

Chapter 5

Libraries

in towns which had

more than

sixty five hundred people

when the library was founded

Table 5.

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Town	Population at founding	County Seat	County	Loca- tion on map	City	Town- ship	Founded by tax	Founded by gift	Date of founding	Volumes now	Circulation 1897-98	Remarks
Cairo	in 1880, 9011	Yes	Alexander	F-11	Yes			Yes	1882	8000	20094	Association, 1875-82.
Danville	in 1880, 7733	Yes	Vermilion	I-5	Yes		Yes		1882	9202	33732	
Kankakee	in 1890, 9025	Yes	Kankakee	I-3	Yes		Yes		1895	2242	32296	Association 1872-96.
Lincoln	in 1890, 6725	Yes	Logan	F-5	Yes			Yes	1895	7000	23597	Association 1874-95.
Mattoon	in 1890, 6833	No	Coles	G-6	Yes		Yes		1893	2934	32312	
Ottawa	in 1890, 9985	Yes	La Salle	G-3	Yes			Yes	1888	8952	38130	

Cairo

Public Library

In Cairo, county seat of Alexander county, the public library dates from 1875. It was founded by the joint efforts of the Cairo Women's Club and the Library Association. Entertainments were held, donations and subscriptions asked for, till the library became a fact, "for the enlightenment and enjoyment of club members and the public."

The Women's Club and the Library Association gave their books to the city in 1882; since then the library has been free and supported by the city. Some other books have been given to the library. The building and grounds are the gift of Mrs. Anna E. Safford. The Women's Club has a home in the building.

The circulation is over 20000 volumes for the 8000 volumes now in the library. Articles and items about the library are published in the papers, and every effort is made to aid pupils and other readers to just what they want.

The town is a prosperous and important shipping point for both river and railroad traffic.

Danville

Public Library

The public library of Danville, capital of Vermillion county was founded in 1882, apparently by the fund raised by taxation according to the State law. There is an item concerning a committee appointed to canvass the town for funds , but no record of their work can be found.

The Danville Historical Society Library was turned over to the public library, and it also received the Culbertson library. The 1895-96 statistics note that it has been given some money, but the sum is not mentioned.

There are now about 10000 volumes , while the circulation in 1898 was 33732 volumes.

The town has foundries, factories, mills, thirteen churches, car and machine shops. The annual income of the library is over two thousand dollars, and it promises rapid, healthy growth.

Kankakee

Public Library

The public library of Kankakee, county seat of Kankakee county, is comparatively young, having been founded in 1895. It was decided that it was necessary for the promotion of general intelligence that "free reading matter" be made accessible to all the people of the city. A general discussion and active agitation of the subject followed. Meetings were held and personal appeals were made.

Mr. Huling had left \$5000 to the Ladies' Library Association, founded in 1872, which was on interest as the beginning of a fund to build a public library. This money was turned over to the city by the Association; Mrs. Huling gave the site, furnishings, and some books; the city raised \$10000 by taxation, and the new building was occupied, December 1898.

Several hundred books were given by members of the Library Association.

With less than 3000 volumes, the circulation in 1897-98 was 32296 volumes. If the books are kept moving at this rate, the library will surely be a success.

The town has a population of about 10000; there are quarries, coal mines, and various manufactories. The Eastern Illinois Hospital for the Insane is also located here.

Lincoln

Public Library

Lincoln, county seat of Logan county, has a public library which the librarian describes as follows:

"The Lincoln Public Library was founded as an Association Library in 1874, and in reality grew out of a reading club. This club so felt the need of proper books to carry on their work that it was decided to try and establish a small library. I give a few lines from their first report:

' This association was organized with an authorized capital of \$5000 , divided into five hundred shares of ten dollars each. By the provisions of the organization, one hundred shares were required to be subscribed before the society could proceed to business. The first purchase of books was 659 volumes.'

The library remained an Association library for twenty years, then for various reasons it was a financial impossibility to maintain it longer on that basis and supply the public demand. We decided to hold a Library Fair , for the purpose of paying off indebtedness, and keep open doors for the next year. We found people so ready and willing to help that we were encouraged to use it as a means to talk public library.

This was the beginning of much talking to the Mayor and City Council by our Library Board and public spirited people. The city was finally persuaded to accept the library as a gift, and

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provide for its maintenance in the future; each stockholder made a personal surrender of his share to the city.

The first year we were given \$500 and one half the lower floor of the city hall , which was just built, with heat, light and janitor service free. This was not enough, as the library was not in the best condition at that time. Finally, by patience and perseverance we succeeded in securing the two mill tax , which gives us from \$1400 to \$2000 per year. The first year that we received this over half was used for books, replacing old ones and buying new ones, trying to bring each class~~s~~ nearly in proportion as possible, in fact trying to fill all the corners. That year about 60 volumes were donated. Since then, not counting books given by the government , we have had donations of about \$25 worth of books per year.

The second year, a former librarian gave us two valuable lots for a building with the understanding that the building should be erected on the lots within twenty-five years. We have since been trying to lay by one half of our funds as a sinking fund to be used as a nucleus for building fund. "

There are 7000 volumes and the circulation is over 23000 volumes.

The city has a college , the Odd Fellows' Orphans Home, State Asylum for the Feeble-minded, coalmines, and several factories.

The library is appreciated and appears to be thriving.

Mattoon

Free Public Library

At Mattoon, largest town in Coles county, the library is comparatively recent, as it dates from 1893. The information furnished by Mrs. Jennings, one of the charter members of the Board, gives a good idea of how and why the library came into being:

" There was no public library in our city; the need of it was apparent, and with very little effort on the part of a few, the Free Public Library of Mattoon was founded. There had been very little if any agitation of the question. Our High School had a good library to which only students had access, and a want which was felt deeply existed among the scholars from the Third grade to the High School. This gave an impulse to the movement and inspired our Mayor and Council to appropriate \$300 for the work.

Our Mayor appointed a Board of nine trustees, four of whom were women, in June, 1893. Few if any have made so marked a success of an effort.

Beginning at the bottom round of the ladder, no bequests cheered the dark hour, but donations of books were received from home libraries, and also some money, so we had about \$500 realized before the doors were open to the public. The outlook was rather dark but the outcome is all we could have wished.

The trustees of the library feel that they are largely indebted to the teachers in our public schools for arousing

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interest in their pupils, showing how much they could gain by becoming familiar with literature . We were amazed to see how from month to month the circulation increased and we found it necessary, yes, very important , to increase our volumes, and the City Council responded to the need by liberal appropriations.

I must not fail also to acknowledge our indebtedness not in a small degree to the librarians who have been so enthusiastic and untiring in serving the patrons from the youngest to the oldest ones. No library can be a success without librarians that have magnetic power and true sympathy with the young."

They have 3000 volumes and a circulation of 32312 volumes. I quote from the librarian's letter:

" The children came in such numbers that with our limited supply of books , it became necessary to make a rule requiring them to be nine years old. Our large circulation is due principally to the character of the community. The women have always been interested in literary work, as is shown by the unusual number of clubs, one twenty-two years old, two over ten years of age, and several younger ones".

The library seems to be doing much valuable work. The town has about 7000 inhabitants; it is the center and shipping point for a fertile corn and broom-corn producing region. The tax for the library amounts to about \$1500 a year at present.

Ottawa

"Reddick's Public Library

Ottawa, county seat of La Salle county, owes its library privileges to the generosity of a citizen The preface to the printed catalogue tells the story:

" Reddick's Library owes its origin to the liberality of the Hon. William Reddick. Mr. Reddick began life in its humble walks, and by industry and frugality , acquired an ample fortune. Among his prominent characteristics was a large public spirit, which engaged his energies in whatever he believed would promote the public welfare...Honorably to himself and satisfactorily to those interested he performed the duties of every private and public trust with which he was charged during a long period of active business and official life. Deprived of the advantages of early educational training it became a purpose, which grew with his years , to so apply his fortune that the people, especially the young people of Ottawa, whose circumstances in life are like those surrounding his own early youth, might at least have access to books, to be the better able to equip themselves for the duties and work of life. By the provisions of his will he left his splendid home residence to be used as a library, and a permanent fund of about \$100000 for its maintenance."

The library has been well patronized from the start. The 9000volumes have a circulation of 38130 volumes, in the city proper and the parts of two townships, which by the decision of the

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trustees are enabled to share the use of the library.

The city has twice given \$800 a year, and once \$600; this was probably at the beginning when law suits hindered the immediate availability of the property.

The town has a number of manufactories of glass, agricultural implements, organs, flour, tile, brick and cigars. Its location, on the canal and two railroads, makes it an important shipping point for grain and manufactured goods.

Summary

The six libraries considered in Chapter 5 may be put in two classes ; three were founded by gift, three by tax. Of the former, two are due to Library Associations; the third owes its origin to an individual's gift. The libraries of Cairo and Lincoln represent years of preliminary work by associations, but that at Ottawa is the result of a bequest; it is the largest, and has a higher rate of circulation; Lincoln, new as a public library, ranks below Ottawa, in point of circulation.

Of those founded by tax, the libraries of Danville and Kankakee owe something to library associations, while that at Mattoon seems to have arisen simply because the people felt the need of it. Kankakee, the most recent, stands first in circulation; although founded by the city, it received some gifts from the Association which preceded it.

Measured by results, there seems to be little advantage in one method over the other; in Kankakee, Lincoln and Mattoon, the novelty of a free library may have an effect on the use of the books. In the library least closely connected with the city, at Ottawa, the rate of circulation is high.

All but that of Mattoon are in county seats; if Mattoon and Kankakee can keep up the high rate of circulation, they will deserve study as models.