucia's mother, Abby J. Goodhue, became librarian after the death of Lucia; paid \$20 for salary and rent

1918 - Library closed for 8 weeks due to influenza, patrons of the library contributed 50 books to the American Liberty Association for use among camps for soldiers and sailors

1926 - Libbie A. Cass, daughter of Abby, assumed the role of librarian after her mother's death

1938 - In October, the Bookmobile from the State Library Association started visiting Springfield every 6-8 weeks, leaving books and exchanging them with each visit; librarian paid a salary of \$100

1954 - Libbie Cass died, December 16

February 1955 - Library collection moved to the old Center School building next to the town meeting house after much public discussion about its future

August 1955 - Library held an open house in the new building and Lucille Wheeler became librarian

1965 - Library nearing capacity for its collection in the Center School building

1966 - Springfield Library dedicated as the Libbie A. Cass Memorial Library

1973 - Library conducted its first summer reading program, running 5 weeks with learners 4 years of age to 6th grade

1975 - Amelia (Amy) Anderson became librarian

1977 - Library accepted into the Statewide Development Program, which includes the services of a consultant who will help to update the collection; per state standards, the library doubled its hours from 2 to 4 per week; the library held its first Christmas Party for children and began to show movies

1979 - the library extended its weekly hours from 4 to 8 hours to meet state requirements for the Development Program; a telephone was installed

1980 - the Recreation Committee and the Library co-sponsored the first children's Halloween Party

1982 - the first scholarship of \$200 was given to a Kearsarge graduate in the name of former trustee Marjorie George

1983 - Springfield joined Librarians of the Upper Valley (LUV), a cooperative that shares books and resources and allows members discounts on new materials

1984 - Celeste Klein became librarian, the Springfield Kindergarten began weekly visits to the library for story hour, books on tape were introduced to the collection, many local organizations worked together to donate a copier to the library, a tutoring program for both students and adults seeking a GED was initiated and served 20 people throughout the year

1985 - Polaroid donated two cameras to be loaned out to residents, a library building fund was created at the town meeting

1987 - the library did not meet requirements for the Statewide Development Program due to a lack of running water and septic system, rendering it ineligible for Library Service and Construction Act grants for a new library building

1990 - the library received a computer from a LUV grant

1992 - the library was awarded a \$40,000 grant from the NH State Library; November 3rd was groundbreaking day for a new library building next to the town offices

1993 - a grand opening for the new building was held on June 20th; the trustees initiated the Friends of the Library program

1996 - internet service became available in the library

1998 - Steve Klein, son of Celeste, became librarian

1999 - the library extended its hours to 6 days a week

2006 - the library received its first CLiF grant for young adult and children's books

2012 - the Springfield Kindergarten closed, ending the 28 year long partnership between the library and kindergarten

2013 - the library began its online presence with its first website, created by a volunteer

2016 - Jennifer Carson became librarian; the library catalog becomes digitized

2017 - Cheri Haire became librarian, May - November; Janet Hendl became acting librarian

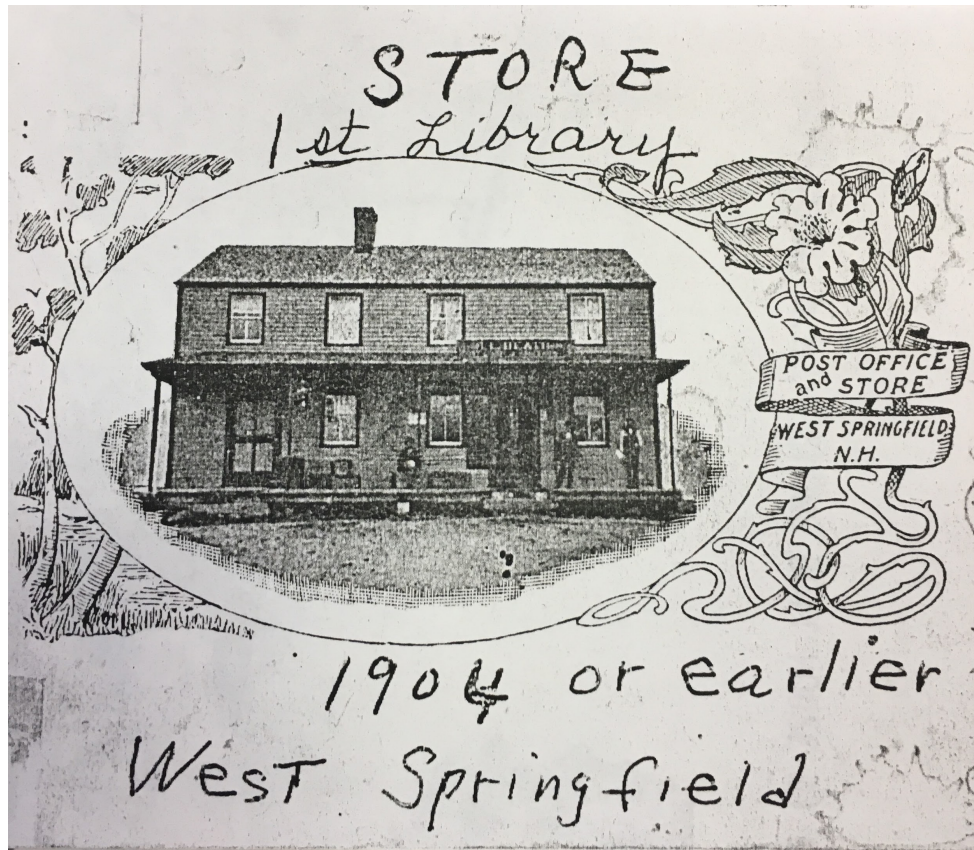
2018 - Laura Pauling became librarian; began on April 2nd

III. Evolution of the Library Building

1895 - 1905: West Springfield Country Store

- Librarian: Ruel L. Heath, owner of store

- Collection was a small shelf of books
- The store was an important resource for residents, distributing dry goods and groceries as well as kerosene; the store also served as a post office



1906 - 1955: Cass House

- Librarians: Lucia Goodhue (1905-1909), Abbie Goodhue (1905-1926), Libbie Cass (1926-1954)
- Collection was one room in the house, which was reportedly rather dark
- In 1926, the library was open from 2 - 6 PM on Wednesday and Saturday
- By the time the collection was moved out of the Cass House, it had reached almost 3000 volumes



1955 - 1993: Center School

- Librarians: Lucille Wheeler (1955-1975), Amy Anderson (1975-1983), Celeste Klein (1984-1998)
- Collection: about 9,500 volumes at capacity
- In 1970, the library was open on Wednesday evenings from 3-5 and 7-8 PM; by 1992, the library was open for a total of ten hours, three days a week
- The library was usually freezing during the winter months; there was a small wood stove (and later on a gas stove) that did not create much heat, and the copier had to be kept

warm in a wooden box with a light bulb; there are also reports of the vacuum cleaner freezing; one resident recalls sitting on the floor and reading in her snow pants while her mother worked the circulation desk

- While the building was suitable to house the collection for 38 years, it was less than ideal: bats inhabited half of the dark building, there was not an adequate heat source during the winter months, and the gas-fired toilet and lack of running water deemed the library ineligible for the Statewide Development Program
- The building now houses the Springfield Historical Society Museum



1993 - Present: The Memorial Building

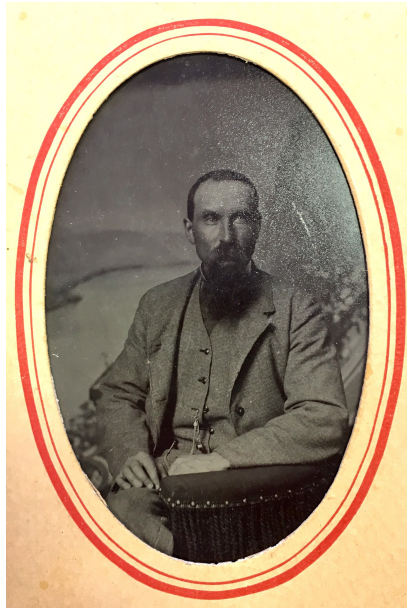
- Librarians: Celeste Klein (1984-1998), Steve Klein (1998-2016), Jennifer Carson (2016-2017), Cheri Haire (2017), Janet Hendl (2017-2018), Laura Pauling (2018-Present)
- Collection: Over 18,000 volumes at capacity
- Construction on a new library building began on November 3, 1993 due to a grant from the NH State Library
- The new Memorial Building, attached to the town offices, was officially opened on June 20, 1993
- The new library space allowed the collection to double and offered handicap access, heat, running water, and a wonderful space for children and events



IV. History of Librarians

Ruel L. Heath: 1895 - 1905

Ruel Levi Heath was born in 1871 in Springfield, and while he wore many hats, he was best known as the owner of the West Springfield Country Store. The store sold grain, groceries, dry goods, and kerosene, and beginning in 1895 housed a shelf of books that comprised the Springfield Library. Heath was paid \$5 for rent and services as librarian when he began in 1895, and by the time the library was transferred across the street to the Cass House, his salary was \$7.50. In addition to librarian and store owner, Heath was also the postmaster and the first Master of Beaver Grange, organized in 1899, and he served as the town clerk and the member of the school board for a time. He passed away on February 7, 1941, and is buried in the Pleasant View Cemetery in Springfield.



Lucia F. Goodhue: 1905 - 1909

Lucia Francis Goodhue was born to Abigail J. Davis Goodhue and Dr. David Putney Goodhue on October 5, 1883. She served as librarian for approximately two and a half years, from the end of 1905 until her death from heart trouble on January 23, 1909 at the age of twenty-five. In addition to her short tenure as librarian, Lucia was very involved in the Springfield community. She spent nine years serving as an officer of the Christian Endeavor, and several years as a member of the Good Templars (a temperance organization), Pythian Sisters (the female auxiliary of Knights of Pythias). The *Argus-Champion Spectator* newspaper remembered Lucia as one of their most faithful correspondents to West Springfield. She is buried in Pleasant View Cemetery in Springfield.

Abigail J. Goodhue: 1909 - 1926

Abby was born in Springfield on October 15, 1845 to Joseph Davis and Elizabeth Fuller Davis. She attended Colby Academy in New London, which is now known as Colby-Sawyer College but served as a secondary school until the early 1900s. Abby studied English and was a schoolteacher in Springfield's District 9 for several years before assuming the position of librarian after the death of her daughter Lucia in 1909. She married Dr. David P. Goodhue, a U.S. Navy Surgeon, in 1867, and had four children, David Henry, Libbie, Laurette May (who died in infancy), and Lucia. Abby also served as a mother to David's son and her grandson, Myron, whose mother, Mary Lura, passed away eleven weeks after his birth. In 1911, Abby broke her hip, which greatly reduced her mobility. She was cared for in her home by Libbie for many years. Abby served as librarian for 17 years. She passed away on September 11, 1926, and is buried in Pleasant View Cemetery in Springfield.



Libbie A. Cass: 1926 - 1955

Libbie Abbie Goodhue Cass was born on February 10, 1874 to David and Abby Goodhue. She attended primary school in Springfield and was a graduate of New Hampton Literary Institute, now the New Hampton School. The library was housed in her home beginning in 1906, and her sister and mother were both librarians before Libbie. She assumed the role after her mother's death in 1926, and as librarian, she was reportedly very stern and protective of the books. In 1896, she married Howard Cass. They had three children, Ralph (who died in infancy), Marion, and David Harlan. Libbie was very involved in Springfield affairs; she was a member of the Beaver Grange for over 25 years, and she was the organ player for her church and taught Sunday School for several years. She was a local correspondent to the Newport *Argus-Champion* and the Franklin *Journal Transcript* for many years. Libbie wrote an essay on the history of Springfield schools that appears in the 1969 *Bicentennial History* titled "Pioneers of Education." Libbie Cass died on December 16, 1954 after a brief illness, and she is buried in Pleasant View Cemetery in Springfield. In Libbie's obituary, Pauline Rudner wrote, "We shall miss our oldest lady citizen in more ways than one. We can't just "go ask Libbie" anymore."



Lucille Wheeler: 1955 - 1975

The trustees selected Springfield resident and lover of books Lucille Wheeler as librarian after the death of Libbie Cass in 1954. She assumed the position with the grand opening of the library in the Center School in August of 1955. While Lucille was librarian, the first summer reading program for children was held. She created a comprehensive filing system to keep track of circulation, the first one the Springfield library had seen. Lucille left the library after twenty years of service in 1975.



Amelia (Amy) Anderson: 1975 - 1984

While Amy was librarian, the library was accepted into the Statewide Development Program which offered the services of a library consultant. The recreation committee and the library co-sponsored the first Christmas and Halloween parties for children and began showing movies, the library began offering Kearsarge graduates scholarships, and the library was accepted into the Librarians of the Upper Valley consortium.



Celeste Klein: 1984 - 1998

When Celeste became librarian, she started the partnership with the Springfield Kindergarten that would last until its closing in 2012; the children walked over to the library for a weekly story hour. Celeste initiated a tutoring program for adults and students seeking a GED that served many people over the years. Recognizing the need for a larger and safer space for the library, Celeste spearheaded the drive to fund the Memorial Building that currently houses the library. She applied for and received a grant from the NH State Library that made the new building possible, and upon completion the library's collection nearly doubled. Celeste served the library well for 14 years.



Celeste Klein pulling a raffle ticket with Fred Davis

Steve Klein: 1998 - 2016

Steve assumed the position of librarian after his mother, Celeste, passed away. Under Steve, the library received its first grant from CLiF (Children's Literacy Foundation) which expanded children's resources at the library. Access to technology increased dramatically with the addition of internet service and a fax machine shortly before Steve started, and the library became a popular center for email. Steve augmented the existing scholarship program by selling books leftover from book sales on Amazon, which benefitted Kearsarge graduates every year, and he focused on increasing programs for families and adults. One of his best contributions was a book distribution program which connected larger libraries with smaller, rural libraries to distribute duplicate copies of books; this service was extremely beneficial to small libraries all over the state. Additionally, Steve implemented a van service in Springfield, delivering books and

materials from the library to house-bound residents. Steve continued Celeste's story hour with the kindergarten and the annual town Christmas party. He served the library well for 18 years.

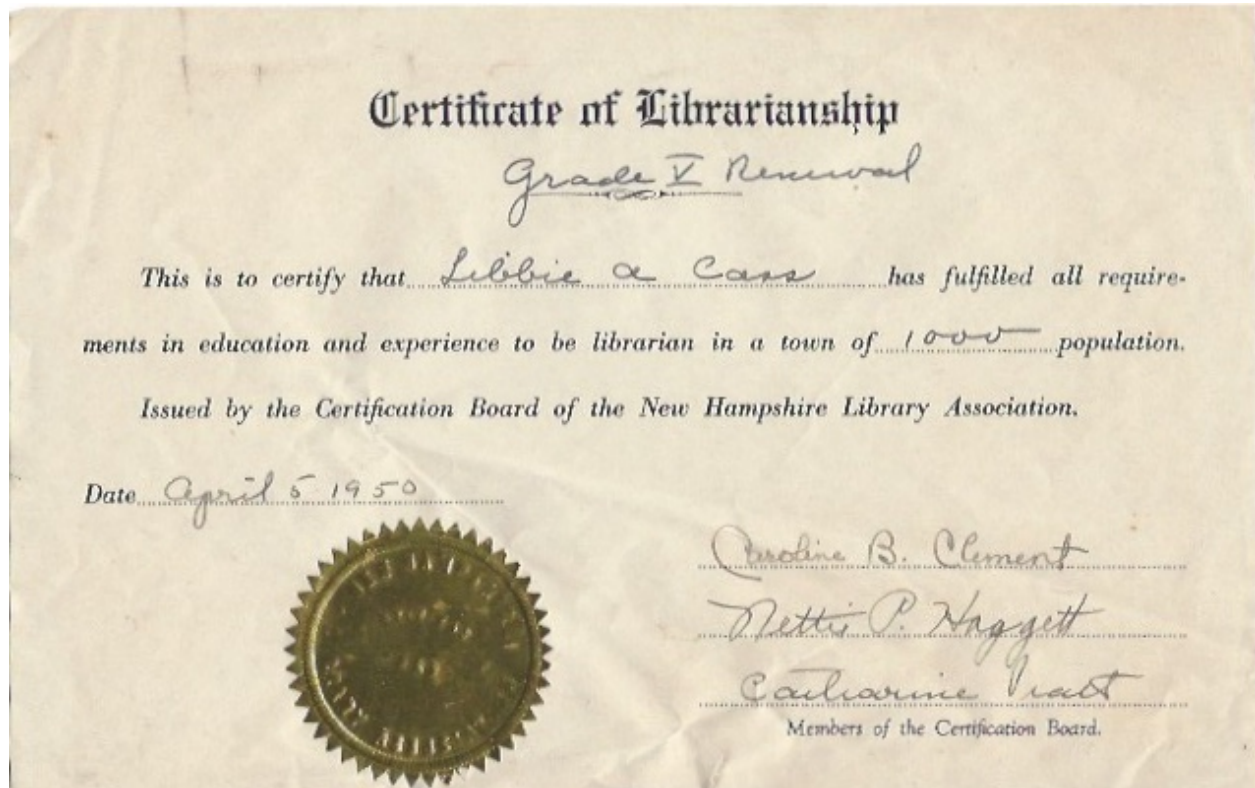
Jennifer Carson: 2016 - 2017

While Jenn was librarian, she digitized the library catalog, making resources more accessible for Springfield residents. She implemented many children's programs at the library, including book groups, summer reading programs, and a LEGO club.

Cheri Haire: May 2017 - November 2017

Cheri continued many of the programs initiated by Jenn, adding several specifically for homeschooled students and children.

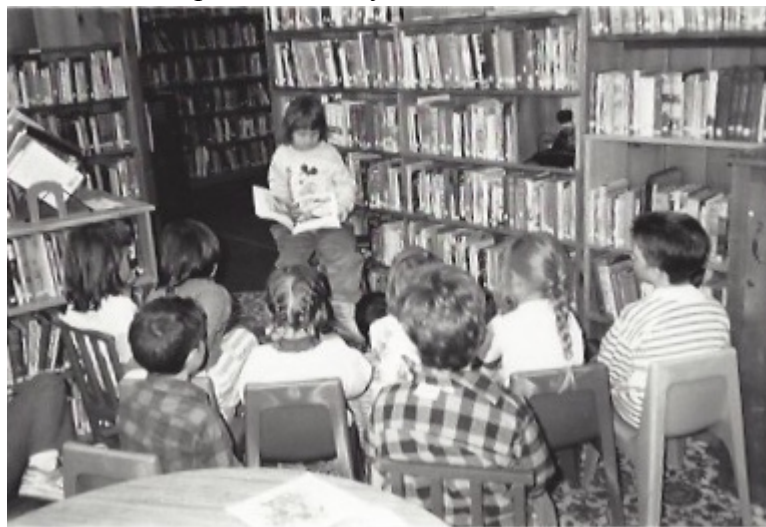
V. Photographs and Newspaper Clippings



Certificate of Librarianship for Libbie Cass, 1950



Set-up of the library in the Center School



Kindergarten story time in the Center School Library



Library Christmas Party, December 15, 1991



Construction of the new library



Construction of the new library



Grand opening of the new library, 6/20/1993

Pictured: Terry Davis, Janet Roberts, Kendall Wiggin (State Librarian), Alice Nulsen, Celeste Klein

Fund drive for library started ^{2/21/90}

SPRINGFIELD - Trustees of the Libbie A. Cass Memorial Library have announced the opening of a fund drive for a new library building.

The present building, once the town's schoolhouse, can hold no more than the present 9,000 volumes, lacks insulation, water, a septic system and, most critically, it lacks space for its tutoring and home study programs.

These and other deficiencies cannot be legally corrected in the present location.

The fund raising committee includes, Terry Davis, Marilyn Johnson and Muriel Tinkham, library trustees; Celeste Klein, librarian, and Elizabeth Bushueff, Barbara Garlock, Marilyn Heath, Wolf Heinberg, Judy Jarvis, Robert Klein, Ann Lape, Alice and Bob Nulsen, Debbie Rearick, Janet Roberts and Laura Wolfe.

Jarvis heads a subcommittee planning events and projects.

Anyone who would like to volunteer to work with the committee or subcommittee should contact Jarvis after 6 p.m. at 763-4518.

Newspaper clipping announcing the initiation of a fund drive for the new library building,
2/21/1990



4-leaf clover found pressed into an old volume in the New Hampshire room



Early volume from the children's collection

VI. Suggestions for Further Research

I. The Springfield Historical Society: Our Historical Society has many valuable resources and records related to the general history of Springfield, especially genealogy. The Historical Society has several publications for sale that are of interest to those curious about local history, including *Stories of Springfield*, *A Pictorial History of Springfield, NH*, and *Springfield Bicentennial History: 1769-1969*. The museum is located next to the Meeting House and is open from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm on Saturday during July and August, and by appointment at other times.

II. The New Hampshire Room: The NH Room is located in the basement of the Libbie Cass Library, and contains all town reports dating back to the late 1800s. Additionally, you can find a collection of old volumes from the early days of the library, many of which were donated by the NH State Library. The NH Room contains volumes on the history of the area, as well as the history of Springfield, such as *A Pictorial History of Springfield, NH* and the *Springfield Bicentennial History: 1769-1969*. For those who are curious in learning more about the history of the library, there are documents relating to the construction of the new library building, as well as trustee meeting minutes and several wonderful photo albums containing pictures of past library functions and the construction of the new library.

III. The Richards Free Library in Newport, NH maintains an online archive of multiple local newspapers dating back to the mid-1800s. The database is very comprehensive and easily searchable, and a very valuable resource for local genealogy and general town and area history. It can be accessed at <http://richards.advantage-preservation.com/>.

My Research: My sources for this project were found in the Springfield Historical Society Museum (largely the library file and the Cass genealogy file), the New Hampshire Room, the *Argus-Champion* archives, and through personal interviews. Unfortunately, many of the old documents don't have authors or dates listed and would be very difficult to cite in a traditional bibliography. Below, I have cited the interviews and newspaper articles I used:

Cutting, Susan. Personal Interview. 22 May 2018.

Klein, Steve. Personal Interview. 28 February 2018.

"Lucia F. Goodhue." *New Hampshire Argus and Spectator*. 29 January 1909, p. 1.

"Mrs. Abby J. Goodhue." *New Hampshire Argus and Spectator*. 18 September 1925, p. 1.

Nulsen, Alice. Personal Interview. 1 March 2018.

Rudner, Pauline. "Mrs. Cass Served Long as Reporter, Librarian." *The Argus-Champion*. 23 December 1954, p. 8.