

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.

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