

**INDIANA WORLD'S FAIR  
MONOGRAPHS. THE  
LIBRARIES OF INDIANA**

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Indiana World's Fair Monographs. The Libraries of Indiana by J. P. Dunn

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**J. P. DUNN**

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*auth.*  
J. P. DUNN.

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INDIANAPOLIS:  
WM. S. SURFORD, LITHOGRAPHER, PRINTER AND BINDER.  
1893.

## THE LIBRARIES OF INDIANA.

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The study of library development in Indiana presents some interesting results as to what has been, what is, and what might have been. Indiana was ushered into existence in humble circumstances. Although when the nineteenth century opened there had been white settlers within her borders for three-quarters of a century, there had been but three or four small settlements, and the inhabitants of these had neither opportunity nor taste for the study of books. They were chiefly Canadian peasants of the more adventurous class, small farmers, hunters, Indian traders and a sprinkling of soldiers. There was not even a school among them until one was established at Vincennes in the last decade of the eighteenth century, by the Abbé Rivet, who is described as "a polite, well-educated and liberal-minded missionary, banished hither by the French revolution." There were certainly very few books of any kind within our boundaries in this first period of our history.

There was no material influx of American settlers until after General Wayne had thoroughly defeated the Indians, and, in August, 1795, secured a treaty with them, ceding the lands then most accessible and desirable for settlement. Then began the change which ultimately made the Indiana of to day, but it was a slow process. There was an abundance of good land all through the eastern half of the Mississippi Valley, and it could be had on most favorable terms in many places that afforded more conveniences and better protection from Indians than our territory could then offer. In 1800 the civilized population within the present boundaries of the State did not exceed 2,500, and in 1816, when the State government was adopted, it had reached a total of 63,897, scattered through thirteen counties. The Americans who came to find homes in our wilderness were more fairly educated than the old French

settlers. Volney declares that nine-tenths of them could read and write, and though this estimate is bold, it is probably not far from the truth. They were a very creditable class of people, who had come here for the purpose of building themselves homes by hard work and self-denial. They cleared the forests and made the farms. Isolated, almost without recreation, shut off from the advantages of civilized life, contending against hardships of nature that can hardly be understood now, they labored on patiently and laid the foundations for the future. They were ambitious for the future too. Schools followed wherever the ax and the plough led, and in the strong and early movement for higher education we find conclusive evidence that they knew they were building a State.

The necessary result of the existing conditions was that Indiana, in the early years of the American settlement, was most thoroughly an agricultural State. In 1840, of the 174,678 persons reported as engaged in occupations, 148,806 were in agriculture, and of the total population of 685,860, not less than 600,000 were supported by agriculture. From that time the development of urban life was more rapid, and in 1850 only 163,249 were engaged in agriculture out of a total of 248,696 in all pursuits. The proportion in agriculture has steadily diminished since, until, in 1880, it had reached 331,240, out of a total of 635,080. The scattered condition of an agricultural community is not favorable to the development of libraries, especially in new settlements, and consequently we look for the beginning of activity in the period of urban growth. Yet there was a strong interest in libraries in the earlier years, a vivid appreciation of their usefulness, and energetic provision for their foundation and maintenance. Indeed, one of these provisions led to a great deal of trouble and shame to the State later on. On November 29, 1806, an act was passed by the territorial legislature incorporating Vincennes University, and "for the support of the aforesaid institution, and for the purpose of procuring a library and the necessary philosophical and experimental apparatus," the trustees were authorized to establish a lottery, and to raise thereby not to exceed \$20,000. There seems to have been some difficulty in raising this sum, or at least in getting it into the possession of the university, for the lottery was continued until it was claimed to be a "vested right," and the State was not finally

rid of it until, in 1883, the national Supreme Court decided that there could be no vested right in a lottery, and so relieved us of our incubus. Vincennes University now has a library of 4,500 volumes, and is probably as well supplied with educational apparatus as other colleges in the State.

But this was not a public library. The first of that class was established at Vincennes in 1807. Vincennes was then the capital of the Territory, and the residence of the wealthiest and most influential men. The old records of the institution, which are preserved in Vincennes University, show that most of these were subscribers to the library, together with several of the more prominent men from other parts of the Territory. The librarian was Peter Jones, then Auditor of the Territory, a trustee of the University, and further known to fame as the keeper of a very excellent inn. The enterprise was successful, though to the present generation it might seem to have moved slowly. In March, 1808, little more than a year after starting, it advertised the possession of 210 works, many of which were in several volumes. They were well selected, and formed, for that time, quite a treasury of literature for a frontier town. This library was successfully maintained through the hard years of our territorial existence, and was supplemented by other aids to mental culture, such as the "Vincennes Society for the Encouragement of Agriculture and the Useful Arts," established in 1810, and Mr. Elihu Stout's reading room established in 1814, to supply subscribers with "periodicals, pamphlets, price currents and newspapers." Vincennes was the center of intellectual activity during the territorial period, and though the Knox County delegates were with the minority, from a political standpoint, in the Constitutional Convention of 1816, they exercised large influence on the formation of the Constitution. The other members also appreciated the value of public libraries, and no difficulty was found in placing in the Constitution a provision that, when a new county should be created, the General Assembly "shall cause at least ten per cent. to be reserved out of the proceeds of the sale of town lots in the seat of justice of such county for the use of a public library for such county; and, at at the same session, they shall incorporate a library company under such rules and regulations as will best secure its permanence and extend its benefits."



This was carried into effect by a general law for the establishment of county libraries in 1818, and there had been adopted, in 1816, a very good law for the incorporation of public libraries in general. The two, with various amendments added in later years, covered the public library system of the State until after the adoption of the Constitution of 1851. The county libraries thus established furnished the chief part of the books to which the Indiana public had access during the remainder of the first half of the present century.

Second in importance only to the county library law in Indiana's acquisition of books during this period was the Sunday-School movement, and there are few things that give a better idea of the people and their condition than an investigation of this work. Although Robert Raikes began his labors in 1781, it was not till many years later that the Sunday-School library became an important element in it. In fact, there was no special publication of the volumes used for "reward books" until, in 1810, the Religious Tract Society of London began publishing books designed for that purpose. The demand for them rapidly increased, other houses began publishing them, and a few years later the establishment of a circulating library in the school became a special feature of the work. It was not until this stage had been reached that Sunday School extension was brought generally and prominently before the American people. The period of general activity began in 1824 with the organization of the American Sunday-School Union, which, like several sectarian unions organized soon after, had for its two principal objects the publication of Sunday-School literature, and the founding of Sunday-Schools on the frontier and in destitute parts of the country. The movement spread rapidly. On August 3, 1827, the Indiana Sabbath-School Union, which had been organized some months earlier, held its first annual meeting at Indianapolis. At that time there were estimated to be 2,000 children in the State who attended Sunday-Schools, while the greater part of the remaining 48,000 were "growing up in great ignorance and thus preparing for great wickedness." The purpose of Sunday-Schools, aside from their religious influence, was declared by this Union to be "paving the way for common schools, and of serving as a substitute till they are generally formed." That this work was systematically undertaken may be seen from the following direction of the Union :

CLASSIFICATION: Let the school be divided into four classes; the first, those who study the scriptures; the second, those who memorize hymns and catechisms; the third, those who spell in two or more syllables; and the fourth, those who are learning the alphabet and monosyllables: and let each class be divided into as many sections as necessary, so that each section shall consist of from six to twelve scholars, the classification to be made at the commencement of every quarter, and the scholars classed according to what they have learned the preceding quarter.

In an "Address to the Public," issued by this convention, it is stated that the State Union expected to aid the Sunday-School work in several specified ways, "and finally, by establishing depositories at several eligible points, for supplying the surrounding region with books *at reduced prices*; of which we are happy to state that the sites of three have already been determined upon, viz.: Indianapolis, Madison and New Albany, where we presume ample supplies already have been, or will soon be, received from the general depository of the American Sunday-School Union."

The reports of the officers, however, show that the work of distribution had been begun. They had ordered \$100 worth of books from the parent society in January, and had succeeded by strenuous exertions in paying \$45 on account. I know of nothing that gives such an impression of the esteem in which books were then held, as the following rules of the Indianapolis school, which were published by the Union as samples worthy of general adoption:

*Fourth.* The books of the library shall be numbered and so classed as that books of the value of 12 cents and under shall form the first class; over 12 and not exceeding 25 the second; over 25 and not exceeding 50, the third; over 50 and not exceeding 75, the fourth; over 75 and not exceeding \$1, fifth; over \$1 and not exceeding \$1.50, the sixth; and over \$1.50 and not exceeding \$2, the seventh; being classed according to the retail price affixed by the purchasing committee, and the number and class of each book shall be written therein.

*Fifth.* Every scholar who has attended school one month and whom the librarian has reason to believe will continue and may safely be trusted with books, shall be entitled for punctual attendance, good behavior, and bearing a good examination on the lesson assigned by the Committee of Religious

Instruction, to draw a book from the library of the value of four times as many cents as the average lesson, assigned by the religious instructor to the class, consists of verses or their equivalent, which book may be kept one week and no longer.

*Sixth.* Every dirt or grease spot, turned down or torn leaf, or week overkept, in books of the first class shall be fined one cent; in books of the second class, two cents; third class, three; fourth class, four; fifth class, five; sixth class, six; and seventh class, seven cents; and for other injuries to be fined by the Librarian in like proportion, and the value of any book lost or very much injured to be paid for either in money or memorizing, and no scholar or teacher to have two books at one time, or, after injuring one book, to draw another until the fine has been paid, or a sufficient credit is standing in his favor to discharge it; and whenever a fine has been assessed for injury done a book, it shall be entered on the book by the Librarian.

These rules had been found serviceable in the Indianapolis school, but they would not answer now. The conditions are wholly changed. At that time the evil to be contended against was the lack of reading matter for the young. Now the serious problem is how to prevent the young from using the cheap, sensational literature that is thrust on their notice. Good books can not now be made too cheap or too easy of access. Situated as we now are we can scarcely comprehend the enormous influence for good of these early Sunday-Schools, and especially of the literature which they furnished to the children of the State. It was a veritable rain of manna in the desert, and to it may safely be ascribed much of the intelligence and much of the virtue of the people of later generations. To what extent these books repressed the swelling tide of ignorance, to what extent they gave occupation to idle minds, to what extent they inculcated lessons of morality and industry, must remain matters of conjecture; but no careful investigator can escape the conviction that they accomplished all that the projectors of the work could have anticipated, and repaid a thousand fold all the labor and money expended in securing and circulating them.

The growth of libraries in this first period of the State's history, ending in 1850, does not seem great when viewed as a whole, and yet it was creditable to the people. The State was