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## The Library Associates

Join more than 6,000 other friends, book lovers, alumni, and faculty who recognize that the influence of a great research library reaches beyond the university it serves to the many communities of which it is a part.

Library Associates receive complimentary copies of the quarterly newsletter *Bene Legere*, as well as invitations to special occasions at the Library. For more information on the Library Associates program, please write or telephone: The Library Development Office, Room

# Charles Franklin Doe and Michael Reese: Library Legacies

Throughout its 134-year history, the Library of the University of California has benefited from the generosity and loyalty of alumni and friends.

Its collections have grown and its services expanded as a result of the recognition of the crucial role the Library plays in the lives of students and faculty. Bene Legere occasionally will be presenting Library Legacies to highlight the importance of private support for the nation's best public library at Cal. From the very early days of the University, the contributions of both funds and collections have been critical parts of building and sustaining our exceptional library. Beginning with this edition, Bene Legere is pleased to recognize two early and very significant donors to our University Library.

Two individuals in particular are noteworthy for their exceptional support in helping create the great university research library at Berkeley—Charles Franklin Doe and Michael Reese. Through very generous bequests to Cal, they played pivotal roles in the development of the UC Berkeley Library—one helped to build a building, one helped to fill it.

Both men arrived in San Francisco during the 1850s and took advantage of business opportunities provided by the Gold Rush and California's resulting population growth. Both men became San Francisco-based financiers who provided necessary funding for a variety of entrepreneurs of their day. But their personal stories are quite different.

### *Charles Franklin Doe*

Charles Franklin Doe was the twelfth child of Bartlett Doe. Born August 13, 1833, he was in poor health most of his life. He took his first job as a schoolteacher in Parsonsfield but soon found himself ill-prepared and ill-suited for the profession and moved to Boston, working as a carpenter. In 1850, his brother Bartlett traveled to California, and was joined two years later by his brother John. Together the two brothers formed the firm "B. and J. S. Doe," a sash, door and blind business. In 1857, Charles followed them west to San Francisco, and formed a partnership with James Knowland to sell retail lumber. Even though this business partnership dissolved, the company Doe helped found prospered as "Charles F. Doe & Co." At the time of his death in 1904, Charles Franklin Doe had a net worth of several million dollars and was considered, "a first rank San Francisco capitalist."

For a man so identified with Cal's Library, there are strangely no photographs of him—only one daguerreotype seems to exist in Maine, taken just before he left for California. It was said that he felt uncomfortable with the idea of sitting for a portrait. He was described as thin, 5 foot 10 inches in height, weighing 150 lbs., with a long face, full beard; prominent forehead; firmly modeled nose, bushy

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eyebrows, with the brows and lids well apart. So a mental image from this description is all we can offer our readers.

His life in San Francisco centered on a home he built in the late 1880's on the corner of California and Laguna Streets. It was reported that he believed that no one should need more than \$500,000 and so began to discuss philanthropy with his close friend and advisor, H.B. Phillips—especially concerning what would be done with his estate, valued at many times that sum. Doe was impressed with the impact that the Alexandria Library in Egypt had on civilization at that time and began to ponder the founding of a library with his wealth. In 1902, he created a will that left nearly a quarter of his property (then totaling more than \$595,000) to the Regents of the University of California, for the construction "...of a library building for its Academic Department..." (It is said that he would have left much more, but California State law at that time limited bequests to benevolent institutions.)

At the laying of the cornerstone of Doe Library on Thanksgiving Day in 1908 (still in evidence at the northeast corner of the building), his nephew, Loring B. Doe, remembered Charles F. Doe and stated that "...His life was an inspiration to all who came in contact with him. He was the embodiment of honor and integrity, and every dollar invested in this building was honestly acquired. His character was without blemish, and he carried to the grave the love and esteem of all who knew him..." This is the wonderful legacy that continues to benefit scholars today on the Berkeley campus.

#### *Michael Reese*

Michael Reese was born in 1817 in Germany and moved to San Francisco in 1850 where he substantially increased his fortune. He is cited in the annuals of early California history for a variety of actions—in 1857, offering financial advise to the fledgling California State Legislature; in 1872, discovering a gold rush site that began yielding \$5000 in gold a day on only the second day of digging; and in 1873, serving as a corporate director of the upstart San Francisco and Colorado River Railway. But perhaps more interesting and entertaining were the mentions of Michael (Mike) Reese in the periodicals of the period.

From the New York Daily Tribune dated August, 1878, "...The late Michael Reese, of California, was an old Forty-Niner and in his young days was a pedler [sic], with his pack on his back. He left a fortune estimated at \$10,000,000, being one of the largest real estate owners in San Francisco. He was noted during his life for his extreme penuriousness, denying himself the slightest luxury of any kind. In connection with this fact, the following story is told of him: 'In the early days of California he fell a victim to one of Cupid's darts. After worshipping at the shrine of love for a time, he grew weary of his devotions, deserted the object of his affections, and was sued in the courts of justice for breach of promise. At the trial of the case, it was shown that during their many excursions, he was in the habit of treating her exclusively to ginger-bread—that being the cheapest luxury. The jury, from that fact and his well-known penurious habits, rendered a verdict in favor of the injured plaintiff. She went on her way rejoicing, and he vowed everlasting hatred towards the sex.' Mr. Reese died a bachelor."

In 1896, an article entitled, "Two San Franciscans. A self-appointed sovereign and a millionaire miser" appeared in the San Francisco Argonaut. "...Another

noted San Franciscan to whom our author devotes a chapter is Michael Reese, the miser. Bishop Fitzgerald thus details his first meeting with him:

I had business with him and went at a business hour. He was a punctual man—as a collector of what was due him. Seeing that he was intently engaged, I paused and looked at him. A man of huge frame, with enormous hands and feet, massive head, receding forehead and heavy cerebral development, full sensual lips, large nose, and peculiar eyes that seemed at the same time to look through you and to shrink from your gaze—he was a man at whom a stranger would stop in the street to get a second look. There he sat at his desk, too much absorbed to notice my entrance. Before him lay a large pile of one-thousand-dollar United States Government bonds, and he was clipping off the coupons. That face! It was a study as he sat using the big pair of scissors. I had come upon a devotee engaged in worship. This was Mike Reese, the millionaire. Placing his huge left hand upon the pile of bonds, he gruffly returned my salutation, 'Good morning.'

Another Michael Reese tale that held strong public interest:

It was discovered by a neighbor of his that Reese had built the wall of one of his immense business houses in Front St. six inches beyond his own property line. Not being on friendly terms with Reese, his neighbor made a peremptory demand for the removal of the wall, or the payment of a heavy price for the ground. Here was misery for the miser. He writhed in mental agony, and begged for easier terms, but in vain. His neighbor would not relent. A day was fixed for Reese to give a definite answer to his neighbor's demand, with notice that, in case of noncompliance, suit against him would be begun at once. The day came, and with it a remarkable change in Reese's tone. He sent a short note to his enemy breathing defiance.

'What is the matter?' mused the puzzled citizen. 'Reese has made some discovery that makes him think he has the upper hand, else he would not talk this way.'

Reese happened to be the owner of another lot adjoining that of his enemy, on the other side. It occurred to him that, as all these lots were surveyed at the same time by the same party, it was most likely that as his line had gone six inches too far on the one side, his enemy's had gone as much too far on the other. And so it was. He quietly had a survey made of the premise. And he chuckled with inward joy to find that he held the winning card in the unfriendly game. With grim politeness the neighbors exchanged deeds for the two half-feet of ground and their war ended.

Though numerous sources of the time do describe him as a miserly bachelor, Michael Reese did aid the University of California Library twice with important and generous support. The first time Cal's Library benefited was through his support for the acquisition of the important scholarly collection of Professor Francis Lieber, a noted professor in Political Science at Columbia University. Then UC President Daniel Coit Gilman, received notice that the estate of Professor Lieber was offering his library for sale. President Gilman placed a

notice in the local papers suggesting that it would be a fine opportunity for a German-American to purchase the library and present it to the University of California. On March 28, 1873, Michael Reese sent President Gilman a check in the amount of \$2000 to purchase the Lieber collection for the UC Library.

The second time Reese was a benefactor of the University, was through a provision in his will, giving to the University the sum of fifty thousand dollars, as a foundation for the "Reese Library of the University of California." At its December 1880 meeting of the Regents, decided that "...the library to be formed by virtue of the bequest of the late Michael Reese, be general in its character, and that the same shall include judiciously selected works pertaining to literature, science, and the arts." In 1885, a tablet was placed in the Bacon Art and Library building, (now located in the East Reading Room of Doe Library) with the following inscription:

To  
MICHAEL REESE,  
In commemoration of his liberality  
in donating to the  
Library fifty thousand dollars

For more than 125 years, thousands of Library donors from thousands of varied backgrounds and views have understood the important role the Library plays in the life of the University. They know, as did Charles Franklin Doe and Michael Reese, that the Library serves as the intellectual resource in support of the University's diverse teaching and research activities, and how important an outstanding library is to the education of students who continue to shape our lives and our future. To them and to all Library benefactors, we are very grateful.

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