

Chapter 6

Libraries

under

the law

for

townships

Table 6

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Town	Population at founding	County seal	County	Location on map	City	Township	Founded by tax	Founded by gift	Date of founding	Volumes now	Circulation 1897-98	Remarks
Batavia	in 1880 3500	No	Kane	H-2		Yes	Yes	1882	5500	22000		Also considered in Chap. 3
Cambridge	in 1880 1203	Yes	Henry	D-3		Yes	Yes	1878	4900	about 7500		" 1
Dundee	in 1880 1434	No	Kane	H-1		Yes	Yes	1879	1700	4800		" 2
Geneseo	in 1880 3522	No	Henry	D-3		Yes	Yes	1882-6	6500	No record is kept.		" 3
Geneva	in 1890 1692	Yes	Kane	H-2		Yes	Yes	1895	1245	11327		" 2
Kewanee	in 1870 2000	No	Henry	E-3		Yes	Yes	1875	8300	in 1896, 20142		" 2
Monticello	in 1890 1643	Yes	Piatt	G-5		Yes	Yes	1897	3000	10599		" 2
Polo	in 1890 1728	No	Ogle	E-2		Yes	Yes	1890	2264	5952		" 2
Rochelle	in 1890 1789	No	Ogle	F-2		Yes	Yes	1891	1906	in 1896, 46000		" 2
Rockton	in 1890 892	No	Winnebago	F-1		Yes	Yes	1888	3300	in 1896, 7500		" 1
Warren	in 1880 1697	No	Jo Daviess	D-1		Yes	Yes	1886	3000	6000		" 2

Batavia

Public Library

The library of Batavia , Kane county, was begun by gifts, to supply the public demand for books; in 1882 the township was prevailed upon to accept the library as a gift from those interested and agree to support it as a free, public library.

The circulation is now 22000 from 5450 volumes; the tax received at first one mill, now two, gives an income of about \$1500 yearly.

There have been no special gifts; the library has been advertised in the local papers, and by reading room notices.

In 1880, the township had a population of 3318, the town, 2634; in 1890 the township had 4292, the town, 3543.

The town , seven miles north of Aurora, has a foundry and a paper-mill. There are three clubs which find the library of use in their work.

No opinion on the law regarding the establishment of libraries was given, so that they seem satisfied; the library is much used.

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Cambridge

Public Library

The library of Cambridge, county seat of Henry county, is one of the few township libraries in county seats. It was started in 1878 by subscription, then came under the control of the village, and is at present supported by the township. The date of the transfers has not been learned.

The library, which is only open one day in the week, issued about 7500 volumes for home use last year; there are 4900 volumes in the library. The income from the tax is from \$500 to \$500 a year. There have been no large gifts.

The population of the township in 1880, was 2302, in 1890, 1886; the population of the town shows a similar decrease of 400 in the same time. The town has no special industry except a flour-mill.

The library appears to be doing good service with small means. The township law is not mentioned.

Dundee

Public Library

The library of Dundee, Kane county, founded in 1879 by Dr. E. F. Cleveland, is now the property of the township. The library circulated 4800 volumes last year; it contains only 1700 volumes.

The tax amounts to \$360 a year. The township which had a population of 2799 in 1880, had in 1890, almost 4000, while the town had 3023 , a gain of 600 in ten years. The town has a creamery, a cheese-factory, and brick-works.

The community is not wealthy. Farmers, working-men , and school-children are the chief patrons of the library. The people of the township outside the town use the library to quite an extent.

The tax does not seem to be as high as it might; the income should be larger to supply the needs of the readers. No opinion is given on the law.

Geneseo

Public Library

The library in Geneseo, Henry county, like that at Cambridge has passed through three stages in its development; first a shareholders' library, between 1882 and 1886, it became a city library, and later was transferred to the township. The first change was made to "extend the influence of the library", the second "to increase its usefulness and revenue". There are now 6500 volumes in the library; no record of circulation is kept.

The shareholders petitioned the city to take the library and the Library Board accomplished the transfer to the township.

The annual income of the library is \$1500; the librarian has \$420 a year. The library was given \$10000 in 1898 for a new building, and into this the library moved this year.

In 1880, the township had a population of 4871, in 1890, 4061 while the town showed a like decrease of about 400, having in 1890 only 3182. Now there are said to be but few families in the township outside the city limits. Coal is mined, and farming tools are made in the town.

The law is satisfactory as it stands.

Geneva

Public Library

The library of Geneva, Kane county, due to a suggestion made by the mayor to the Geneva Improvement Association, was begun in 1894-95 by vote of the township. The election was carried largely by the zealous efforts of the Association, which also lent the library \$350 as a permanent investment to help out the first year, and drafted a letter to tax-payers asking for funds to support the library till the tax should be available. Library lectures were given as a means of educating the people to need the library.

There are in the library 1237 volumes and 11327 volumes were issued for home use last year. The income from the tax is \$1100 a year . A few books have been given to the library.

The township had a population of 2030 in 1890 ; that of the town was 1842, an increase of about 400 in each since 1880. There are six factories, glucose-works, a creamery , and a foundry in the town; the community is not wealthy.

"The library is on the whole, very popular and growing more so", the librarian says. Children, specially those whose parents are of foreign birth, form a large proportion of the readers.

No opinion is given of the law . It seems to work well here.

Kewanee

Public Library

The library of Kewanee, Henry county, was founded in 1875, by vote of the township; it was preceded by small subscription library. The project was thoroughly talked up before the election, so that all knew about it. The librarian says "We kept it continually before the voters". The only gifts received have been a few books.

The circulation is over 20000, for the 8000 volumes in the library . The tax yields \$1800 a year now.

The township had in 1880 a population of 4207, the town 2704, while in 1890 the township had 5988, and the town 4569. The community is wealthy and growing. Coal is mined , and there are boiler and tube factories.

The library has always been well advertised;"the country people use it freely and are pleased with it". The city limits now include about five-sevenths of the population of the township, while in 1880 two-fifths lived outside the limits.

The present law is satisfactory as far as it goes; the librarian says, " We would like a law whereby we could assess and collect a two mill tax for a proper library building."

Monticello

Public Library

The library of Monticello, county seat of Piatt county, is the gift of Mrs. S. W. Allerton, being the visible expression of the interest felt by the Allerton family in the community where their first land interests were. In 1897 Mrs. Allerton offered the township the books, furniture, and fixtures for a library, with a fund for the purchase of more books, if the township would provide a building, and pay the running expenses, as librarian's salary, heat, light, and janitor service. The offer was accepted almost at once, and the township makes an estimate of the probable expense for the year, and appropriates money for the purpose; it is hoped that the two mill tax can be levied by vote of the township, to provide a regular income. The library has received a few smaller gifts.

The circulation, 10544 volumes is excellent for the first year of a library having only 3000 volumes.

The township had in 1890, a population of 2832, and the town, 1643. There are in the town five factories, a foundry, and a flour-mill: it seems to be prosperous.

The problem of the law has not come up in the history of the library yet. The librarian says, "We try to carry out as far as possible, approved methods for creating greater interest in the library." Every one seems to be satisfied.

Polo

Buffalo Free Public Library

At Polo, Ogle county, the library was begun as a stockholders' library in 1871; a lot was bought, and a building fitted up; but the enthusiasm died out, and in 1889 the library was almost dead. The next year some of the stockholders petitioned the township authorities to make it public, on the understanding that the property of the old organization should be given to the new library. The proposition was approved and the library became the property of the township; the tax of one mill amounts to \$500 to \$650 a year. Some money has been raised by entertainments. A gift of \$500 with its interest is set apart with some smaller sums, as a fund for a new building. There are 2264 volumes and 5952 were issued for home use in 1898.

Buffalo township had, in 1890, a population of 2653, while that of the town Polo, alone, was 1728; the town ships live stock to Chicago, and farm tools are manufactured.

As regards the township law, Mr. R. D. Woolsey, one of the trustees writes as follows:

'Is the present township law satisfactory?' This is a very difficult question to answer, and of course depends altogether on the ideas of the individual giving the answer. So far we have found no difficulty. In fact I will say we have paid very little attention to it. There is not much of it. This is the very reason why as an individual I think

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good deal of it; it makes it less difficult to keep in line with its work. Chapter 8 of the Statutes is very short and mostly relates to larger cities. But in Article 10, townships are given certain powers and under this we act and find no trouble. We have ample power and as long as things move harmoniously all is well. The fact is, we have had very little cause to refer to the law; hence, I am inclined to say, Let it alone.

As to the cause of there being so few in the State, I would suppose it results from the fact that public opinion is not sufficiently developed to demand more. Here it seems to me is the necessity of the times.

Our American people are perhaps too busy as a general rule to do much in this direction, but they are mostly right if brought to a realizing sense of what is needed. A few energetic men and women pulling together would build a library in any town. Why do they not do it? Here is in my opinion, the secret of progress."

The library appears to be thriving and duly appreciated.

Rochelle

Flagg township Public Library

The township library in Rochelle, Ogle county, was founded in 1891; it has received no important gifts.

The library in 1896 contained 1906 volumes and the circulation is given in the Report for that year as 4600 volumes. No special reason appears for the large circulation, so far as can be learned; the figures may include reading room circulation as well as the books issued for home use. The income of the library for the same time was \$1300.

In 1890, the population of the town was 1789, that of the township, 2495. The town, the center for a stock-raising and agricultural region, has two foundries and a flour-mill.

The reports which have been obtained indicate that the library is appreciated.

No direct report could be had, so that no opinion of the law was obtained.

Rockton

Talcott Free Library

In 1888, Mr. Wait Talcott and his son W. A. Talcott offered to give to the township of Rockton, Winnebago county, a building suitably arranged for library purposes and a lot, if the people would agree to found and maintain the library. The offer was accepted. The tax furnishes an income of \$700 a year. There have been no other gifts.

The library contained 3300 volumes last year, and in 1896 7800 volumes were issued for home use.

The population of the township in 1890 was 1492, that of the town 892. There are paper and flour-mills, and a foundry in the town, which is also named Rockton.

The library is fairly well patronized and seems to be appreciated; the tax is reasonably liberal for so small a community.

No opinion was expressed concerning the law; probably they have had little need to consider it.

Warren

Free Public Library

The library in Warren, Jo Daviess county, was founded primarily to aid the students of the Warren Academy, in 1885; it is open now to the public and is supported by the township in part. The Academy furnishes a room and a librarian, but no statement could be found concerning the source of the income of \$230 a year.

The library contains 3000 volumes and the circulation last year was 6000 volumes.

In 1890 the population of the town was 1172; that of the whole township was 1587. The town has a flour-mill and foundry; farming and stock-raising are the industries of the township.

The present arrangement appears to give satisfaction. No statement was made regarding the law. From the reports it seems likely that the funds are obtained by an appropriation from the township authorities for the purpose.

Summary

The relatively small number of libraries organized by townships may be ascribed to any one, or better, all of these causes; absorption in personal affairs; the hostile attitude apt to ensue when the extra tax on people outside the city limits is proposed for some object centralized at a point inside; the universally bad roads which make easy communication and so the prompt return of books, a difficult matter at the seasons when the country people have time to read; or, indifference on the part of the town to the mutual benefit to be gained.

At any rate, of the sixty which have been studied and which are fairly representative, eleven are township libraries; that at Lombard, in Chapter 1, should possibly be added, as their library seems to be open to all, irrespective of place of abode.

These eleven libraries are distributed in the towns of the different sizes as follows:

Chapter 1, Cambridge, and Rockton;

" 2, Dundee, Geneva, Kewanee, Monticello, Polo, Rochelle and Warren;

" 3, Batavia, and Geneseo.

Those founded by individuals, which the people have had only to accept and, in part or wholly maintain, are the libraries in Dundee, Monticello, and Rockton, and in all the public has taken good care of the gift and profited by it. That at Warren was founded by individuals for the school, but is answering the purpose of a free public library as well as if that had been the original plan. In Geneva and Rochelle the public libraries were not

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preceded by other libraries of any sort , but were the almost spontaneous result. of the awakening of the public conscience.

The other five, in Batavia, Cambridge, Geneseo, Kewanee, and Polo, were the outcome of agitation which took the form of library associations and companies, of various ages; the oldest, or the oldest whose age is known is that at Polo , which after a temporary prosperity, languished , till after fifteen years, the people were roused to a sense of what the library should be.

In Cambridge and Geneseo the libraries passed through three stages of existence ,shareholders , village and city respectively, then became township institutions; in each case the original proprietors surrendered their ownership whenever the people were willing and ready for the change.

Only two of these libraries are in county seats, Cambridge, and Monticello; the latter as a gift can not be considered representative. A majority, seven , were begun in towns having 1000 to 2500 people. All but Monticello are in the northern one-fourth of the State;three are in Henry,three in Kane , two in Ogle, and one each in Jo Daviess and Winnebago counties.

According to use, Rochelle,if we concede the figures reported in 1896 , is far in advance of the rest; the issuance of twenty-four times the number of volumes in the library, even if it includes reading room use , is not usual. Geneseo issues nine, Batavia four, Monticello, three, and Dundee a trifle less than

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three times the number of volumes contained in their respective libraries. The rate in Kewanee, Polo, Rockton, and Warren varies from twice to two and four-fifths times the number of volumes; Cambridge gives out a little over one and one-half times its whole number, while Geneseo, with 6500 volumes, keeps no record of circulation.

The age of the libraries appears to have very little influence, as Geneva, next to the youngest has a much higher rate than Monticello, the most recent, which in its turn, does but a trifle better than that in Dundee, founded in 1879 instead of 1897.

The manner of founding does not matter if the people realize the value of the library when it is in their possession. This is determined by the character and habits of thought of the community, aided by the methods used in administering the affairs of the library.

The libraries in townships do not have, so far as I can discover, a higher rate of circulation as a rule, than libraries of equal size in towns of the same population; the increased number of possible users does not insure a greater number of actual readers, in the majority of cases. There may be exceptions, when the towns differ materially in make-up, or an unusually active Board and librarian take advantage of unusual conditions. The chief argument for libraries under township organization is the field for increased usefulness by the added income.