

Chapter 4

Libraries

in towns which had

from four thousand

to

sixty five hundred people

when the library was founded

Table 4

Town	Population at founding	County seat	County	Location on map	City	Township	Founded by tax	Founded by gift	Date of founding	Volumes now	Circulation 1997-98	Remarks
Braidwood	in 1880, 5524	No	Will	H-3	Yes		Yes		1876	1587	3500	Income small
Canton	in 1890, 5684	No	Fulton	D-5	Yes			Yes	1892	3700	31636	City maintains; tax \$1700. Association 1969-76
Champaign	in 1880, 5103	No	Champaign	H-5	Yes		Yes		1876	5838	22936	
Dixon	in 1890, 5161	Yes	Lee	E-2	Yes		Yes		1895	3700	19348	Open shelves
Galena	in 1890, 5635	Yes	Jo Daviess	D-1	Yes			Yes	1894	4029	24263	Giver supported 2 years
Litchfield	in 1880, 5000	No	Montgomery	E-7	Yes		Yes		1882	3138	3040	Charge for fiction.
Moline	in 1870, 4166	No	Rock Island	G-3	Yes		Yes		1872	9526	25455	Subscription of \$3600, too.
Pekin	in 1890, 6347	Yes	Tazewell	E-4	Yes			Yes	1896	3000	12000	Association 1866-96.
Sterling	in 1880, 5087	No	Whiteside	E-2	Yes		Yes		1878	10000	24714	900 books given by Socy
Waukegan	in 1890, 4915	Yes	Lake	I-1	Yes			Yes	1895	2000	22000	Given by Sesame Club

Braidwood

Public Library

At Braidwood, a coal mining town in Will county, the business men organized and urged the establishment of a public library " for the benefit of the public " , in 1876. The town was prosperous and gifts were plenty.

There are now about 1600 volumes with a circulation of 3500 volumes.

"There are no books in foreign languages inthe library; no one outside the English-speaking classes uses the library". There is no mention of any library advertising.

The chief industry of the town is coal mining. Out of a population of 4641 in 1890, 1668 were of foreign birth, according to the U. S. Census report.

Canton

Parlin Library

At Canton, Fulton county, Mr. William Parlin Sr. founded the library by an endowment in 1892, " for the benefit of the city": the condition imposed was the proper maintenance of the library by the city.

The Parlin family has given books, furnishings, and made repairs for the library since then.

In 1898 the library contained 3700 volumes and circulated 31636 volumes.

Much work is done with the schools and the library is popular and flourishing. The two mill tax amounts to \$1700 to \$1800 annually.

The town is largely interested in the manufacture of cigars, flour, tile, brooms, farming tools, guns and stoves; there is also a commercial college.

Champaign

Public Library

The Illinois Democrat for May 29, 1868, announced that the reading room of the Champaign Library Association would open June 1, in Burnham's building with T. B. Sweet as librarian. Later issues of the same paper tell of lectures for the benefit of the Library Association; one was by Dr. Gregory on "What to read and how to read it." One lecture by Petroleum V. Nasby, in April 1869, the Association was the loser by six dollars.

In 1876 the Association gave the task over to the city. The library later had quarters in the city hall.

Mr. A. C. Burnham gave to the library about four years ago, a site and building worth \$40000; he added to this an endowment of \$10000 for the purchase of books. The library has received other gifts of books and property, but no other of such size.

The library contains about 6000 volumes and the circulation was 22396 volumes.

Champaign had in 1876 a population of nearly 5000; furniture and wagons were manufactured.

Dixon

Public Library

In 1895, a few public-spirited men of Dixon, county seat of Will county, induced the City Council of Dixon to levy the tax provided for in the State law regarding public libraries.

There was no great demand, in fact some opposition, but the library is appreciated now.

The Hose company owned a small subscription library, founded in 1872; this collection was given to the public library, but it has received no other gifts. The library has done no special advertising; the readers go directly to the shelves.

The circulation for 3700 volumes was almost 20000 volumes.

The town has several factories and a normal school. The library's income is about \$2000 a year.

Galena

Public Library and Reading room

The people of Galena, county seat of Jo Daviess county, were specially fortunate in having Mr. B. F. Felt as a fellow townsman. The following extract from the proceedings of the Board of Directors' meeting of March, 1897 explains what he did and the method used:

" Mr. Sheehan as chairman of a special committee to arrange the details of the transfer of the Public Library from the custody of Mr. B. F. Felt to the city of Galena, read the following paper which had been duly signed:

Whereas, I, B. F. Felt of the city of Galena, Ill., did on the fourth day of Sept. 1894, tender to the city of Galena, a proposition whereby if the said city council would pass an ordinance for the establishment and maintenance of a Public Library and Reading Room in said city of Galena, in accordance with the provisions of the statutes of the State of Illinois, and upon certain conditions in said propositions named, I would donate to the Board of Directors of said Public Library and Reading Room, one thousand volumes of books and furnish the room or rooms of said library with all modern equipments, and maintain the same for the period of two years. And

Whereas, On said twelfth day of Sept. A. D. 1894, the said city council accepted said proposition made by me, and on the second day of Oct. A. D. 1894, passed an ordinance for the

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establishment and maintenance of a Public Library and Reading Room, in accordance with the provision of the statutes of this State, and in compliance with the conditions imposed by said proposition. And

Whereas, I have complied with the terms of my said proposition to be performed on my part, and the period of two years stipulated therein has expired.

Now therefore, in pursuance of the terms of my said proposition, and in consideration of the acceptance of the same, and the passage of the ordinance therefor by the said city council, I therefore give, grant and donate to the Board of Directors of the Galena Public Library and Reading Room of Galena, Ill. the one thousand volumes of books, library equipment, furniture and property hitherto placed by me in the room or rooms of said library in said city of Galena.

Witness my hand this 23d day of January 1897 A. D.

(Signed) B. F. Felt."

The success of the library has been great from the first. There are over 4000 volumes in the library, and more than 24000 volumes were issued for home use in 1897.

There have been many gifts of books, money and furniture. A memorial case is devoted to autograph copies of books, and these are nearly all gifts. Mr. Felt has given a number of books and cases in addition to his original gifts. The number of gifts is

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due in some degree to the spirit in which founder and promoters have worked; this is shown plainly in the answers received from the library:

"The young people of Galena needed the advantages of a good library and reading room; the young men needed a place to spend their evenings; the literary clubs and school children needed a reference library; the library was founded primarily for the 'all around needs' of the young people of Galena. The conditions imposed were three in number:

- a , The name to be the Galena Public Library;
- b , No immoral, atheistic, or anarchistic works are to be tolerated in the library;
- c , Four of the nine Directors required by the State library law shall always be women; this in order to keep the library out of politics.

Those opposed to educational advantages made a mild protest , saying the money thus expended should be applied to keeping the streets in repair; a few were afraid of additional taxation; now, after the decided and phenomenal success, all always favored the idea.

Our special plan for promoting the welfare of the library is to keep abreast of the times in library science, and to at least try for a time , every workable idea we hear of or have seen tried in other libraries. The two mill tax supports the library

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very well. We are thoroughly convinced of the wisdom of commencing with a thousand volumes and adding to the number from time to time , such volumes as the public demand lustily.

We commenced in October , 1894, with one thousand volumes , and now have over five thousand. At different times we have had continued calls for books on electricity, music and musical composers, art and artists, description and travel, useful arts, juvenile books and fiction; fiction, new fiction, all the time.

Just now we are trying to supply the demand for " books with lots of pictures" ,with scrapbooks made from advertising cards, pictures from magazines,, and bright sayings and little stories from the Youth's Companion and other children's papers. The school children flood us with material for the scrapbooks, and the assistants have their books also.

The book plate we use contains one word which has brought us a great many books, it is the little word from; some how this is the open sesame to those who otherwise would not be inclined to give even one or two books, but who have given a great many volumes and take pride in showing what they have done. The idea was suggested by the Mercantile Library of Denver, Colorado, and we can say it has worked well in Galena. When a special request is made the donor's name is withheld from the book plate."

The city , on the Galena river, is the center of the lead-mining district; it has a number of factories, smelting works, and other industries.

Litchfield, Ill.

Carnegie library gift

Jan. 8. #10,000.

L. J. F. 1903: 87

Litchfield

Free Public Library

Mr. Benjamin Hood of Litchfield, Montgomery county, became interested in the subject, and persuaded the City Council to make an appropriation for a public library.

In 1882, the funds were sufficient to open a reading room and begin the purchase of books. No special efforts were made; the room was kept open and books added. " After a few years, it grew in favor and is now highly prized."

For some years all works of fiction and some other classes when taken for home use have paid a fee of five cents per week for each book. The librarian says "no objection has been made". This is one way to discourage the reader of novels.

The charge or some other local cause has had an effect on the circulation, which in 1897 was 3040, while the library contained 3100 volumes.

The income from the tax for the library is \$550 to \$600 per annum; the returns, measured by the use of the library , seem inadequate.

The town has a population of about 6000; there are railroad shops and flour mills, an academy, convent and hospital.

Moline

Public Library

The library of Moline , Rock Island county, is interesting as an example of how to make a tax useful at once. The following letter from John H. Porter, one of the Directors, will be suggestive:

" It has been a creature of the municipality since its organization, which did not occur until after the first legislation for the establishment of free public libraries in this State, which was in March, 1872.

In April of that year, a vote for a tax of one mill was carried, and an appropriation of \$800 was secured from the City Council thereby. On Sept. 18, 1872, the Mayor appointed the first Board of Directors.

It was not deemed wise to delay the formation of the library until the accumulation from taxes should give sufficient funds, and the ladies of the city were asked to give a supper for the benefit of the project, at which it was proposed to ask for subscriptions to the amount of \$3000 to \$5000 from the citizens, payable one-third in two months , one-third in one year, and one-third in two years. The ladies took hold of the matter with enthusiasm, and the supper was given Dec. 17, 1872. A subscription of over \$3300 was obtained that evening , which was subsequently increased to nearly \$5600, which was to be used exclusively for the purchase of books.

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On the sixth of June, 1873, the library and reading room were opened to the public, the library containing 1500 volumes, all new, and the reading room well supplied with current periodicals and newspapers. Since then there has been steady growth and it has come through many difficulties. The library has acquired a valuable piece of real estate, which not only gives it an abiding place, but furnishes beside an income of \$100 per year. On our shelves are nearly 11000 volumes, and it owes no man anything.

The Moline Public Library is one of the most alive institutions of the city. Its directors believe in it as a force for good; and it is, therefore, aggressive. Being aggressive, it is of necessity progressive, with a constantly increasing attendance and circulation."

The library has a circulation of 25455 volumes, and a yearly income of more than \$3500.

The city of Moline, on the Mississippi river, has large manufacturing and shipping interests, which make it prosperous and widely known.

Pekin

Public Library

At Pekin, county seat of Tazewell county, the library as free and public is a new undertaking; the librarian writes as follows:

" The library was organized November 24, , 1866 under the name of the Ladies' Library Association of Pekin. It was organized, according to the constitution for "moral and intellectual advancement".

The change from a society to a public library was made in April, 1896, on account of the lack of funds to maintain it properly. The City Council took up the work and since then the library has gradually but surely made progress. "

The library in 1897 contained about 3000 volumes and the circulation was 12000 volumes, a gratifying indication of the popularity of the library under new conditions.

The town is prosperous with manufactories and shipping interests, foundries , and distilleries.

The larger income of the library should give an opportunity for greatly increased usefulness.

Sterling

Public Library

The public library of Sterling, on the Rock river, Whiteside county, was founded in 1878 according to the State library law for cities. I quote from the librarian's letter:

" The nucleus for the library was some 900 volumes that came from the Sterling Literary Society, which had been absorbed by the Christian Association. Messrs. Galt and Tracy gave the library a room , rent free, for ten years. For six or seven years the members of the Board formed an association , which gave lectures, musical and other entertainments, from which was derived several hundred dollars annually. Several gifts of books , not very considerable , and small sums of money have been given to the library. Our annual appropriation from the city nets the library about \$1250 per annum."

After twenty years they have about 10000 volumes and the circulation in 1897 was 24714 volumes .

The town has the usual flour mills, foundries, carriage and farm implement manufactories.

The library seems to be successful.

Waukegan

Public Library

The "why" and "how" of the library in Waukegan, county seat of Lake county, are given as follows:

"The library was founded because of the growing need of providing the young with suitable literature, and for the benefit of the working people; also to supplement the work in our public schools. It was founded under the law enacted for the Crerar Library of Chicago; it remained under this law until placed upon a successful basis, then presented to the city. The Sesame Club, a Women's club of Waukegan were the founders."

The library has received gifts of money, books, and furniture. Incorporated in 1895, it has always been free.

With almost 2000 volumes, the circulation was 65 daily, or about 22000 volumes.

The town, on the lake shore, 35 miles from Chicago, has shipping and manufacturing interests of importance. The population in 1890 was 4900.

Summary

Taking up the ten libraries of Chapter 4, four came as gifts with very little effort on the part of the citizens; of the rest, only two, Champaign and Sterling, were preceded by an Association.

Four of the libraries of this class are in county seats; Pekin and Waukegan owe theirs to gifts, but Dixon, like Mattoon in Chapter 5, was founded by the city.

According to circulation proportionately, Waukegan heads the list, followed by Galena, Dixon, Champaign, and Pekin in the order named. Pekin is the newest, while Waukegan, Galena, and Canton were founded before 1896. Litchfield is at the foot, the circulation being less than the number of volumes in the library.

Moline raised a subscription of \$5600 to help out the first tax; Canton is the only town which received its library as a free gift, with maintenance provided.

Dixon has open shelves, but with almost twice the number of books has a lower rate of circulation than Waukegan; this may be because the people only take out books they are sure they want, for when access to the shelves is not given books often go out, and are returned without being read, because the reader was disappointed in the work.