Melissa Smith

Minnesota State Librarian

April 1, 1867 – April 1, 1873

After the news of DeWitt's death, Melissa faced the responsibility of supporting herself and her young son, Eugene. She applied for the position of State Librarian. In his reply, after indicating that the Librarian's position was filled until 1866, Governor Miller made the following remarks:

> ***...I have doubts as to whether a lady could be appointed, tho' if this vacancy existed I would try to have that difficulty removed by law.***

With no solid job prospects in Minnesota, Melissa and Eugene moved to her parent's home in Beloit, Wisconsin, where they remained until their return to Minnesota in the winter of 1866.

Unbeknown to Melissa during her absence from Minnesota was the effect her application for the State Librarian position had on Governor Miller. Apparently, he found the courage to put action behind his words for he appointed a woman, Louise Goodwin, to the position of State Librarian on March 3, 1865. When she resigned two years later, the path was cleared for Melissa's appointment. She became State Librarian on April 1, 1867, and held the post for six years. Melissa's tenure was characterized by her intelligent and professional approach to librarianship, with a fierce determination to improve the Library's physical space and book collection.

By her second year, she convinced the Governor to seek appropriations for an additional room. Once attained, she also fought for a new stove, chairs, and desks in the new space. During her third year, the Library received an appropriation for gas fixtures, new cases and tables, "affording great additional convenience that those visiting the library cannot fail to appreciate." In her final years, the wood burning stove was replaced with steam heat. Along with the new carpet, new chairs and an increased appropriation for book purchases, Melissa had every right to state:

> ***It affords me much pleasure to be able to congratulate you (the Governor) and through you the people of the State, upon the improvements that have been made in the State Library.***