

History Of Mount Pulaski Public Library

Library Started Here In 1897 On Modest Scale

(May 15, 1947)

This year of 1947 marks a half century since the Mount Pulaski Public Library began as a growing institution, and the occasion was observed Tuesday afternoon, May 6, when the library club met in regular session in the library rooms.

At this time a history was given, the first 35 years by Mrs. Paul E. Beidler, and the last 15 years by Mrs. Charles Schmitz.

Following is what Mrs. Beidler had prepared from old records:

History of Library

The expression, "the first hundred years is the hardest," is often heard, but for the Mount Pulaski Library the first 50 years were the hardest.

The earliest records are the minutes of the Literary Club of Jan. 26, 1897. Mrs. X. F. Van R. St. John, vice-president; Mrs. Katherine Lushbaugh, secretary, and Mrs. George Vonderlieth, treasurer.

From those minutes we gather that some preliminary ground work was laid for the establishment of a library, for it recorded that several benefits were given, the main one a cantata, entitled, "Jephthah," which netted them \$48.55; together with socials, etc., the sum was brought to \$71.95.

Start With 64 Volumes

Sixty-four volumes were ordered from John L. Beidler, and these, together with books donated, the functioning of a library was set in motion.

The first librarian was Miss Hilma Jones, assisted by Miss Blanche Rankin. The library was open to the public Thursday afternoon.

Finding a permanent place for the books presented a problem to the women. On March 23, 1897, the members were granted the privilege of using a corner in the old Universalist Church for their books. This church was situated on Marion Street on the lot later purchased by Morris J. Myers, who erected a modern home there, and which is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. John H. Tendick. The club was also invited to hold their meetings in the church, which they did for the summer months.

Was Literary Club

The Literary Club was a cultural organization. The programs recorded show a serious study of classical subjects. Perhaps the need of reference books for this study prompted them to do something about establishing a library.

Of the original group as recorded in roll call, we find that those still living are: Mrs. X. F. Beidler, Mrs. T. O. Snyder, Mrs. Irvin Eminger, Mrs. Clara Mitchell, Mrs. Hester Evans, the latter of whom lives in Champaign; and Mrs. Jesse Barlow (Marie Werlich), Route 1, Waterlot, Wis.

There were 126 books to start with, and Dr. P. H. Oyler donated a bookcase for their care.

In July, 1897, Miss Jones resigned as librarian, as did the assistant, Miss Rankin, and the president appointed Miss Grace Fryer as librarian and Miss Marie Werlich as assistant.

In October, 1897, the books were removed to the business house of A. K. Shride on the south side of the public square, and remained there some time. Later they were removed to the Lushbaugh building at the northeast corner of the square, which was later Dr. George S. Connelly's office. There is now an oil station being built there.

In November, 1897, a play, "A Day in the Union Depot," was given and \$69.20 was realized from this source to buy more books, which added to the already substantial foundation for a library building.

In December, Grace Fryer Webster resigned as librarian. This

left them without a librarian, as Miss Werlich was no longer a member of the club, having been dropped for non-attendance. The president, Mrs. Kathrine Lushbaugh, consented to act until the incoming president could appoint a new one. In January of 1898, the new president, Mrs. A. W. Leslie, appointed Mrs. Lushbaugh as librarian, with Mrs. Charles Otis as assistant.

Minstrel Show Benefit

In June, 1898, a Lady Minstrel was staged and the sum of \$51.65 added to the book fund. The gentlemen of Mount Pulaski, not to be outdone by the ladies, offered to put on a minstrel show for the benefit of the library. Since this was the first offer of help from the men, the ladies were delighted to accept, and nearly \$100 was cleared.

The same year the ladies petitioned for space in the City Hall then being built, and it is recorded in 1899 that they were promised some space, but seems to never have materialized.

In 1899 a lecture by Dr. Headly made a profit of \$12.20, while a strawberry social earned \$25.33. The 33c was donated by Ed Lincoln to buy a book.

There is a gap in the records from 1900 to 1902, but we learn from other sources that Mrs. Mae O'Connor was appointed librarian in 1900 and served 40 years. Somewhere in the early 1900's the library was moved to the old Logan county court house building in the public square, occupying a room previously used by the police magistrate. Later the books were upstairs when the American Legion had headquarters there.

Solicit House To House

In 1902 the women conducted a house-to-house canvass to raise funds. Mrs. Maude Stafford reported \$50 at one meeting. At another meeting Mrs. Geo. Huck reported canvassing Washington street and had \$6.40. Mrs. T. O. Snyder and Mrs. Schurman made 35 calls on Vine Street and received \$4.45, and one book. Mrs. Robert Aitchison, Sr., reported she and Mrs. Coffman visited the east part of town and collected \$3.95. Final report was \$71.

On May 12, 1903, there was a discussion of disbanding the Literary Club and forming a Library Board. At the next meeting, on May 26, a resolution to that effect was voted on and carried. The new club was to be known as the Mount Pulaski Library Club.

The ladies favoring the new club met on July 7, 1903, at the home of Mrs. Robert Aitchison. The constitution and by-laws were read by sections and adopted. Election of officers took place, as follows: Mrs. Maude Stafford, president; Mrs. T. O. Snyder, vice-president; Mrs. Aitchison, treasurer; Mrs. Caroline Mathes, secretary. Board members were, Mrs. Maude Huck, Mrs. Belle Capps, Mrs. George Vonderlieth, Mrs. Hannah Myers, Mrs. Hester Evans, Mrs. Mae O'Connor and Mrs. James Ayers. And thus the Mt. Pulaski Library Club was born.

In April, 1904, a play entitled, "Twixt Love and Money," was given, from which \$89.55 was cleared.

The ladies had continued canvassing for funds and added a neat sum. In May, 1904, it was reported that a total of 830 books were in the library, not counting a number of paper-backed books not catalogued.

Carload of Paper

The club members, then as now, were ever anxious to add to the funds so that the library might grow, and they set out to collect a carload of waste paper which they accomplished and received \$186.02 for their efforts.

In 1908 an entertainment netted \$72.85.

During 1911 Prof. Skinner met with the club and discussed books needed by the students, and asked co-operation of the library board. The library had always given special attention to children's books in fiction and reference.

NEW LIBRARY FINE CONTRIBUTION TO OUR COMMUNITY



A lecture course was sponsored in 1913. The first number in January brought \$145.40 and the next two numbers went in the "red".

Being a librarian in those days was truly a labor of love, for it is recorded that the club voted to give the librarian 75c a week the year round. In January, 1925, the American Legion offered rooms on the second floor of the courthouse as a meeting place for the club, and the hostesses were Mrs. Geo. E. Suedmeier (then of Chestnut), Mrs. Hester Evans and Mrs. B. H. Keck. The meeting was held on Feb. 3. Not all meetings were held there, as the hostesses had their choice.

C. Tomlinson Generous Giver

In January, 1928, Mr. Clarence Tomlinson gave the library \$100. Previously he had given several \$20 donations. He was a real friend of the library, as is T. A. Scroggin, who has given many \$5 donations, and many other things as will be shown later.

In 1930 there were several plans to secure the church building known as the St. Agnes Mission, as a library. Some interested men subscribed \$800, and the ladies were to raise the rest of the funds. Thru some misunderstanding the ladies did not carry out their part in the allotted time, and the men withdrew their offer as they thought the ladies were not interested.

Memory Shelf Started

During March, 1932, a Memory Shelf was started, and the first book was in memory of Mrs. Frank Snyder, the first book being "Romana."

At this time, Mrs. O'Connor, the librarian, reported 4,350 books were on hand. And, at this meeting, a rising vote of thanks was given to Mrs. T. A. Scroggin for her efficient work as treasurer for 28 years.

The Library Club had sponsored municipal Christmas Trees for a number of years, had planted a Centennial tree in the public park, and many other civic projects had their approval.

To these ladies who pioneered in this field, this generation owes a vote of appreciation and deep respect, for it has been a long, hard road to bring a library from a start of 126 books to 4,530 books in 35 years. Their vision, courage and unstinted giving of time and money is a priceless heritage.

I have given you the infancy and adolescence of the library. Mrs. Charles Schmitz, who has been secretary for 15 years, with a perfect attendance record, will bring the library to maturity and the new home which is assured.

History of Mrs. Schmitz

In continuation of Mrs. Beidler's part of this history I will begin with October, 1932, when the meetings were still being held on the second floor of the old Logan county court house building, now the Abraham Lincoln Memorial Shrine. The club roster



LORAH Z. LIPP BEQUEATHS \$35,000 TO BUILD LIBRARY

Library Dedicated In Honor Of Her Parents

(Oct. 25, 1945)

Gifts totalling \$46,000 were left to philanthropic purposes in the last will and testament of Mrs.

consisted of 75 members, which was considered large for that time. The present membership is 135. The regular meeting hour was 2 p.m. but at a later date was changed to 2:30 p.m., which hour is still in force.

Moved Over Bank

As the club was increasing in membership, and more books were purchased, rooms provided were inadequate to accommodate the large attendance at meetings, T. A. Scroggin, always a friend of the library, offered for use the two rooms over the Farmers Bank, formerly a lawyer's office which offer was thankfully accepted. These rooms were used until 1934, when Mr. Scroggin again came to the rescue by offering free of charge the use of the present location in the old Scroggin Hotel Building. The expense of redecoration was born by the club, and the dedication of the rooms was in the form of a Silver Tea, held Wednesday, Sept. 26, 1934. It was gratifying to the club membership, who were assisted by the South Side Club, when a shower of china, silver, chairs and other articles were given with which to furnish the rooms. Later two dozen folding chairs were purchased, as was also a piano from the directors of

Lorah Z. Lipp, whose death occurred Oct. 9, 1945.

The biggest contribution by the deceased was the setting aside of \$25,000 for the erection of a library in the City of Mount Pulaski, with an additional sum of \$10,000 for purchases of books and other library equipment as well as maintenance and repair.

Trustees as requested in the will were to be Ben W. Ely, G. A. Volle, Harold Hubbard, Austin W. Schaffnacker and Walter W. Schafer. They were empowered to proceed with the erection of such library to be completed within two years or not later than three years.

The site for the building was left to the discretion of the trustees.

The building is to be known as the "Muldoon Library" and the small plaque inscription "In Memory of James and Mary Muldoon by their daughter Lorah," was to be placed within the library.

It was the further request of Mrs. Lipp, who was deeply interested in the work of the Women's Clubs, that a room sufficiently large enough for assembly purposes be provided free of charge for the use of the Woman's Club, Junior Woman's Club and the Library Club.

Other gifts mentioned in the will were \$4,000 to the St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church of Mount Pulaski; \$3,000 to the St. Clara's hospital in Lincoln; \$3,000 to the Orphanage of the Holy Child of the Episcopal Church of Springfield; and \$1,000 to the Trinity Church in Lincoln for building extension.

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