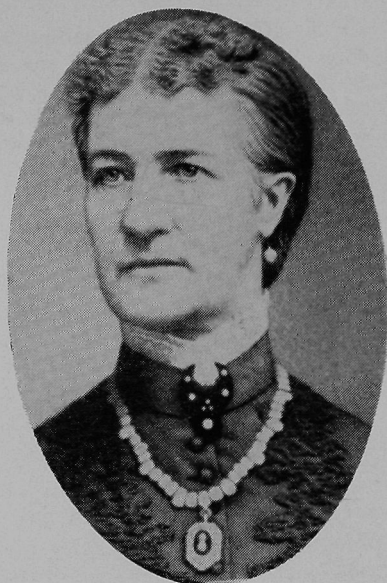




KENDALL YOUNG



JANE YOUNG



KENDALL YOUNG PUBLIC LIBRARY  
Webster City, Iowa

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## Measureless Benefits From Gift

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PHILANTHROPY OF WEBSTER CITY LEADING CITIZENS  
CREATED KENDALL YOUNG LIBRARY

BY BESSIE L. LYON<sup>1</sup>

### FIRST ENDOWED LIBRARY IN IOWA

There is an old saying that "One man's meat is another man's poison." Whether the fact that the town of Algona practically "scooped" the commercial prospects of the little settlement at Irvington proved to be "poison" to the latter place, may be a debatable question. At all events, the waning development of Irvington, a town which Kendall Young and L. L. Treat had carefully laid out, and in which they had invested heavily, caused them to sell their properties and locate in Webster City. And, if we may continue the metaphor, this movement, in 1859, became most nutritious "meat" for the future development of Webster City. Both of these men became prosperous and progressive citizens of the town of their adoption, and as long as they lived, Webster City was their permanent home.

The story of the achievements of Kendall Young,

<sup>1</sup> Written by Miss Lyon under the auspices of the Board of Trustees of the Kendall Young Library of Webster City, and by its officers directed for publication in the ANNALS. Source material: Articles by Charles Aldrich, W. J. Covil and E. D. Burgess, references to Lee's History of Hamilton county, excerpts from early files of the *Hamilton Freeman*, consultations with trustees, the librarians and with Mrs. Tressa Treat Stearns, quotations from Mr. Young's diary—all woven around personal remembrance of Kendall Young by the author.

and of his magnificent gift of the first endowed library in the state to Webster City, the town he loved, is one of the finest instances of philanthropy in Iowa history.

Mr. Young was born January 20, 1820, in the small town of Eden, Maine, and his early years were spent on the farm. Attending the country school near home, he took his share of the rugged "chores" necessary for helping to run the school. One job was to chop cordwood into proper lengths for the heating stove, a task which he performed with New England efficiency.

When he was 19 years old, a boundary dispute arose between Maine and New Brunswick, and the trouble grew so furious that the governor of Maine called out the militia, in which Kendall Young served as a private for two months. This eruption was called the "Aroostook War," which was adjusted by the United States taking up the dispute, and the matter was settled without bloodshed. For his services, he was paid by the United States \$18, and given two land warrants, one for 40 acres and the other for 120 acres. The warrant for 40 acres was used to secure land in Sec. 21 of Cass township, Hamilton county; the other was used to secure 120 acres at Irvington, which he later sold and bought land adjoining the 40 acres in Cass township, giving it the appropriate name of the Aroostook Farm.

This holding in Hamilton county formed the nucleus of the accumulated 1,667.34 acres of land which he eventually acquired in Hamilton and Wright counties, and which now, by his generosity, very largely produce the rich endowment for the use and maintenance of Kendall Young Library.

#### SECURED START IN GOLD MINING

Perhaps the life of a soldier awakened in him a desire to travel, for he soon went to sea as a common sailor, traveling to points along the Atlantic coast, the West Indies and across to England. Cod fishing near Labrador occupied the most of the last summer of this venture. The sea there was infested with icebergs and the atmosphere was foggy and drenched with rain.

This made sea life lose its appeal for him, and he returned to his native Maine.

Here he established a trade in fish and fishing supplies for a time, but the urge to travel became too strong to resist, and in consequence he sought a place west of the Appalachians, buying a farm in Wisconsin. Thus, at the age of 27 he had concluded to be a farmer—a conclusion which gave way in 1849, before the grand exodus to California in search of gold.

After seven weary months, traveling with ox teams, he reached California and for two and one-half years "panned gold" on Mormon Island, securing enough of the precious metal to form a foundation for his future fortune. Returning once more to Maine, he found life there too circumscribed, so he traveled west and bought a store and an interest in a paper mill at Rockton, Illinois; but these investments proved to be insufficiently profitable to satisfy him, and he sold out, going thence to Albion, Marshall county, Iowa, where he went into a partnership with L. L. Treat, with whom he was a close business associate for the rest of his life.

In 1856, the men went to Kossuth county, Iowa, where attractive bargains in land soon brought a rush of settlers. On a beautiful site, they platted the new town of Irvington, and all bade fair for a prosperous future. But just then came the devastating panic of 1857, and that same year, Inkipadutah with his terrible band perpetuated the dastardly Spirit Lake massacre, both of which greatly reduced the prospects of gain. Added to these handicaps, the newly established county-seat of Algona took so much of the expected trade that the undertaking would soon be quite unprofitable.

Associated with the two men was one George Smith, and together they had not only platted a town, but had built a store, started a sawmill and were planning more improvements. When the Indian scare came, the sawmill was put to good use, sawing thick planks for a stockade, with bastions at the corners. The women



and children were sent away, but the men of that region sought safety behind this well-built stronghold.

Kendall Young had already bought land north of Webster City, and his observations of the region as he passed through, were so favorable that in 1859 the partners sold their Irvington holdings, stockade and all and migrated to Webster City, greatly to the advantage of that struggling little hamlet, which at that time numbered scarcely 400 inhabitants, while the whole county had only 1,650 people in it.

The land he bought in 1856 was acquired for \$1.75 per acre. Later he kept close watch for good land, and managed by work and thrift to secure large holdings. His was a most acute financial sense, and he was pleased with his ventures, but not thoroughly satisfied with his life as a bachelor. When he stopped at the hotel, as he went through Webster City, he became well acquainted with the proprietor, "Dan" Underdown, who came from England. Assisting in the management of the hotel was his comely sister, Miss Jane Underdown, and at the age of 38, he found Jane so charming that he came back from Irvington and they were married, September 25, 1858.

Charles Aldrich was at that time the editor of the new paper, *The Hamilton Freeman*, and the item concerning the marriage is of particular interest, inasmuch as the two men were life-long friends. It stated: "The marriage notice of Mr. Kendall Young and Miss Jane Underdown was accompanied by TWO GOLD DOLLARS! Ken has been one of the most sunny-hearted bachelors in existence—a better fellow never broke bread—and he deserves the good fortune that has befallen him, in winning the heart and hand of one of the fairest daughters of the west. May prosperity and happiness attend them all their lives."

#### EARLY KOSSUTH COUNTY RESIDENCE

The first year of their married life was spent in Irvington, and whatever pioneer hardships or fear of Indian raids affected others, the sprightly, rosy-cheeked

Jane was not made unhappy by such things. She made the best of pioneer life, and whistled and sang merrily as she performed her domestic tasks, keeping the house in immaculate condition. Mr. Treat, who boarded with the Youngs that year, said, "Her floor was clean enough to eat on."

Moving to Webster City in 1859, where Mr. Young started a store, he found that the panic had left its traces here, as well as at Irvington, and for a short time the new establishment yielded slight returns, but patient waiting and honesty soon developed strong roots in this new soil. In later years he related to his friends that during those "Lean Months," he sometimes went to his store, swept out, built a fire and waited—not one customer came and not even a paper of pins sold!

However, times slowly improved, and his sterling honesty and fairness to all customers won the good will and trade of the settlers. He was soon able to buy an interest in a sawmill, always keeping an eye out for the purchase of good land, in which he invested cash.

In order to re-stock his store and carry on his expanding interests, it was necessary to have credit with the wholesalers in Chicago. As yet, there were no railroads nearer than Iowa City, and overland freighting was slow and expensive. Going to Chicago, he sought to buy goods on credit, but the dealers were unwilling to grant easy terms. A legal adviser was called in, and Mr. Young was seriously quizzed as to his assets, all of which he recounted truthfully, stating that he needed credit to carry on his store, and that he was already in possession of large acreages of Iowa land.

"How much is that land worth?" queried the astute lawyer. Without a second's hesitation or a thought as to how he might damage the credit he sought, he replied, "I do not think it is worth a damn!" This startlingly forthright honesty so pleased the head of the firm that Young was assured, "You can have all the goods you want, and pay for them when you get ready." From that time on, this firm got excellent re-

turns for the credit extended, for Kendall Young not only made money, but he paid all bills with cash.

#### ENJOYED VACATION IN EUROPE

By 1867, just eight years after he came to Webster City, he took in, as partner in the store, J. M. Jones, who was both able and conscientious in business matters and whom Mr. Young considered so trustworthy that he and Mrs. Young took a vacation, visiting the Young relatives in Maine and old friends in New England, then sailing to England to visit Jane's people (Underdowns) and finally on to the Paris exposition.

In keeping with Mr. Young's meticulous habits, he kept a diary, which throws considerable light on the journey, but which is somewhat laconic. They arrived at Chicago May 8, and for two days he bought goods, visited for two days more, and then "Paid bills," and left for the east via the Michigan Central railroad (with "tickets \$27.50 each"). He recorded a climb to the top of Deer Hill on May 19, where he cut his name on a rock, and on the next day he "Examined the house and property of Bryant, the poet and editor."

Leaving Boston on May 29, they reached Liverpool June 10, whence they took a train for London, and from there to Staplehurst, where Jane's father lived. What his reactions were to real English life are not discernable, but he did record that he went hunting and shot a rabbit and "saw lots of pheasants, but 40 pounds fine for shooting one. These pheasants are saved for sport of the English land gentry (land holders) and are saved at great expense by game keepers employed for that purpose." Here we see the "Yankee thrift cropping out; what a shame to spend money that way, when there were thousands of prairie chickens free out in Iowa!!

By June 24, they were on their way to Paris, via Dover to Calais. His comment on the exposition was, "Mind cannot imagine the things that cannot be seen here, in the shape of manufactured articles and much that is natural." Two more days were spent in seeing the sights of Paris, but he only records his impressions

of the monument to Napoleon and the palace where Louis Napoleon was then parading as emperor. They returned to Staplehurst, where he worked in the hop garden with Mr. Underdown, and stated that he "looked over the spot where the favorite charger of Napoleon, "Jeffah," was laid, aged 37 years, killed by Underdown in about the year 1828." From this record we gather that the English took Napoleon, horse and all, and that the horse, "Jeffah," having no imperialistic notions, could be tolerated in England until old age made it necessary for Mr. Young's father-in-law to shoot him! Meanwhile, his once famous master was exiled and died on St. Helena.

Another visit to London tells of his visit to the Bank of England, St. Paul's church, Westminster abbey and the Tower of London. He was impressed by the fact that Sir Walter Raleigh was imprisoned for 12 years in the Tower, but he dismissed Westminster abbey with, "It is certainly a great piece of architecture." They reached New York on August 22, and went over to Boston and Maine to visit relatives. While there, he went fishing and the diary tells us that he "caught 50 with my own line—one weighed 40 pounds." Knowing the truthfulness of Mr. Young, we do not doubt this fish story.

August 23 gives us a most important record, "This is Jane's birthday, 33 years old." This establishes the fact that Jane was fourteen years younger than her husband. In the back pocket of the diary was a bill for "1 Paisley shawl—4 pounds (\$20)." One wonders if this was not a birthday gift for Jane.

A careful record of all expenses from traveling expenses, cab fares to Paisley shawls, pipes and penholders, is left for us to see. It is all summed up with the statement, "May 28, Cash on hand, (gold) \$932—(with the final result when he got home)—\$349." We wish that the diary had been more explicit concerning this, the longest vacation that the Youngs ever took, but what details are given, show us something of the pattern of their reactions to life abroad.



## ENTERED BANKING INSTITUTION

A group of business men, in 1871, organized the First National Bank with Kendall Young, the largest stockholder, as president. Selling out his interest in the state, he devoted his time to conducting the business of the bank, and also investing in land, and looking after his various properties with the utmost care. Andrew Brewer was employed to build a barn on one of the Young farms. Every day after bank hours, Mr. Young drove his staid old black horse, attached to a light buggy, out to see how the work was progressing. He kept busy picking up odd pieces of boards, driving nails out of timbers and straightening each one, remarking, "Andrew, I don't ask you to do this; your TIME is valuable, but mine wasn't worth anything after four o'clock." The old New England thrift would crop out—but how lucky for Webster City, that his thrift and honesty bequeathed a fortune to the community!

The Young home was on Willson avenue, where the library now stands. Across the street, east, B. S. Mason lived, and L. L. Treat lived across the street, on the south. These three men were close friends, and Tressa Treat Stearns said that every evening, after an early supper, the three would assemble at Treat's and play a game of cards, but when eight o'clock came, they promptly went home and retired. Mrs. Young and Mrs. Treat accompanied each other in making many social calls on mutual friends. The children of the Treat family were such favorites of the childless Youngs that no trip was taken without bringing back some gift for both Carl and Tressa.

Mr. Young's business interests and lands rapidly increased in value, and he remained president of the bank until his death, in 1896. A nephew, F. D. Young, was earlier persuaded to come west, and he also became a prominent business man in the community. The cool and deliberate judgment of Kendall Young was no doubt a contributing factor to the success of the nephew, as well as to many young men who sought guidance from him. A well-known contemporary,

Charles Aldrich, wrote of him, "His habits were excellent, he was willing to work at any honorable employment, had no false ideas concerning labor—and was determined to win a good name in whatever community would become his home."

Though Mr. Young was somewhat quiet and conservative, yet to anyone whom he trusted, he would go out of his way to extend a favor. I can remember a personal incident in our family. My father was a steady and careful farmer, whose farm adjoined a small acreage that juts out, across the road from the present Kendall Young park. One day, thinking that perhaps Father would like that extra acreage added to his farm, Mr. Young said, "Jotham, if you would like to buy that small pasture, I would sell it to you, but to nobody else."

Both sunshine and shadows come into the lives of all human beings, and despite social and financial well-being, a shadow darkened the happiness of the Young home, in the failing health of Jane. For many years Susan Dougherty, the housekeeper, had faithfully conducted all domestic operations, relieving Mrs. Young of all home burdens, but when it was found that neither rest nor travel restored her to a normal condition, it became expedient to take her to the sanatorium, at Battle Creek, Michigan, where she received every care and attention, and seemed happy.

Declining years or Mrs. Young's illness did not diminish Kendall Young's business acumen, or his interest in the welfare of Webster City. When he first came to the town, he joined the struggling little Congregational church, assisting liberally in its promotion. But, when a Universalist organization was set up in the early seventies, he transferred his affiliation to that fellowship, in which he manifested great interest throughout his life.

#### PROVIDED FOR DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY

Eventually, no hope was given for Mrs. Young's recovery, and as his years advanced beyond the "three score and ten," he felt that it was time to plan for the

disposal of his fortune. Beyond his wife and home, nothing was so dear to him as Webster City, in which he felt himself a part of its every bone and sinew. Accordingly, in 1894, he called upon his old-time friend and legal adviser, W. J. Covil, to draw up his will, for he now had a very definite purpose to make Webster City the sole beneficiary of his wealth, after the death of his wife.

About this time, people began to feel the need of a public library, and a group of influential ladies initiated a campaign for raising funds to satisfy this very apparent need. Mrs. Tressa Treat Stearns, being such a close friend of Mr. Young, felt confident of his support of this worthy cause, and was amazed when he curtly refused to comply with funds at her solicitation. "Why, Mr. Young, don't you want a library in Webster City?" she asked. "Not that kind—too small, too small," he replied. Even Mrs. Stearns had no inkling of the plan he had already formulated to give his fortune to create a free public library for the people of Webster City.

In the spring of 1896, health conditions made it necessary for Mr. Young to seek benefit from the treatment at Battle Creek; but it was soon evident that his active life was nearing its close. He grew steadily weaker, and on June 30, 1896, this useful career ended.

His will was probated July 2, and when it was discovered that all of his estate, "After the death of my beloved wife, Jane," should be devoted to the building and permanent endowment of a library for the benefit of the whole community, the joy of the people of Webster City could not be described.

J. W. Young, a somewhat distant relative, was named executor of the estate, and Kendall Young appointed as trustees of the endowment fund, F. D. Young, Samuel Baxter, W. J. Covil, J. W. Young and E. D. Burgess, and the latter became the first librarian.

J. W. Young went to Battle Creek and consulted the wishes of Mrs. Young, who proved to be in hearty accord with the purposes of the will, and she further desired that the income of the estate, over and above

her needs, should be utilized at once to start a library, generously tendering the use of the home and its furnishings for that purpose. She also donated \$2,500 which she had received on a life insurance policy for her husband, to be used for whatever purposes the interest of this endowment might be thought by the trustees to be worthwhile. Many shut-ins have been cheered by the kindness of Jane Young.

By the terms of the will, the estate must remain a *permanent* endowment for the library, and cannot be diverted into other channels, and the trustees are required to publish a semi-annual report of all business transactions. When the first report was published, in 1899, the value of the whole estate was reckoned at \$150,000; as values have increased during the years, and new investments have been made, the property valuation today would exceed a half million dollars. And all this is free for the citizens of Webster City to enjoy, without a cent of tax paying required for the purposes employed!

In a special provision of the will making the endowment permanent, the trustees are required to invest and re-invest the proceeds of the property—"said proceeds must be safely invested and expended for the purposes herein designated, the establishment and maintenance of a free public library, which shall be free to all the people of Webster City, and said library shall be called the Kendall Young Library."

In other words, funds accumulated cannot be diverted to other than strictly library uses, and this endowment is in perpetual trust to the people of Webster City. Many times people with "causes" implore the trustees to use some of the income for some special promotion—but the board has adhered to the expressed desire of Mr. Young that proceeds are for library purposes *only*. The trustees gladly accepted the plan of using the home as a temporary housing for the library, and chose Mr. E. D. Burgess to organize the work.

#### LIBRARY BUILDING WELL PLANNED

On July 27, 1908, the transformed home was opened



to the public, with some 1,100 books on the shelves. The report for the year 1953 stated that there were 32,548 books on hand, a circulation of 100,486, with 4,239 borrowers. One can but moralize, "How far Kendall Young's candle has thrown its beams!"

By specification in the will, the library was to be built either on Seneca street, where his former business buildings were located, or upon the site of his home on Willson avenue. The trustees decided that the home was a more suitable location. After the death of Mrs. Young, in 1903, the residence was moved to lots west of its former site, where it is now the busy and useful home of the Webster City Women's Club, and it is appropriately named "Jane Young House." The present library building was then erected on Willson avenue.

One room in the library, containing various art collections and especially choice books, is named the "Jane Young Room." Charles Aldrich, in memory of his early days in Webster City, gave to this room more than 400 volumes, mostly on natural history; the most celebrated portion of this contribution is a quarto edition of the series, "Birds of America," by John James Audubon, containing 500 hand colored engravings of American birds.

Two beautiful marble statues, the "Venus de Milo," and the "Minerva of the Vatican," stand in this room, and there are also a group of fine miniature statues, the gift of the noted sculptress, Abastemia St. Leger Eberle, who spent her early life in Webster City.

A very delightful part of the library is the children's department, which is colorful, bright and sunny; besides books for children, it has a room for a "Story Hour," which is a popular diversion throughout the school year and during the long summer vacation. Next to the children's department is a room full of dolls—dolls of many periods, big and little, somber and gay. This rare array of gorgeous "dolldom," is the work of the late Mrs. Arch Foster, and after her death, Mr. Foster presented the entire group to the library.

Many visitors from out of town come to see and admire these brilliantly attired dolls, each of which stands on its own pedestal.

A nicely equipped club room occupies a part of the first floor, and the free use of this convenient room has given opportunity for many cultural gatherings, as well as furnishing a restful place for research work. The main floor is occupied by the delivery desk, stack rooms, Jane Young room and two large reading rooms. There is an abundant supply of periodicals and magazines, and a recent acquirement is a fine supply of music recordings. A beautiful dome, glinting in green and gold, surmounts the whole, while a newly installed lighting system makes sunshine on the darkest days for all readers.

In addition to those who come to enjoy the library, there are many who are unable to come; so an extra service afforded by the library includes books for many shut-ins in private homes. Another highly beneficial feature is the 16mm sound motion projector which is loaned to schools, churches and various organizations. The library also owns four slide film projectors, with several hundred filmstrips to accompany them. These are loaned to schools throughout the county, and have been in constant demand. Thus, the beneficial influences of Kendall Young's munificence extends far beyond the bounds of Webster City.

#### ABLE ADMINISTRATION STAFF

The organization of the temporary library, the purchase of books, and the plans for a permanent library fell upon the capable shoulders of Mr. E. D. Burgess, who remained as librarian for 32 years, until his death in 1930. He was succeeded by Miss Charlotte Crosley, the assistant librarian, who was on the staff for 33 years, serving the patrons most conscientiously until she resigned in 1946. Miss Margaret Davidson, a thoroughly trained and efficient librarian, is now in charge of the institution.

To manage the farms and agricultural interests of the estate, the trustees employ the services of Mr. Will

Miller, a man of experience and ability, who looks after the leases, the sales of products and the general upkeep of the large estate.

A portion of the estate adjacent to Webster City, which has a fine growth of natural timber, bordering the White Fox creek, has been leased to the park commission and is called Kendall Young Park. It has been beautified by winding roads and unique shelter houses. There are picnic stoves and tables, slides and merry-go-rounds for the children, a place to play ball and a fine shuffle board for amusement. During the summer season, thousands of people flock here, from far and near for family reunions, and the demand is so great that reservations for places must be made far in advance with the care-taker, who lives in a house beside the park.

One of the Young farms of 170 acres, lying east of Webster City on highway 20, is performing an unusually useful and educational function in the training of Future Farmers of America. The land is rented to the board of education, and the Vocational Agriculture instructor, Everett Clover, one of the ablest Vocational Agriculture teachers in Iowa, directs the activities of the boys the year 'round.

The boys plow the land, sow and harvest the various crops, and keep records on production, erosion, soil building, etc. It is a real agricultural experiment station, and this excellent training for the F.F.A. boys has brought many honors to the community, as well as laying the foundation for more scientific farming in the future. Kendall Young, with his keen appreciation of the good land of Iowa, would be pleased to see these gratifying results.

In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the library, a fitting celebration was held on July 27, 1948. A banquet was given at Hotel Willson, followed by a program held on the library grounds. Music was furnished by the Women's Club chorus, and Judge Henderson, chairman of the board of trustees, made a very enlightening address as to the interpreta-

tion of the will. Wm. J. Petersen, superintendent of the State Historical Society, congratulated the city upon the immense amount of cultural advantages of a free public library in the community. The late Dr. Effie McCollum Jones, pastor of the Universalist church, paid an eloquent tribute to the memory of Kendall Young for his gift of "perpetual enrichment to the welfare of all the citizens of Webster City."

A trusteeship of this great institution is indeed a public trust, and those who have filled the positions have been men and women who have spared no effort to produce and maintain a library of which the citizens are justly proud.

Mr. Young named five old-time friends as the original trustees, whose names are previously mentioned. Upon the demise of a member, his successor was to be chosen by popular election, but until such election, the Board might fill the vacancy with a temporary appointment. Of the first group J. W. Young was the longest on the board, retaining an active part until his 90th year of life. The present board includes Judge O. J. Henderson, chairman, who has served since 1930, George Alexander, Dr. Faye C. Lewis, John Evans and Mrs. Freda Weldon.

If, after more than half a century, Kendall Young could come back to Webster City and see the hosts of people who frequent the library—mothers accompanying their children, 'teen-agers, rural teachers, city teachers, who often bring whole classes along, ministers, writers, journalists, housewives, club women and business men, he surely would find unction for the loneliness of soul he experienced during Jane's long illness and his own declining years, in the great usefulness of his bequest to the citizens of Webster City.

Who can set the bounds to the wealth of culture that his philanthropy has created? Who can estimate the MEASURELESS BENEFITS that have accrued to Webster City through the generosity and genuine kindness of Kendall Young, our most outstanding benefactor and citizen!



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