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## The History of an Unusual Library

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To the book-lover all libraries with their shelves of alluring titles, with their musty old books tucked away in basements, hold a fascination, but the old library in a small town which traces its ancestry through the Civil war, through the first library movement in the state, back to the very roots of the existence of the town itself must hold interest even for the person who cherishes no special affection for books or their abiding-places.

In the year 1833 a little embryo village was surveyed and laid out in the north-western corner of the state of Indiana, where a gap in the dense, primeval forest invited the Indians and French to seek a gateway through the timber from one part of the prairie to another, and was poetically named La Porte.

It augured well for the literary aspirations of the infant settlement that in the second winter, 1834-5, the few villagers should contribute of their scanty hoard toward a common book-fund. To New York went the fund; back slowly over pioneer trails came a few books to swell the library already donated from the settlers' personal libraries to the rather remarkable total of nearly three hundred volumes. The books were carefully listed and the library proudly installed in a corner of the office of John B. Niles, the one attorney the place boasted, under the nominal charge of an Englishman

by the name of Whittam. Some of Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* and Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii* indicate sufficiently the choices of the day, while the only periodical was *The Dial*, later the chief organ of the Transcendentalists.<sup>1</sup>

There then comes a long gap, during which the settlers apparently dropped their cooperative effort, possibly because they were more absorbed in exercising the muscles of their bodies in wrestling with the soil and with primitive conditions than in exercising the muscles of their brains. But in the midst of the Civil war the beginnings of the present library are to be found. Although boasting nearly eight thousand inhabitants, La Porte was without a reading-room or library, except the McClure library,<sup>2</sup> to which so few had access that it was practically without influence on the community. A few choice souls, under the impetus of the pastor of the Presbyterian church, determined to organize an institution "to be influential in developing a literary taste by cultivating a habit of reading, to stimulate the mind by promoting learning, and to furnish a pleasant and useful place of resort."<sup>3</sup> The effort awakened such enthusiasm that by March 16, 1863, five hundred dollars had been subscribed. On that date the subscribers met in the Grammar School building and effected an organization of the La Porte Reading-Room and Library Association by the adoption of a constitution and by the election of officers and directors.<sup>4</sup>

The prompt opening of negotiations with the other library association in the town necessitates a rather lengthy digression, which is justified by the link thus established between the La Porte library and the first library movement in the Central West—a movement of far more than passing or local interest.

It will be readily recalled by readers familiar with com-

<sup>1</sup>The above brief account is based upon an interview given a reporter of the *Le Porte Herald* by Mrs. George L. Andrew, recorded in its issue of January 10, 1921. She tells how she read the *Last Days of Pompeii* at the ripe age of ten, because that was all the fodder there was for her active little mind, and how she skipped all the hard words until she was detected by an uncle, whereupon she was forced laboriously to read aloud and spell out all the long words. *The Spy* was one of the very first books she read.

<sup>2</sup>To be explained later in the paper.

<sup>3</sup>Jasper Packard, *A History of La Porte County*, 110.

<sup>4</sup>The names of the officers, one of whom is still alive, are recorded in Packard, 110.

munity experiments that in 1825 Robert Owen, the famous Welsh manufacturer and philanthropist of New Lanark, after making that factory town renowned as the happiest mill community in England, turned to the new world to try out a communistic colonization scheme which he believed was to inaugurate a "new moral world." He purchased thirty thousand acres of land at New Harmony on the lower Wabash river in Posey county, southern Indiana, from the Rappites<sup>6</sup> in order to have a vast theatre to try out his social reforms.

Among the eminent men of science<sup>6</sup> whom Owen gathered about himself, was William McClure,<sup>7</sup> a man of large means, who had traveled far and wide, and who had a deep knowledge of science. Owen gave McClure sole charge of the educational part of his reforms, while McClure, on his side, joined whole-heartedly in the experiment by investing \$150,000 and agreeing to focus his plans for educational work in America about Harmony under the Pestalozzian system. The two men shared the ideal of devotion to the improvement of the conditions of the lowly. Although Owen's experiment ended within three years in failure and in that visionary's return to England, although all McClure's educational experiments failed, one by one, still in his last hours, as he was re-

<sup>6</sup> The *Rappites* is a convenient way of designating the earlier religious socialistic group of German peasants who had followed George Rapp from Wurtemberg to found Harmonie in Butler County, Pennsylvania, who had then moved to New Harmony in Indiana in 1815, where they prospered, but who then for some not wholly explained reason sold their estate to Owen in 1824 and removed once more to Beaver County, Pennsylvania. The mortality from malaria among their membership during the first four or five years fixed their determination, it is said, to sell their plantation as soon as a purchaser could be found, and may partially explain the sacrifice after the malarial conditions had been overcome of their thirty thousand acres of orchard, garden, vineyard, and fields. The Beaver community ultimately ceased to exist and became a conventional corporation of individual holdings. J. H. Levering, *Historical Indiana*, 241-3.

<sup>6</sup> The group included, besides McClure, Joseph Neef, a disciple of Pestalozzi, Schoolcraft, a student of Indian lore, Thomas Say, an illustrious zoologist, Dr. Troost, the geologist, and Madam Fretageot, trained in the Pestalozzi school in Switzerland. *Ibid.*, 259.

<sup>7</sup> McClure was a Scotchman, who had come to America to make a geological survey of the United States. He won, in consequence, the title of Father of American Geology. He was chief founder of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences and served it as president for twenty-three years. He was one of the first men ever to sense the value of industrial education and founded an agricultural school in Spain on ten thousand acres which he afterwards lost because of a political revolution. He and Owen met at New Lanark, whither he had made a pilgrimage to study that model factory community. *Ibid.*, 258-9.

turning from a vain quest to Mexico for health, he directed his last philanthropy to linking together his two pet projects—education and the working-man. By the provisions of his will, his executors were to donate \$500 out of his property<sup>8</sup> to any club or society of laborers who might establish in any part of the United States a reading and lecture-room with a library of at least one hundred volumes, laborers being defined as those “who labor with their hands.” Over one hundred and sixty<sup>9</sup> libraries sprang up accordingly in as many counties of Indiana and Illinois,<sup>10</sup> but nearly all were short-lived, for they were formed with a view only to getting the proffered donation, and were even often inspired by an agent who was interested to the extent of securing his fee for the selection and purchase of the books. However, some eighty thousand dollars were thus distributed.<sup>11</sup>

The city of La Porte has shared in the munificence of the first of library founders. In the early spring of 1867<sup>12</sup> an in-

<sup>8</sup> The list of McClure's holdings makes interesting reading: 10,000 acres in New Harmony, over a million reals in Spanish securities, a house in Alacante, the convent of St. Gives, an estate of 10,000 acres in Valencia, a convent and estate at Grosmano, the estate of Carmen de Croix, 41,000 francs in French securities; notes, and mortgages on properties scattered from Big Lick Plantation in Virginia to parts of England, France, and Spain; also his vast collection of prints and minerals; and nearly 2,000 copper plates of engravings. *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>9</sup> G. B. Lockwood in *The New Harmony Movement* lists 160, but the list is defective as it fails to name the library in La Porte and hence may have missed other McClure libraries. *Ibid.*, 325-7.

<sup>10</sup> A brother and sister of McClure had assumed the estate, as they had been advised that the trust was void because it had been created for the benefit of corporate bodies not yet in existence. However, a young attorney of Posey county fought the case and secured the establishment of an administratorship with the result that in 1855 the distribution of the allotted sums began. *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>11</sup> Most of these libraries were foredoomed naturally to early extinction as there was no requirement of a competent custodian, suitable quarters, or endowment to replace worn-out volumes. Most of the books eventually found their way to attics or basements to be eaten by mice. Add to these defects the fact that the preliminary libraries required were usually composed of old books of all sorts hastily gathered together and of little practical value; add still further the fact that the Civil War soon took away many of the members of the associations, and you have a sufficient array of causes fatal to the plan. The one notable exception to the rule of early decay is that of the library at New Harmony itself, where the Rappists, after repurchasing their old church, gave the wing to be used for the Working Men's Institute Library, and where the large bequests of Dr. Murphy, a citizen, have saved the library. For a fuller account of this entire movement see Lockwood, *The New Harmony Movement*, 322-35.

<sup>12</sup> My two authorities differ as to this date. W. Niles, *Historical Sketch of*

terested agent came to La Porte, endeavoring to organize a McClure library. He finally applied to some of the railroad men<sup>13</sup> from whom he met with a sufficient measure of success to fulfill the conditions of the will. He delivered about three hundred dollars worth of books, charging the balance of the five hundred dollars as compensation for his services. Membership was confined at first to railroad men. After the library had been kept for some time in an office of the machine-shop of the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad Company, it was transferred to the carpenter-shop. The hope of a larger membership and of an increased circulation prompted the removal of the library up-town to a rented room in the second story of one of the business buildings, but interest lagged and the institute was soon in arrears for rent.<sup>14</sup>

The directors of the La Porte Reading-Room and Library Association promptly saw the opportunity of materially increasing the number of their volumes by entering into negotiations with the Working Men's Institute. The terms of the agreement which was soon reached conveyed to the new association the property of the old upon payment of the debts of the institute, which amounted to fifty-six dollars.<sup>15</sup> This accession gave the new enterprise a permanent footing at once, enabling it to start with seven hundred volumes, many of which were well-selected works on history, poetry, science, travel, and fiction, while there were also a surprising number of Congressional documents.<sup>16</sup> Although most of these vol-

*the La Porte Library and Natural History Association*, 3-4, says August 16, 1856; Jacob Zook in a manuscript letter preserved in the library says the spring of 1857.

<sup>13</sup> La Porte was at that time a section point on the Lake Shore and Michigan Central Railroad and filled with railroad employees.

<sup>14</sup> The few facts given above are based on the manuscript letter of Mr. Zook already alluded to and on the verbal authority of Mr. William Fargher who took care of the books and nailed them up upon their removal from the railroad office.

<sup>15</sup> The original contract is deposited in the La Porte Library, together with a printed copy of the constitution and by-laws of the McClure Working Men's Institute. In case of dissolution of the new organization, the property was to revert to the McClure Association. The grant to each of the members of the Working Men's Institute of membership in the new library association for one year enumerated by Packard (p. 107) must have been by mutual verbal understanding, as it does not appear in the manuscript contract.

<sup>16</sup> A catalog of the McClure library, printed in 1860, is still extant and shows a very well-selected list for the time of 520 volumes. In the field of history appear such classics as Macaulay's *History of England*, Gibbons's *Decline and*

umes of the old McClure library have been rebound, some still reveal on the inside cover the label of the Working Men's Institute and in some the original catalog number still appears. Fully nine-tenths of these books are still preserved on the shelves of this library, although not widely circulated, probably a larger proportion of a McClure library than could be found anywhere outside of New Harmony.

On May 11, 1863, the board of directors submitted their first report to the association, finding much cause for encouragement in the possession of seven hundred volumes and twenty-nine newspapers, magazines, and reviews and in the occupation of the up-stairs rooms to which the Institute had removed in the vain hope of a renaissance and which the new association had taken over.<sup>17</sup>

But this encouragement seems scarcely to have been justified, as there were long intervals between the meetings from the date until the close of the year 1864.<sup>18</sup> The old officers were discouraged, but determined not to stand in the way of others who might be able to give new vitality to the organization and so on December 6, 1864, the officers and board resigned in a body to allow of the election of new. With the new blood there is unmistakable indication of new vigor. The board immediately appointed a committee of one to "prepare the reading-room for occupancy to tomorrow."<sup>19</sup> This mandate of expedition would seem to have been measured up to by the one lone member, as the minutes record routine meetings at the society's room from that date on. The association also promptly rechristened itself The La Porte Library and Natural History Association. November 6, 1865, the first movement was made by the organization toward securing for it-

*Fall of the Roman Empire, Rollins's Ancient History, and Fox's Book of Martyrs; in the field of poetry, such writers as Burns, Spencer, Shakespeare, Shelley, Milton, Moore, Pope, and Byron; and in the field of science, Darwin's works. Sixteen volumes of Niles' Weekly Register and one hundred and forty volumes of Congressional documents of the 34th and 35th Congress constituted a truly imposing array for this small library.*

<sup>17</sup> The location of the library at this time rests on the authority of Mr. Niles.

<sup>18</sup> No meeting occurred from May 11 to October 26, 1863, on which latter date the minutes record only a very brief meeting; then again there is an absence of all interest until December 6, 1864. The journal in manuscript is deposited in the library.

<sup>19</sup> Packard, *A History of La Porte County*, 110-1.

self new quarters with the result that before the close of the month it was established in the post-office building. In January of 1868 a fire starting from the carelessness of the masons with their stove on the third floor of the post-office building resulted in damages to the property of the association in the room below to the extent of five hundred dollars. By that year the association had also outgrown the narrow confines of its original objects. It declared its purposes to be, in addition to the maintenance of a library:

to establish a system of instruction by lectures, to collect and preserve a museum of specimens in illustration of the natural sciences, and to furnish such other means of instruction and improvement as may be useful, practicable, and consistent with the above.<sup>20</sup>

The library made yet one more move before it came into permanent quarters of its own. When Dr. S. B. Collins erected his marble front building in 1871, he offered to the Library Association the free use of the five rooms of his third story for five years. The offer, accepted with alacrity and gratitude, provided spacious quarters for just about six months, for by July 1, 1872, Dr. Collins gave notice that he needed the rooms for his business, offering one hundred dollars a year toward the payment of rental elsewhere.<sup>21</sup>

This early period from 1864 to 1874 is, in some senses, the most interesting and most brilliant period of the history of the library. Life membership fees were fixed first at fifty dollars, which did not exempt holders from possible assessments of one dollar a year and later at one hundred dollars, which fee held out the lure of one certificate of stock in a non-dividend paying corporation; regular membership fees from five dollars to three per year; and the use of the library bestowed on all members of a family not in "independent businesses." Early in its history it was open from ten in the morning to noon and from seven to ten at night on two days per week, though the reading-room was open daily except Sun-

<sup>20</sup> Constitution, as amended August 4, 1868, Art. II, sec. 1. Here, as so often, it was the devotion of a few persons which saved a good cause from wreck. Dr. G. M. Dakin served as president from May 1, 1865, to 1897 with only brief intervals of relief.

<sup>21</sup> Minutes of the *Journal*, 49.

days from eight in the morning until noon, from one to six in the afternoon, and from seven until ten in the evening except during the winter months when it closed earlier. But by 1872 the board had reached such liberality as to open the library on Sunday afternoons, as an experiment.<sup>26</sup> The more conventional hours of nine in the morning to nine at night were still in the distant future of 1897. Non-subscribers were admitted to the reading-room on payment of five cents each time, providing always that "strangers temporarily stopping in the city" be shown favorable discrimination.

But that which sheds real lustre on the period is the means whereby the association was financed, for until 1882 it was without invested funds, dependent wholly on membership fees and the wits of its officers. A strawberry festival is recorded as having netted May 19, 1877, \$23.83; October 2, 1871, an art gallery exhibition and promenade social was determined upon, for which the Philharmonic Society and Mannerchor were to be solicited for music; June 3, 1873, a committee being created to sponsor an ice-cream festival; November 3, 1873, the public was invited to meet the board in order to arrange a masquerade ball, which left the members rejoicing with \$176 to add to their treasury. But these are the conventional small-town fêtes of the period. Where the association conferred a real benefit upon the community was in the distinguished lecturers which the board brought to the town in its annual lecture courses covering a period of twenty-five years. The list contains such speakers as Emerson, William Lloyd Garrison, Charles Sumner, Wendell Phillips, Bayard Taylor, Benjamin Taylor, Horace Greeley, P. V. Nasby, Susan B. Anthony, George Thompson, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Anna E. Dickinson, Clara Barton, and Mrs. Scott Siddons. The public could scarcely have complained of exploitation even in a good cause when course tickets of four lectures were offered at one dollar, single admissions thirty-five cents. Each of these years during this interval brought donations of books, which meant a steady, if not rapid, growth in the size of the

<sup>26</sup> This experiment was voted August 9, 1872, with the careful proviso that the librarian's salary should be increased from \$3 a week to \$4. The experiment ceased on October 6, 1873.



library, until by 1874, it numbered between two and three thousand volumes. Perhaps the fact that the rooms were crowded every night with readers explains the strange "calumny" which an early writer felt called open to repudiate that "we are a political institution."

The efforts to have the library in a permanent home constitute a dramatic chapter in its history from 1874 to 1876. First came the General Orr proposal. He offered to purchase from the Presbyterians their old building and grounds, together with the half-lot adjacent, if it could be purchased for not more than four thousand dollars, and to present it to the association on condition that the structure be preserved to promote the objects of the association, that that organization add a brick addition, and that six thousand dollars or more be raised by the citizens to aid in improving the grounds and in increasing the library and the specimens. Active measures were taken to raise the requisite sum by volunteer subscriptions, no small feat to accomplish in a town of small property-owners between February 21 and May 12. Just at this juncture an unfortunate disagreement between the donor and the board in regard to the arrangement and the repair of the building and in regard to the manner in which the fund should be expended led to a rupture and the reconveying of the property to General Orr.<sup>84</sup> But most of the subscribers were agreeable to allowing the money to form a fund for the purchase of a suitable site when opportunity presented.

Somewhat more than a year later came the second proposal, which seemed to promise a permanent abiding-place. In August, 1875, a prominent banker and property-owner of the city offered to sell the association a corner section for two thousand dollars with a donation of several hundred dollars in money and fifty thousand bricks for the building. But this proposal also came to shipwreck, as the board by November of that year had reached the wise conclusion of rejecting the

<sup>84</sup> A cut of General Orr's proposed building appears in an *Illustrated Historical Atlas of La Porte County*. The fantastic row of open-air arbors and reading-tables suggests rather Parisian cafés than sober library facilities. This episode left ill-feeling and years of indifference to the library, which it survived only by some fortunate bequests.

offer unless the conditions stipulated were withdrawn.<sup>35</sup> Again the lot was reconveyed and the money refunded to the association.

Success came at last through independent measures. May 1, 1876, the library board bought of the heirs of N. T. Place a lot centrally located for twelve hundred dollars, the heirs making a small donation to the association. By 1876 a simple but suitable two-story brick structure had been erected but with the almost inevitable concomitant of a debt of a thousand dollars fastened upon it.

The years from 1877 to 1897 mark another well-defined period during which the library lived in its own quarters as a private institution. With a debt of twelve hundred dollars on its hands the association was eager to pass on its responsibilities. Early in 1878 a new and especially-elected board leased the library property to the Young Men's Association, a business corporation, at a nominal rental of one dollar, the debt to be assumed by the latter association. But two years later the Library association found itself once more saddled with its old burden, as the Young Men's association canceled the lease. Accordingly, a group of a dozen of the leading citizens came to the rescue with a loan of a hundred dollars each for five years without interest.

By August, 1880, the board found itself without funds for current expenses and obliged to dismiss the librarian, but reached a strange solution by turning the library over to J. B. Holmes, who in return for the membership fees was to conduct the library, ostensibly for the benefit of the members, but practically for the benefit of the students of his business college. Oddly enough, the arrangement proved mutually satisfactory and was renewed yearly until his death, late in 1888, whereupon a similar arrangement was entered into with his widow and successively with several other people until 1897.

Though the interval from 1886 to 1896 marks a decline of interest in the association,<sup>40</sup> it brought relief from financial

<sup>35</sup> The deed stipulated that a two-story building be erected with a storeroom below, whereas at this time the board inclined to a one-story structure.

<sup>40</sup> The minutes record no meeting from May 1, 1886, to June 7, 1894, and again no meeting until January 26, 1896. The record of June 7, 1894, shows several women sitting on the board.

stringency through several fortunate bequests. The will of Aurora Case had in 1872 made the library heir to a farm of two hundred and seventy acres, subject to a life estate in his son, but it was only upon the death of the latter in 1882 that it became available. After the debts of the association were paid, it was possible to set aside \$4,300 as a permanent fund, the interest of which was devoted to the purchase of books. Within about a decade the association received a second bequest from the estate of Mrs. Nancy Treat, one thousand dollars in cash and a lot adjacent to the library valued at \$4,000.

But now appeared a desire to make the library a benefaction to the whole community—a public library. It was felt that the school children and the very element which most needed a library were deprived of its benefits, whereas it was the earnest desire of the members to make the books serve their widest field of usefulness.<sup>42</sup> Among the several state laws under which the change could be effected, it was held wise to select the law of 1881, which authorized the school board in cities of ten thousand inhabitants to establish a free public library in connection with the common schools and to levy a tax of one-third of a mill on each dollar of taxable property.<sup>43</sup> After several meetings of the association, to one of which prominent citizens were invited, and after long negotiations with the school board, it was voted on June 3, 1896, to convey all the property of the association to the city of La Porte after the building should have been remodeled and enlarged with the funds lying unused in the treasury of the association. A reading-room and children's room, added as wings to each side of the original building, transformed it into a more attractive as well as more commodious structure.

The board of education assumed control on April 23, 1897, with a small debt for unfinished work, which the city had agreed to assume provided that no tax were to be levied the

<sup>42</sup> To the librarian at the time, Mrs. Jennie Jessup, must go a goodly measure of credit for this important step.

<sup>43</sup> *Laws of Indiana*, 1881, chap. 27, Secs. 1-2. In 1899 the law authorized the board to levy one mill per dollar, but owing to local conditions, it was inadvisable to ask for more than one-half that amount. *La Porte Argus*, Feb. 14, 1900.

first year. This left the library without funds for books or rebinding. By the middle of the year 1899, the board was forced to dispense with the assistant librarian for six months and to close the library mornings. And during this period it was kept open only through the generosity of the members of the school board who turned over their salaries for its running expenses.

The only events which need to be recorded between 1897 and 1920 the next landmark in this library's history, are the erection of the La Porte public library into a government depository,<sup>44</sup> the acquisition of the library of Centre township, from which the librarian salvaged about three hundred volumes,<sup>45</sup> frequent contributions to the growing museums, and the gift of a complete file of the volumes of the *La Porte Herald*, one of the two city papers, extending over a period of sixty-five years.<sup>46</sup>

A third great landmark in the history of this library came, however, in 1920, an event which linked this little library to the last great benefactor of book-lovers and housed the gift of the first of library creators in one of the last gifts of the great giver of library buildings. Because of the crowded condition of the library,<sup>47</sup> which prevented the circulation of

<sup>44</sup>An almost complete set of government documents, dating from the beginning was sent from Washington and the library placed on the mailing list for future publications of the government. Unfortunately, the short-sightedness of the school board has recently forced the librarian to return most of these documents—to make room for more useful volumes! It is only to be hoped that some more appreciative library has become the new depository.

<sup>45</sup>Under an early Indiana law of 1832, certain lots in each township were set apart to be held by township trustees for libraries. For over twenty years the books which had been purchased for Centre township were stored in the Odd Fellows building, until in 1909 a newly-elected trustee in removing township effects to his office turned over the cases of books to the city librarian.

<sup>46</sup>The set includes a few volumes of the paper when it was known as the *Weekly Union*, 1856-65. From 1867-9 it was known as the *Union Herald*; in 1880 it joined with the *Chronicle*, a competitor, as the *Herald Chronicle*, of which there are only incomplete files. In 1889 it became the *Herald*, which name it has since retained unchanged. When, as it is to be hoped, the volumes of the *La Porte Argus*, now in the attic of the widow of a former editor of the only other newspaper in the city, are deposited in the library, the newspaper material on the history of the city and the county will have been preserved and made accessible for future historians. The *Argus* was established April 15, 1869. For convenience this fact is recorded here though the gift was made in 1922.

<sup>47</sup>The circulation was in 1915 51,638, an increase of one hundred per cent in five years. Funds now permitted the purchase of new books every month, but even the creation of temporary shelves did not meet the need. *La Porte Herald*, April 6, 1916.

hundreds of books, the superintendent of the public schools suggested that effort be made to secure a Carnegie library. An appropriation of \$27,500 was obtained to which the city was allowed to add \$10,000, and after tedious delays, due to the war and consequent building conditions, the new structure was erected, scarcely half a square from the old, and opened on November 6, 1920.

But interesting as is the library itself, it is its museum which probably entitles the library to a unique place among small town libraries in the central west. It was started, as has already been suggested, in 1868, only a few years after the library movement was launched, with a cabinet and collection of minerals, ores, fossils, and shells under the inspiration of Dr. Higday, one of the directors, who was particularly interested in developing this department. At one time he fathered an excursion to the Indian mounds near the Kankakee river, where he unearthed for the association a large number of flint and copper implements, arrow-heads, pottery, and bones.<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, Dr. Higday's intention to label and catalog these early specimens was not carried out because of his death in 1876, and hence the value of the collection has been to a certain extent lost. From one reason or another, various objects have found a depository in the library until it now houses a heterogeneous collection of stuffed birds and animals,<sup>49</sup> colonial relics, pictures of local interest but of no intrinsic value, reminders of pioneer days, and numerous objects of historical association. But that which makes the collection of real worth to La Porte is not the spinning wheels, exactly like hundreds of others in a more perfect state of preservation, not the baby-wrap made in 1839, not fans borne at the courts of Europe, nor even dolls dressed in Washington in the style of 1848 and sent overland in a pack on a man's back, as the label so carefully informs us, but the articles associated with the local history of the city. That which makes the past real to the people of that community are a

<sup>48</sup> Some of the specimens from this excursion were given to the Chicago historical society before which Dr. Higday read a paper descriptive of this expedition.

<sup>49</sup> A large and beautiful elk's head, a perfectly stuffed buffalo head, a pair of reindeer antlers could not be surpassed in the largest museum.

brick from the first saw-mill erected in the country, the surveyor's chain used in making the first survey of La Porte county, a book with wooden covers actually used in the first Sunday school of a village in the county, objects which recall the pioneer hardships of 1833 to 1850,<sup>50</sup> articles reminiscent of the community's connection with the Civil war, objects of local interest and pride—but all associated with names well-known in the county.

One collection will undoubtedly confer on the museum real distinction, as it ranks with the two or three finest collections of its kind in the United States. W. A. Jones, a retired iron-worker of Chicago, left his collection of arms, numbering over nine hundred pieces, when he died in June, 1921, to the city on condition that provision for its proper housing in the Carnegie library or in an addition thereto be made within a year, in default of which the collection was to go to the Field Museum in Chicago. Mr. Jones had traveled widely and had spent more than a quarter of a century in collecting these pieces, which represent firearms of all ages, among them some very rare and valuable antiques. The monetary value has been roughly estimated at \$90,000,<sup>51</sup> and the educational value to the student has been greatly enhanced by a card catalog pre-

<sup>50</sup> A wooden cradle made in 1841 enlists special interest because one of the six children rocked in it still lives in the city. A hickory flail suggests the far cry from our motor-driven separators. A pair of saddle bags recalls the sad fate of young Copelin who had returned to Virginia to pay for the new land which he was about to purchase in La Porte county. His too free tongue at the inns on his road back led to his being followed and murdered only one mile from his brother's home near La Porte. The hanging of the murderer, we are reminded, was the first to occur in the county. A local call to enroll in the Twenty-first Battery over the signature of a Captain Andrew who still lives in the city is dated Sept. 8, 1862; caps and arms worn by La Porte men in the Civil war are displayed; and a saddle used by one of the residents on his entire march with Sherman from Atlanta to the sea makes history live. A fireman's silver water pitcher never fails to awaken the pride of the older men in their local volunteer fire department. During the decade 1870 to 1880 tournaments and contests between hose companies were popular. La Porte's *Old Wide Awakes* used to participate in these contests with great success. In 1875 the company was presented by its honorary members, some of the leading citizens of the city, with a silver water pitcher devised in a form to suggest the company, as the lid is surmounted with a fireman's helmet, and the front of the pitcher bears a shield, and an engraved hose-cart. The monograms W. A. H. (Wide Awake Hose Company) appear on each gold-lined goblet. After being tossed around for years with no appreciation the pitcher, reminiscent of a certain phase of development of the city, was suitably brought to the library.

<sup>51</sup> Although the price of each piece is recorded in the card catalog, it is in cipher.

pared by the collector himself, which reflects the great pride and enthusiasm of the collector.<sup>54</sup>

Here are to be found Chinese ceremonial halberds once used in Buddhist temples, a Japanese war scythe, fourteen and a half feet long, an elephant spear, a long narrow-bladed Congo spear, a Ceylonese scimitar; a Spanish bull-fighter's sword; and old flint-lock rifles. Historical interest attaches to some of the pieces, such as a revolutionary musket of the Brown Bess type; a muskatoon used in cavalry service in the Civil war; a rifle said to have been made for Theodore Roosevelt and stolen by one of his guides who sold it to an old trapper; a Bullard repeater used by surveyors for both the Northern Pacific and Great Northern railroads; a rifle said to have belonged to a Modoc chief; a Royal Mail Coach pistol, said to have been used in colonial days between New York and Philadelphia;<sup>55</sup> a navy revolver used by a marine on the Confederate steamship, Florida;<sup>56</sup> and a mitrailleuse used in the Franco-Prussian war.

The evolution of many of our fire-arms may be traced by a study of this collection. For instance, the Henry rifle, from which the Winchester evolved, is represented;<sup>57</sup> the Porter revolving rifle; the Sharps Patented sporting rifle of the days before the machine-made rifle; the Hallbreech-loading gun, the first on the market; Ruthe's trap pistol of 1857—this model rare because of the presence of a handle; Colt's house pistol, the first pistol made with a cylinder of four chambers;<sup>58</sup> a Japanese match-lock pistol which antedates the first flint-lock; a pair of famous Wilkes duelling pistols; a Trantor used

<sup>54</sup> The catalog records only six hundred and nine pieces and should be completed.

<sup>55</sup> When the British took New York in 1776, they confiscated all the arms they could take, and those not suitable for the army were sent back to England to be sold at auction. The set in this collection, purchased by a clergyman, was preserved in his family until the death of the last descendant only recently. The arm can be identified as of colonial manufacture, as it lacks the broad narrow marks of the English makes.

<sup>56</sup> The initials carved on the handle, J. S., C. S. A., S. S. Florida and a flag justify this conclusion.

<sup>57</sup> This was the first of the under-loading lever type, also the first with the full-length loading magazine. Thousands were used in the Civil war, the demand exceeding the supply. A regiment armed with them was considered fortunate.

<sup>58</sup> Jones's own comment on the pair which he secured, which are engraved in relief, inlaid with gold, stocks inlaid with silver with Turkish characters on the stocks is well merited.

in the Civil war; a Colt army revolver made for service in the Philippines with extra large trigger guard to be used with gloves because of the thorns; and a Wheellock, a type used in the seventeenth century and so-called because the lock must be wound with a key before firing, all are to be found here.

Many are the pieces which the owner regarded as "one of the rarest pieces in my collection": a revolving rifle with a brass-nickled frame inlaid with fancy brass figures; a rare old coach blunderbuss, the lock carved with Arabic characters; a Swiss hand-carved blunderbuss, clearly made in Europe, doubly rare because of the oval muzzle, a piece only duplicated in Sawyer's collection in the Boston museum; an East India match-lock with elaborate carving on the barrel, said to have belonged to a prince, who paid a fabulous sum for it; an old-time Turkish blunderbuss; a three-barreled percussion shotgun; a single-shot, breech-loading, hammerless rifle; the only one Jones ever knew; pistols inlaid with ivory, with mother-of-pearl, with gold or with silver; a magazine pistol fed by gravity; a four-barrel flint-lock, picked up in the Thieves Market of Mexico City; a pepper-box with a barrel eleven inches long in one piece, revolving only by hand; and a Japanese percussion pistol, a pretty conceit as it is a combination of pistol and writing outfit.<sup>58</sup>

The present librarian dreams of two more changes to round out a long period of service extending over twenty-three years. She desires to see the present incorporation under the school board forsaken for the wider field of usefulness which the library may serve by incorporation under the county library law of 1917.<sup>60</sup> Already the library has a number of subscription members outside the city, practically all the county teachers paying the fee exacted of all except residents of the city of La Porte. This progressive step would enable this library to help solve the rural library problem and help strengthen one of the weakest spots in the organization of the smaller schools of the state of Indiana—lack of library facilities. Township libraries have proved uneconomical and

<sup>58</sup> The writing-brush is carried in the barrel of the pistol, the ink-well in the rear of the hammer with a hinged cover.

<sup>60</sup> Thirteen counties in Indiana have availed themselves of this plan.



inefficient, as certain general books are duplicated, and rarer books cannot be indulged in because of the expense, while the overhead expense of underpaid, underworked librarians is a constant, unnecessary drain. The county library, on the other hand, means better service, economy in methods of purchase and supervision; and a common fund for expensive and technical books. The cost spread over a whole county is nominal.<sup>61</sup>

The second dream is an annex beside the main library building with a curator to arrange, classify, and label the large, valuable, but now badly-classified collections in the museum and thus enlist the interest and deepen the pride of each citizen in his local history.

<sup>61</sup> See the article by W. J. Hamilton in the *La Porte Argus* Jan. 25, 1921.