

# The **P**ALIMPSEST

FEBRUARY 1941

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### THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

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### THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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# THE PALIMPSEST

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## Trenton

Trenton is a village in Henry County, Iowa, nine miles northwest of Mount Pleasant. When the visitor first sees the plan of the village and its public square filled with beautiful trees, he visualizes a city that might have been. Trenton at one time did aspire to be the county seat, and later there was promise of its becoming a thriving manufacturing center. But no railroads reached it, and its chief industry moved to Fairfield, Iowa. Now, its unoccupied shops, neglected buildings, and old houses suggest to the observer that the village has seen better days.

In the spring of 1836, Michael Crane made a claim to the land where Trenton now stands. On it he laid out a village and called it Lancaster, after the city of that name in Pennsylvania. In 1837 the claim was sold to Samuel Brazleton, Colonel Asbury B. Porter, and George Miller. These men resurveyed the claim, replanned the village, and named it Trenton, after the capital of



New Jersey. Several years later, George Miller purchased the interest of the others and became sole proprietor of the potential town. The village grew steadily. The census of 1854 reported 226 inhabitants. By 1880, however, the population had shrunk to 181. At that time there were three dry goods stores, one grocery, one hotel, three physicians, three carpenters, and four blacksmith shops in the village.

In its heyday, Trenton was known for its chief product, Charter Oak wagons. By 1887, the Charter Oak plant had an annual capacity of over 500 wagons, famous in that section of the country for their quality. The plant, however, had outgrown Trenton and in 1888 it was moved to Fairfield.

Joel Turney was the man who had brought prosperity to Trenton. In 1848 he had left Columbus, Ohio, for the West Coast. On his way, he came to Trenton, located on one of the overland routes to the West. There he opened a temporary blacksmith shop where he could repair wagons for the rough trail across the prairies and plains. The next year the forty-niners, rushing to the California gold fields, found at Trenton, Iowa, a mechanic anxious to serve them, and Joel Turney was kept too busy to follow the moving frontier. After overland travel dwindled, a wood-



working shop was added to the plant and he made farm wagons in a small way, entirely by hand. Then came the Civil War and wagons again were in greater demand. After the war, wagons were shipped to the new country opening in the West. Through those years the plant gradually expanded until it reached a peak production of over 500 wagons a year.

Several blocks southeast of the public square is located the Henry County Institute of Science, an institution that has brought to Trenton even more attention than its wagon factory. The Institute building is a large, square, red brick structure, two stories high, facing south. Constructed in 1869 at a cost of \$6000, the Institute building has been in use constantly since that time, and, although it bears a few marks of age, can be used for many more years. The large room on the main floor has served as an auditorium and for social gatherings. Beyond this room, at the back of the building, is a hall with a broad staircase leading to the library room on the second floor. Around the walls of the library are the book cases, holding over 1800 volumes, and the museum cases, containing among other things interesting mineral and geological specimens. Hanging on the walls are portraits and landscapes, purchased by the Institute of Science. Several pieces of



statuary rest on the top of the book cases. Other furnishings include organs, tables, chairs, and a stove.

The Institute building was erected by George Miller, one of the early proprietors of Trenton, especially for the Henry County Institute of Science. For seventy years this structure has borne witness to the magnanimous spirit of its donor. George Miller will long be remembered as the most illustrious citizen of Trenton, Iowa.

MELVIN GINGERICH



## George Miller

George Miller, the founder of the Henry County Institute of Science, had helped organize a similar association at Media, in Delaware County, Pennsylvania. Word of Miller's death reached the Pennsylvania organization at a time when it was in session, and so, following its custom of preparing a biographical account of its deceased members, the president immediately appointed a committee to write his biography. On the same first Saturday of January, 1870, at the same hour, the Henry County organization, too, was making arrangements to draft resolutions in commemoration of their patron. Two weeks later they appointed a committee to write a biography. It was the sketch produced in Pennsylvania, however, that was later recorded in the secretary's minutes of the Iowa association.

For many years the Henry County Institute of Science met on October 30th to celebrate George Miller's birthday. Always one number on the program consisted of the reading of his biography. Whether the Pennsylvania or the Iowa version of his life was read on these occasions, the minutes do not disclose. The Pennsylvania biog-



raphy, approved by his contemporaries, is presented here just as it appears in the minutes of the Henry County Institute.



George Miller, the subject of this notice, was the son of George and Mary Miller and was born in Upper Providence township, Delaware County, Pennsylvania, on the 30th of the tenth month, 1797. His parents were both members of the Society of Friends, as their ancestors had been from their first settlement in this country. Inheriting a birthright with this religious Society, he had the advantages of a careful, early training; but his opportunities for obtaining a school education while young, differed but little from that of the sons of other farmers of the neighborhood, if we except some little instruction in Latin and French that he received from a competent teacher, during one or two terms.

While quite young he gave some attention to scientific studies, and took some interest in the collection of botanical specimens, and those of mineralogy and geology.

In early life he also manifested a fondness for reading, but his selection of books even at that time, was from those of a practical and instructive character. The progressive movements of the age in which he lived were generally in strict harmony



with his natural feelings, particularly such as had for their object the general improvement of the country, or the advancement of society; and these never failed to receive his hearty cooperation and support, however unpopular they might have been for the time being. From sectarian prejudices he was unusually free, but very firm and devoted to those political principles which in his judgment accorded strict justice and equal rights to all.

In the year 1820 he made a tour, mostly on foot, to the Falls of Niagara. His route was by the way of New York City, the Hudson river and the central parts of the State of N. Y. After reaching Black-Rock on the Niagara River, he took a passage on board of a steamboat and proceeded to the town of Erie in the state of Pennsylvania. This was the first steamboat that ever floated in Lake Erie. From Erie he proceeded on and to the Hocking or Hockhocking river near the present town of Logan, in the state of Ohio. From this point he walked to his home in Delaware County, the whole distance being more than six hundred miles.

About the period of the return of our youthful traveler there sprang up in this county a taste for the study of the natural sciences which was stimulated by the publication of the first local *flora* of the late Dr. William Darlington. George Miller

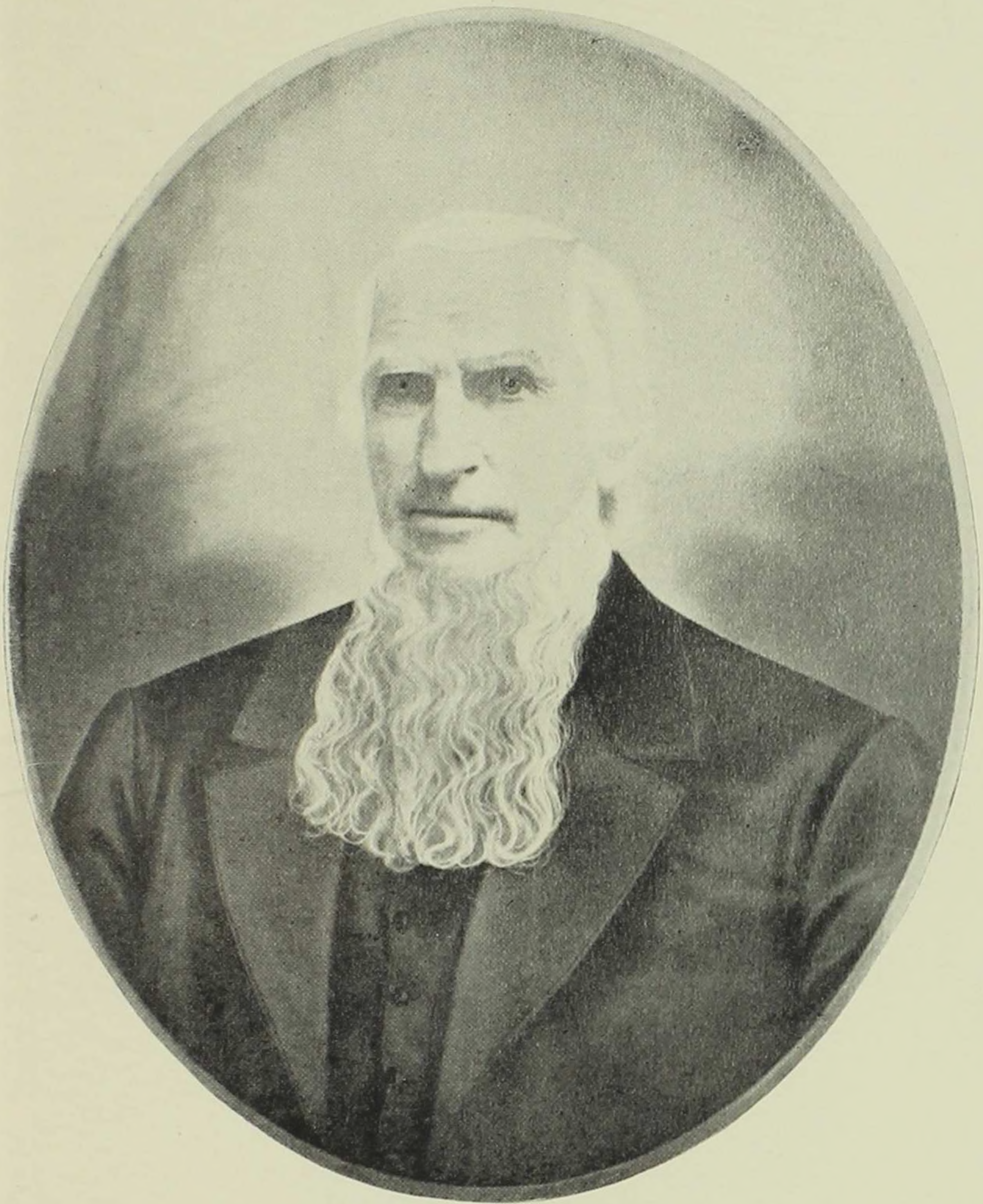


by his studies, his travels, and observations of nature in its varied forms was well fitted to join in any movements in that direction; and hence we find him among those young men who engaged more enthusiastically in the study of the natural sciences as the means of investigation increased. With him this was particularly the case in respect to botany.

But coöperative study has its advantages as well as coöperative labor. Our Institute had its origin in convictions of this kind; and George Miller was among the first to foresee the usefulness of such an Institute. With the view of bringing about its establishment, several meetings were held at different places in the county during the early part of the year 1833, but it was not till the 21st of September in that year that an organization was effected. As George Miller was the oldest of the five young men present at the meeting held on that day, his name was the first signed to the constitution then adopted.

While he continued to be a resident of Delaware County, he cordially coöperated with his fellow members in ensuring the permanency of the Institute and securing its usefulness by his presence at its meetings and his contributions to the Museum. But his stay with us was brief. His love of travel and his great admiration of the





GEORGE MILLER



West induced him to leave his home again in 1835. After traveling on horseback through Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and Illinois, stopping occasionally in the Miami country with old friends of his family, he settled for a short time in Illinois on the Vermillion River. From this place he made another extensive tour, passing through northern Illinois, and Prairie Du Chien on the Mississippi, and making extensive reconnaissance of the country on both sides of the river as he progressed. He eventually purchased an extensive tract of land in what is now Henry County in the state of Iowa. Here he made his final settlement and this has been his home for more than thirty-three years and until the time of his death.

When George Miller made his purchase, the Territory of Iowa was not organized. The country thereabouts was almost in a state of nature. The Indians and buffalo roamed freely over its vast prairies and limited timberlands. At the point on the Mississippi where he crossed that river, there was then but a single log cabin. Now the site is occupied by the populous city of Burlington, and the river is spanned by an iron railroad bridge. The Indians and the buffaloes have receded far away to the Rocky Mountains. The country has passed through its territorial exist-



ence and become the state of Iowa and is now numbered among the greatest in the Union.

Though engaged in agricultural pursuits, George Miller never lost his interest in science. As an evidence of this he erected, during the last year of his life, and at his own cost, a building containing a lecture room and departments for museum and library. The edifice, called the Henry County Institute of Science, is located on his own lands, and in close proximity to the thriving village of Trenton. While this building was in progress he was in declining health, as he had been for several years previously. He was also subject to severe attacks of illness, which he bore with almost stoical fortitude. On Christmas Day, though feeble, he dined with an old friend, but in the afternoon became more unwell. From that time he gradually sank till midnight of the last day of the year 1869 when he expired at the age of seventy-two years and two months.

George Miller never married. He was a man of retiring disposition, of the strictest integrity, but very firm in all his purposes. His aim was to do good to his fellow-man; and as to the kind of good that was uppermost in his mind towards the close of his life, no sculptured monument could more forcibly attest than the Henry County Institute of Science.

MELVIN GINGERICH



## Organization of the Institute

The Henry County Institute of Science at Trenton, Iowa, was the product of George Miller's planning and leadership. Just when the project was launched the records do not disclose, but during the summer of 1869, he built on his property the two-story brick structure that was to become the home of an Iowa prototype of the Institute he had helped establish in Pennsylvania thirty-six years earlier. By December of that year the building was ready for occupancy, and so a supper was given by the citizens of Trenton to raise money to provide furniture.

Although George Miller must have initiated the organization, his health did not permit him to take an active part in the final preliminary meetings of the Trenton citizens. He became seriously ill on Christmas Day, 1869, and died on the last day of that year. Interested persons in the community met on December 29, 1869, and organized the Henry County Institute of Science, with twenty-four charter members. At this meeting the constitution and by-laws recommended by a committee, appointed two days previously, were adopted and officers were elected.



J. C. Green was chosen president, Mrs. N. Hull vice-president, Fannie Nevins secretary, Jacob Morrison treasurer, C. C. Turney librarian, and Q. M. Noel corresponding secretary. The committee of five managers included A. B. Montgomery, Francis McCray, Henry Hipwell, A. J. Wilson, and Abram Stedwell. On the following day the managers organized themselves as a "Body Corporate to be known as the Henry County Institute of Science." After the death of Miller, his heirs, respecting his wishes, deeded the building to the Institute, to be retained by that organization as long as it maintained a library in the "hall", as it came to be called.

The articles of incorporation stated that the object of the Institute was "the promotion of the Arts and Sciences." The preamble of the constitution, however, gave a more complete statement of the purpose of the organization, in the following words: "The progress of civilization is calculated to stimulate mankind to increase the exertion in the acquisition and diffusion of general knowledge. In no age or country has ignorance been established honorable; on the contrary, the effort to increase and systemize information has ever been deemed commendable and desirable. Of all the plans devised for so important a purpose, none seems better adapted to the end, than the



forming of a society by which our exertion and information will be united and systematized. Important advantages have been derived from similar institutions scattered throughout the country, and also from the establishment of a Library and Museum of the Arts and Sciences. It is hoped the subject will so recommend itself to the community, as to receive their immediate and cordial support."

Membership in the organization was obtained by election. Those desiring to join had to be recommended by two members in good standing. At the next regular monthly meeting following the recommendation, the candidates were voted in by a two-thirds vote of the qualified members present. The method of voting provided for secrecy. "All candidates proposed to be elected as new members, shall be voted for by white and black balls. The white balls are to be considered in favor of electing. The ballots shall be so placed that all members may cast their votes without other members being able to discover how they voted." After their election, members signed the constitution and paid a two-dollar initiation fee. The annual dues, however, were only one dollar after the first year.

Each member was entitled to take from the library two volumes at a time, for a period not



longer than one month. At a later date, members were allowed to take more than two books at a time by paying five cents rental on each additional book. After 1892, the name of the person checking out the largest number of books was recorded in the minutes. In that year, James Mallory borrowed thirty-nine books. In 1897, Ella Goldsmith had a record of forty books, and in 1902 Mrs. Ada Ford checked out forty-eight.

That the organization conducted its business affairs in a capable manner is proved by the copious notes of the secretaries. Each year auditors were appointed "to examine the Treasurer's, Secretary's, Librarian's, and all other accounts." Furthermore, bonds were required of the secretary, treasurer, and librarian.

The anniversary of the Institute and the election of officers was on the first Saturday in January of each succeeding year. At this annual meeting, the committees were appointed. An important one was the historical and biographical record committee, whose duty it was "to keep a record of remarkable events to be preserved in the archives of the Institute." They were also to obtain "relics, pictures, documents, and family records, and traditions calculated to throw light upon the History of Henry County, and incidentally of other parts of the country." Finally they were to



"prepare biographical records of deceased members of the Institute and of remarkable men and women of the county, to be read from time to time at the meetings of the Institute."

The five managers were responsible for all property of the Institute, monies and books excepted. They had the liberty to grant the free use of the hall of the Institute for "free lectures upon Science, Art, Literature and education", and to rent the hall for other purposes.

The Institute met regularly on the first Saturday of each month. The time of meeting was usually at two or three o'clock in the afternoon. Sometimes the meetings were held later in the day. In the December, 1870, meeting it was decided to adjourn "till the Second day of January, 1871, at early candle lighting."

These sessions were not taken up entirely by business matters, for at times topics for conversation were assigned. On April 3, 1875, "Mrs. McCray moved that the Institute take 'Charles Dickens' as a topic for conversation at the next meeting." The motion carried. In August, 1877, "On motion of Mrs. Turney, 'Novel Reading' was chosen as a topic for conversation at the next meeting and F. McCray was appointed to lead the conversation."

There was some controversy as to whether



those participating in these discussions should address the chairman, and it was finally decided that all taking part must be recognized by the chair. There were times when warm arguments occurred, but the spirit of controversy was avoided in the fields of politics and religion, for "party politics and party religion" were to be especially avoided.

When the Institute was organized in 1869, there were twenty-four members. The number gradually increased until there were seventy-nine names on the membership book for 1873. In 1885 the number had dropped to thirty-seven, in 1895 to twenty-seven, but in 1905 it was up to thirty. There were only three members paying dues in 1936. During the last few years no librarian has been hired, and, consequently, the library books are not in circulation. But the remaining members still keep up the records of the Institute, pay insurance on the building, and rent it to organizations wishing to use its halls.

MELVIN GINGERICH



## The Institute Library

"The object of this Society shall be, to promote the study and diffusion of general knowledge, by the establishment of a Library and Museum" reads the first sentence in the Constitution of the Henry County Institute of Science.

The first contribution to the Library was the private collection of books owned by George Miller, who had donated the building to the Institute. In the business meeting held on January 15, 1870, a committee was appointed to prepare a catalogue of books to be purchased by the Institute. When the committee reported in February, for a reason not disclosed in the minutes, they were instructed "to erase McCaulley's History and add such others as they choose to purchase." At the same meeting, the book committee handed in a bill of \$79.60 for books purchased.

After that date, there were large orders for books every few months. For instance, in January, 1873, the book committee was authorized to buy \$125 worth of books. Later in the same year they bought 108 volumes costing \$106.47. In February, 1874, they spent \$150 to augment their library. After 1890, however, the average yearly



purchase dropped down to about \$50 worth, and several decades later the average probably did not exceed \$25.

The library contained 1010 volumes in 1879, but by 1900 it had grown to 1634 volumes, purchased at a cost of \$1780.70. Books have been added at more or less regular intervals since 1900. For instance, in 1902, forty-four books were purchased, in 1904 twenty dollars worth, and in 1905 the book committee was authorized to spend fifty dollars for books. No records are available showing the number of books now in the library but the total is probably close to 2000.

Money for the purchase of books was obtained through initiation and membership fees, fines and rentals, festivals and suppers, and from the rent of the hall to various organizations. From 1870 to 1890, the Institute received \$326 in initiation fees from 163 new members, while the old members each contributed one dollar a year.

From July 1 to December 7, 1901, the Institute received the following payments for hall rent and janitor fees: Yeomen, \$11.00; Rebekahs, \$11.00; Kauffman Concert, \$3.00; Republican speaker, \$2.00; township trustees meeting, \$1.50; and Modern Woodmen, \$11.00. A number of these organizations paid rent to the Institute for a long period of years.



Many books in the library were donated to the Institute by interested organizations and individuals. In April, 1874, A. Stedwell gave three books entitled *Mineralogy*, *Geology*, and *The Bible Among the People*. About three years later, W. P. Andrews of Mount Pleasant donated four books, the titles of which were *History of the Sabbath*, *Thoughts on Revelation*, *Thoughts on Daniel*, and *The Religious Amendment to the Constitution*. A member of the Institute described the library as containing "all kinds of literature, from the trashiest novel up to the best standard works of literature, history, and science".

The first catalogue of books in the library was printed in 1878. The committee had 160 copies printed but only sixty were bound. No copies of this catalogue can be found in the archives of the Institute library, but it may well be that a few are left in the homes of former members of the organization.

The *Catalogue of the Books and Periodicals Belonging to Henry Co. Institute of Science at Trenton, Iowa*, printed by the Mount Pleasant *Journal* in 1890, contains on page two a short account of the origin of the Institute. In the pages that follow, the 1400 volumes in the library are classified under ten divisions: Science; Essays, Addresses, etc.; Historical, Biographical, etc.;



Travels, Adventures, etc.; Fiction; Poems; Juvenile; Family Library; Treasure Trove Series; Miscellaneous; and Anonymous. Within each division the books are listed alphabetically by titles.

The largest division in the catalogue is "Fiction", a total of thirteen pages. In this list are the well-known books of Dickens, Scott, Cooper, Twain, Hawthorne, Holmes, Thoreau, Eggleston, Eliot, Stevenson, Hugo, Goldsmith, and H. B. Stowe. But perhaps two-thirds of the books are written by authors known only to the student specializing in English or American literature.

Divisions one and two are next in importance with six pages each. The science section contains books written by Tyndal, Huxley, Comstock, and Darwin. There are lectures by R. G. Ingersoll, Herbert Spencer, H. W. Beecher, and others.

In the biographical division, there are lives of Hannibal, Joan of Arc, Lady Jane Gray, Benjamin Franklin, John Brown, David Crockett, Lafayette, Greeley, John Locke, Kit Carson, Miles Standish, Voltaire, Washington, and many others. The history section contains H. C. Lodge's *Short History of the English Colonies in America*, James Parton's *Famous Americans*, Oliver Johnson's *Garrison and the Anti-Slavery Movement*, Macaulay's five-volume *History of England*, Milman's six-volume *History of Rome*, Thiers's *His-*



*tory of the French Revolution*, and Hildreth's six-volume *History of the United States*, as well as many other books perhaps less well known.

The library for many years was open twice a month on Saturday afternoon. The salary of the librarian up to 1934 was \$12 a year. After that time the library was not opened as often as previously and so the salary of the librarian was reduced. Sarah Green was elected librarian in 1874 and held the position until 1889. Mrs. Carrie Morrison, now living in Olds, Iowa, was elected librarian in 1891 and held the position for more than fifteen years, the longest period of service given by any member of the Institute.

The librarian's record book was a ledger with a page for each member of the Institute. When a book was borrowed from the library, the date and the number of the book were entered under the borrower's name, and later when the book was returned, the date of return was entered opposite the day when the book was taken out. Since the beginning of the library in 1870 three large ledgers have been used. These records make it possible to study the reading choices of all members of the organization. Some members used only a few books each year, while others read thirty or more.

The number of books in circulation varied from



year to year. In 1890 members borrowed 1001, three years later the circulation amounted to 723, and in 1897 it was only 492. Circulation of books again increased, however, until in 1905 the figure was up to 743. In 1937, the last year for which figures are available, only eleven books were checked out of the library.

MELVIN GINGERICH



## The Institute Museum

George Miller had always been interested in mineralogy, geology, and botany, and had collected specimens in each of these fields of science. Upon the completion of the Henry County Institute building, he not only placed his private library in the new hall but also donated his collection of scientific specimens to the new Institute. The space on the second floor was shared by the museum and the library.

His gift was followed by many others from students of science interested in the new organization. Each time a gift was presented to the Institute the name of the article and the donor were recorded in the secretary's minutes. Only a few of the many gifts can be mentioned here. In 1873 Thomas Roberts of Fremont County, Iowa, donated a stone hatchet. The next year a turtle shell and a coffee-tree pod were presented to the museum. Several months later, A. B. Montgomery contributed a "rock that the Iowa State House is built of". John P. Jones in 1877 gave the Institute the scalp of a Sioux Indian. A varied collection was received the next year when friends presented wampum, rattlesnake rattles, sea lion

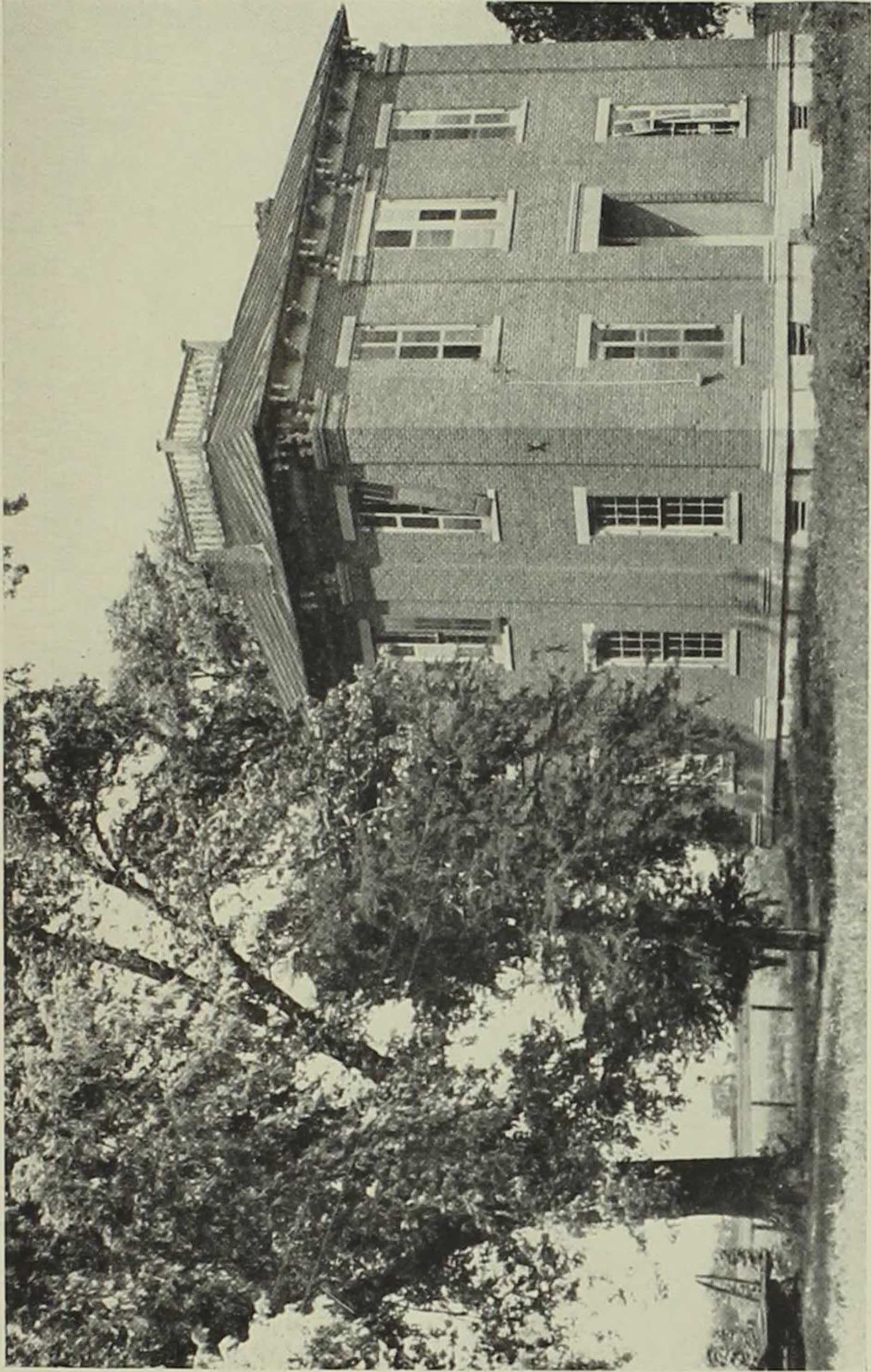


whiskers, Indian arrow heads, a large butterfly, and a section of railroad iron from the first narrow-gauge railroad of Colorado. A few years later specimens of petrified wood, coke, mica, stalactites, coral, a whale's tooth, and a sturgeon scale were added to the collection. Earlier in 1880, the Institute had purchased from Mr. McCray for three dollars a mounted jack rabbit.

Sometimes articles were donated because of their historical value rather than because of their intrinsic worth. In 1886 "a donation of a piece of bark was received from P. J. Crawford; it was taken from a limb on which three murderers were hung at Medicine Lodge, Kansas". The corresponding secretary was "instructed to return thanks for the same". A year later Mrs. Turney gave to the museum a "vial of sand from Minnehaha Falls." It too was accepted with a vote of thanks. Earlier in the history of the organization it was decided "to instruct the museum committee to accompany all specimens obtained by them hereafter by the proper scientific and historical description and to obtain such description for all specimens now in the museum."

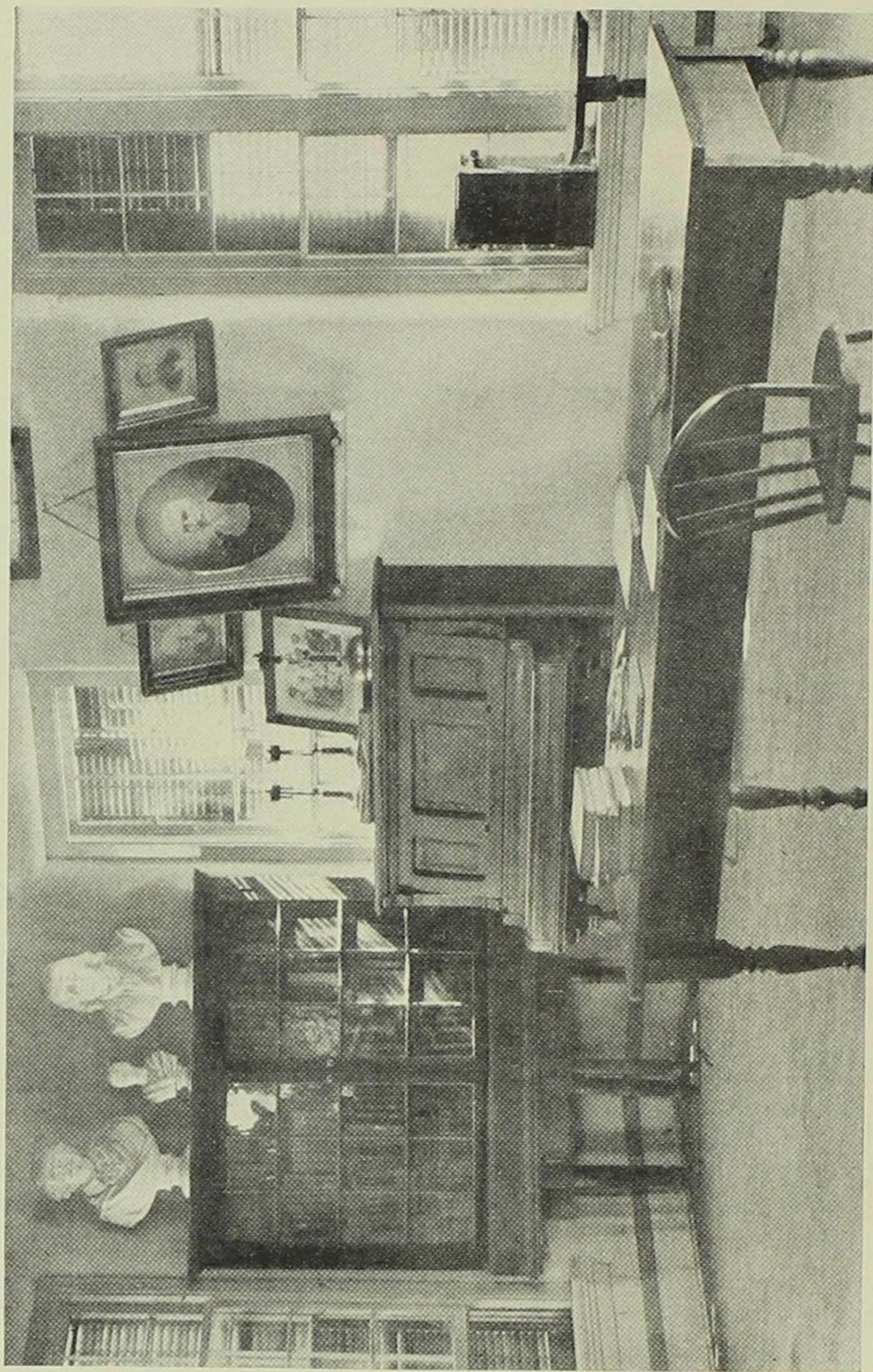
Those interested in science occasionally were given the opportunity to listen to lectures delivered in their hall by men who were authorities in their fields. In February, 1874, the Institute au-





THE HALL OF THE INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE





IN THE LIBRARY OF THE HENRY COUNTY INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE



thorized the corresponding secretary to communicate with their three lecturers and thank them for their services. In December, 1883, Mrs. Dr. Spaulding was granted the use of the lecture room for a "Scientific Lecture". Seldom do the minutes disclose the exact subject of the lecture, but in 1872 Mrs. Cowles "at early candle lighting" delivered a lecture on "Temperamentology". The lecture of H. P. Philpott, in November, 1887, was entitled "Dead Men's Tales".

To encourage music in the meetings of the Institute, an organ was purchased in 1882. The purchasing committee was limited to \$95. A month later an additional five dollars was requested but the Institute refused to increase the amount originally promised. Later in the same year, the hall was rented to a theatrical company in order to raise funds for the purchase of a stereoscope. The entertainment netted the Institute only \$25.35, which was not enough to pay for the thirty-five dollar machine purchased some time later. With the stereoscope came one hundred pictures, which could be placed in position for viewing by the turn of a knob. This instrument is still in good condition.

The interesting collection of statuary in the library room of the Institute building was acquired in 1878. At that time, busts of Franklin, Web-



ster, Byron, Scott, Milton, Burns, Shakespeare, and Dickens were purchased at a cost of \$20.31.

At various times framed pictures were presented to the Institute library. Dr. William Findley gave to the library a picture of himself, since he was the first practicing physician in Trenton, Iowa, being located there from 1839 to 1844. Several times the Institute purchased pictures to be hung in the library room. For example, in 1875 they expended fifty dollars for that purpose.

Perhaps the most conspicuous picture in the library room is the large portrait of George Miller on the south wall. In September, 1884, a committee of three was appointed to have Mr. Miller's picture enlarged. By the following February the committee reported that they had ordered the picture at a cost of \$33. The portrait shows the Institute's patron as an aged man with snowy white hair and a full, white beard. But his features do not suggest the weakness of old age; rather he appears to be a man of vigor and of keen intellectual power.

MELVIN GINGERICH



## Social Life of the Institute

Although neither the Preamble nor the Constitution of the Henry County Institute of Science mention any other purpose than promoting "the study and diffusion of general knowledge", the hall of the Institute was for many years the center of social life in Trenton.

Even before the Institute was organized, the people of Trenton held a festival in the new building, erected by their public-spirited citizen, to raise money to buy seats, stoves, and other furnishings for the new edifice. The committee in charge announced in the *Mount Pleasant Journal*, "A good substantial supper with coffee, will be furnished. Oysters and confectionaries in abundance. Instrumental music will be part of the entertainment. A general invitation cordially extended to all. Ample preparations will be made for a large attendance. The utmost endeavor will be used to make the Festival an entire success. Turn out and see what the people of Trenton and vicinity will do."

In the *Mount Pleasant Journal* on December 10, 1869, appeared an account of the entertainment. "The Festival given at Trenton, on last



Thursday evening, was a grand success. Notwithstanding the bad weather and the outlandish condition of the roads, there was a very large attendance. The supper was one of Trenton's best, and that is mighty good, and there was plenty to feed all that were there and an abundance left. The amount realized clear of all expenses was \$222.60. Trenton can't be beat on festivals, and in a few weeks they will have, thanks to their enterprising citizen, Mr. Miller, a hall of which they can well feel proud."

The Institute in time became famous for its oyster suppers. On Christmas eve of 1872, an oyster supper and ball netted the organization \$55.36. The bill for oysters amounted to \$12.72. Two years later their Christmas eve oyster supper and ball brought \$42.50 into their treasury.

Christmas eve, however, was not the only night for social occasions. The gathering on April 21, 1874, brought in a net profit of \$50.53. The proceeds of this social affair were used to purchase pictures and to decorate the hall of the library room. The custom of holding reunions on New Year's evening began as early as 1875.

For a number of years the Institute also sponsored a Fourth of July program. For example, on July 4, 1872, the association gave a ball and festival, which netted them \$106.38. When seventeen



members met in a business meeting two days later, they learned that there were four cakes left from the festival. Then "Mr. Wilson moved that we proceed to eat a portion of the cakes and sell the remainder and the motion was carried. After the feast, the chairman proceeded to sell the remainder consisting of one cake to the highest bidder and the cake was knocked down to F. McCray for the sum of seventy-five cents."

In the business meeting of June 24, 1876, it was moved that the Institute "hold a Festival and Social Hop on the evening of the 4th of July, to commence at 5 o'clock P. M." Committees were appointed to secure music, to arrange tables, to provide cakes and dishes, and finally three men were made responsible "to procure the milk of which to make the ice cream". This festival, however, earned a profit of only \$26.95.

On at least one occasion, the Institute arranged a Thanksgiving supper. This social gathering, in 1879, was not open to the public but was limited "to members and their household and two invited guests to each member, with certificates of invitation."

One of the most regularly held social affairs was the celebration in honor of George Miller's birthday. The members, their families, and invited friends met for a coöperative supper on



October 30, 1877, in the first of many such celebrations. The meeting of 1883 was typical. In that year there were fourteen items on the program: Calling to order by President; Music; Reading the biography of Mr. Miller, by S. M. Green; Music; Oration, by Kate Montgomery; Music; Toast: "George Miller", by J. C. Green; Music; Toast: "Literature", by F. McCray; Music; Toast: "Authors", by L. Noel; Music; Remarks by the President of the Institute; Supper.

The Institute often organized literary societies through the winter months and their meetings were well attended by the people of the village and surrounding community. At the meeting of the Institute on December 3, 1881, it was decided to hold literary meetings every two weeks, at which the officers of the Institute would preside. The first program was to consist of an oration by Dr. Douthart, an essay by Miss Montgomery, and the reading of a poetical selection by Mrs. McCray.

The problem of maintaining order was often a serious one at these cultural occasions. "The Trenton Literary Record", Volume I, Number 5, for March 3, 1876, (written in ink), stated that the behavior at literary meetings was much better that winter than it had been the previous season. But the editor of the "Record" was not yet satis-



fied and wrote: "It is not very agreeable to the few who get up the entertainments to be treated in the manner they have been". She then went on to analyze people's reasons for attending, in the following lines:

Some folks go to take a walk  
While others go to laugh and talk.  
Some go there to show their art (in dressing)  
But few go there to take a part.  
Some go there their friends to meet  
While others go to stamp their feet.  
Some go there to clap their hands  
And disobey the chair's commands.  
Some go there much fault to find  
But few go there to improve the mind.  
Some go there to make a pun  
While others merely go for fun.

The hall was often rented to groups wishing to dance there. It was decided, however, in 1881, that when a group wished to hold a public dance they would have to deposit in advance with the Managers of the Institute a sum of money twice the amount of the rental fee as security for the rental fee "and damages the hall may sustain."

Many political meetings were held in the hall of the Institute. The Republicans held four meetings there in 1892, the Democrats three, and the



Populists two. In 1896, political parties paid for the use of the hall on October 3rd, 12th, and 25th. At other times theatrical companies played there; colored minstrel entertainments were presented; and patent medicine companies rented the hall for days at a time.

But the organization that rented the hall longest was the I. O. O. F. They began using the Institute building at the very beginning of its existence, and by 1900 had paid over \$960 rent. At one time, however, some fault was found with this organization. It was in 1888 that "Sarah Green moved that Mr. McCray request the Odd Fellows to refrain from the use of tobacco while occupying the upper room." The motion carried. Soon after this, the Institute bought from Ben Goldsmith's store six spittoons at thirty cents each. These must have been used consistently, for after that time at regular intervals the janitor handed in special bills of twenty-five cents each for cleaning the spittoons.

Since 1938 the American Legion post at Trenton has been renting the Institute hall. They have taken care of needed repairs and have installed electric lights. Other groups occasionally rent the building, but it no longer is the center of Trenton's social life as it was for almost a half century following its erection in 1869.

MELVIN GINGERICH



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