

## LIBRARY NOTES

Your *State Library* is 125 years old. Iowa was only a thin line of counties huddled along the Mississippi river when Congress appropriated 5,000 dollars to be used for the establishment of a territorial library. On November 12, 1838, Governor Robert E. Lucas in his first annual message, reported to the legislature: “. . . (with the assistance of several literary friends) I made out a catalogue of standard works as are deemed most important as the foundation of a public library. . . Those books that could be procured in the western country have been purchased and have been at Cincinnati for some time, waiting to be forwarded (at) first rise of water in the Ohio river. . .”

The Governor's young secretary, Theodore S. Parvin, served as acting librarian until his appointment as United States District Attorney in the fall of 1839. He rented a room in Burlington to house the new collection and set about preparing a catalogue, a slim pamphlet of 18 pages, that listed all the titles. Familiar standard volumes appeared in that roster: *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, *Bancroft's History of the United States*, *Chitty's Blackstone*, *Locke on the Human Understanding*, *Le Toqueville Democracy in America*, *Malthus on Population*. Recently, a book named in the original register was discovered on the shelves of the Iowa Historical Library. Indexed under *Biography*, *Wirt's Life of Patrick Henry*, 1818 edition, it had made the full circuit from Cincinnati to Des Moines by way of capitals Burlington and Iowa City. More than 70 years later John Brigham, historian and State Librarian for 38 years, looked back on those early beginnings in an article for the ANNALS. “It is a matter of pride and satisfaction,” he wrote, “that . . . the pioneer library of Iowa included not only law reports but standard works of literature, science and law. It is possible that but for this trend Iowa's library might now be classed with unprogressive state libraries . . .”

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