

EARLY LIBRARIES IN CRAWFORD COUNTY

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OF the various early libraries in Crawford County, the book collection belonging to Allegheny College was the most outstanding. The early history of the Allegheny College Library is actually the history of the college itself during its first years. For some time, the books that had been donated for the library were practically the only assets of the college; there were no buildings, and few students but the sons of the founder and first president of Allegheny, Timothy Alden. By means of his determination to make a success of his enterprise, the college very soon acquired a book collection of unusual range and value. Chief among the early gifts were those of William Bentley, Isaiah Thomas, and James Winthrop, all scholarly men of New England. The story of the early years of the Allegheny Library is in its most striking aspect the story of these three collections, but to get the true, all-inclusive picture one must consider also the contributors of money, books, and labor on a small scale; for without the aid of all these people the library would not have been able to develop as it did.

Fewer than thirty years after the founding of Meadville, when it was still very much a frontier community, a man went there for the express purpose of establishing an educational institution. Although recently from New York State, Timothy Alden was basically a New Englander, a direct descendant of John Alden and a friend of such well-established men of Massachusetts as the Reverend William Bentley, a Unitarian minister of Salem, and Judge James Winthrop of Cambridge. Why a gentleman of such connections, good education, and traditional Eastern cultural background should have been so remarkably determined to spend his time, energy, money—in fact, almost all the remaining part of his lifetime—upon the transplantation of opportunity into what was then a wilderness—is even today something of a mystery. The decision was reached by both chance—because Major Roger Alden, a distant relative of Timothy, was one of the outstanding citizens of Meadville at the time—and

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careful planning—for Timothy Alden personally regarded the location as favorable for the establishment of a college.

As early as 1815, the official date of the founding of Allegheny, Alden set out upon his travels eastward to collect gifts for his college. On this first journey he visited Quincy and Cambridge in Massachusetts; Albany, Brooklyn, Newburgh, Schenectady, and New York; Providence; Newark; and Pittsburgh—at least, donations were received from citizens of these places. Alden kept carefully a record of the books donated, their value, and the names and addresses of the donors. He noted, also, their occupations. Booksellers in many towns were generous to the itinerant scholar; ministers, doctors, bookbinders, merchants, and an engraver—even one Benjamin West, a sugar boiler—made contributions of books to the college. This first trip of Alden's on behalf of Allegheny resulted in the donation of \$2000 in land, almost \$1700 in books, and about \$460 in cash. It is difficult to understand why at such an early date more books were available than even small amounts of money, particularly as many of the books were of value. Alden's appeal must have been made chiefly to, or at least been most successful among, scholarly men who were more likely to possess books than wealth. Also, Alden was probably most interested in collecting donations for a library. His eagerness to obtain books for his college is indicative of a definite philosophy. Solon and Elizabeth Buck, the authors of *The Planting of Civilization in Western Pennsylvania*, say that Allegheny, of all the colleges in western Pennsylvania, is the only recipient of the New England heritage. Alden himself was the third in a line of Harvard graduates, and the library he acquired for his college came mostly from New England and "represented the New Englander's conviction of the necessity of books" for the success of an educational institution.

Timothy Alden's first trip in behalf of the college library was his most productive venture of the sort, but it was not by any means the last of his attempts. From September 12, 1815 until February 16, 1816, he was absent from Meadville on an itinerary which took him 1630 miles overland and 640 by water. And, five years later, he wrote:

Having received a commission to solicit benefactions for All. Coll. at discretion, I spent a few days in Philadelphia, after the rising of the Gen. Assembly, in fulfilment of the duties assigned, viz. in May and June 1821.

Almost all of the gifts received on this trip were in the form of books. Alden was a master of the various approaches that could be used to

induce people to part from a few volumes of their libraries. As an example, here is a portion of a letter he wrote to John Thomson of Harriton, Pennsylvania, one of the most important of the minor contributors to the library. The date of the letter is December 17, 1824:

I do not wonder that you think to select such books as you may wish to preserve from the Library of your late venerable uncle—but—sir, permit me to suggest, that in his collection—there may be some in foreign languages—perhaps, not in the most elegant binding, which would be very proper for a college, yet of little moment in a gentleman's private library—Such would be very acceptable to our college from the circumstance, among others, that they had belonged to the late Secretary of the Old Congress. . . . Should you or the heirs offer them for sale, they would probably fetch but little—and if bestowed upon us would be highly esteemed . . . no matter in what language written nor on what subject. . . .

Apparently, tactful as this letter may be, it was not tactful enough. Thomson, in any event, did not receive Alden's suggestion very graciously; he wrote:

With the last proposition I can by **no means comply**. It is true the Library is respectable but t'is my intention to **Keep** the Valuable part for my own use. That part therefore which I would dispose of would not be either useful or interesting to the College.

As he subsequently sent Allegheny quite a generous gift, we can assume that he was not very seriously provoked.

Several possible misunderstandings about the miscellaneous gifts received by the college during this early period should be anticipated. In the first place, not only during the times when Alden was canvassing the East for donations were books received at Meadville for the growing library. Various persons who in one way or another heard about Alden and his project sent him unsolicited contributions. The gifts were, of course, of varying interest and value; some were selected with the needs of a small college in mind; others were not, although they were perhaps sent with as good intentions. Another important point is that Timothy Alden did not accept the donations of others while giving nothing of his own. On the contrary, he contributed many books from his private collection, undoubtedly selecting those that he thought would be most useful. Finally, some of these early gifts to the library were not books at all, nor were they even materials that could be put to use in a book collection. For instance, on a trip made in 1826 Alden was given "a blank Master Mason's diploma, in Eng. French and Spanish, elegantly engraved." These miscellaneous gifts were often haphazard indeed in comparison with the

carefully chosen books given by Bentley, Thomas, and Winthrop. Yet they revealed real generosity, and sometimes great practicality—witness the contribution of Carson Davis, a Meadville man, who gave book alcoves, furnishing bricks, as he stipulated, “in consideration that I am to have access to the books of the college library in the same way as do other benefactors of the college—during my life.”

The first of the three main collections was the legacy from the Reverend William Bentley, who was for thirty-six years pastor of the East Church in Salem. Bentley died in December of 1819 at the age of sixty-one. In May of that year he had written to Timothy Alden as follows: “In regard to books, which we consider as our tools, we are more willing to bequeath them than to miss or want them.” Bentley’s library was well known as an excellent one; although he did not receive a large salary, his collection had grown steadily. We can easily picture the sea captains of Salem, on their return trips from the countries of Europe, bringing, a few at a time, the books that became part of William Bentley’s library.

Much correspondence back and forth between Alden and Bentley’s nephew and executor, William Bentley Fowle, took place before the amount and handling of the bequest could be settled. In January, 1820, Fowle notified Alden that the books were in his possession but that the will had not yet been proved. Fowle also requested that some provision be made for receiving and disposing of Bentley’s gift after its arrival in Meadville. It is difficult to say in what frame of mind he made this remark. His uncle’s bequest may have seemed foolish to Fowle; however, there is no evidence that he begrudged Alden the books, even though the situation was one that might have moved an ungenerous man to pettiness. Fowle himself received the largest part of Bentley’s library, but both Allegheny and the American Antiquarian Society profited generously by the provisions of the will. The Society received Bentley’s German books, New England printed books, and manuscripts. This left for Allegheny the classical and theological books, dictionaries, lexicons, and Bibles. A discussion arose about the exact meaning that Bentley had intended to convey by the wording of his will; about a month after his uncle’s death, Fowle wrote to Alden as follows:

I am aware that the terms ‘Classical & Theological Books’ are not so definite as could be wished, and although I have no doubt of the sense in which the testator understood them,

I should like to have your definition of them that the line may be distinctly drawn.

To this Alden responded, about three weeks later:

I acknowledge the liberality of your request that I should give a definition of the terms **Classical** and **Theological** Books which as you remark are not so definite as could be desired. Though I might easily offer a definition, I feel that it would be indelicate for me to do it.

With typical scholarly energy Alden went to say that it would be possible to refer to Dobson's Encyclopedia and other "modern" works to define the words under discussion. He concluded with the opinion that the standard rightfully should be Bentley's "*will and pleasure* so far as known." This was to be determined by Fowle, and Alden suggested that the Allegheny board might appoint someone to assist Fowle in this task. The person chosen was Dr. Isaiah Thomas, who was representing the American Antiquarian Society in the interpretation of Bentley's will. This choice was important to the future growth of the Allegheny Library.

Two months later the question was still unsettled. Benjamin Crowninshield of Salem wrote to Alden to explain some of the reasons why:

It is very uncertain what number of books will fall to the lot of the Meadville college. At first, I apprehended that Dr. Bentley had arranged his books according to the expressions of his will. I was led to this belief from his having shifted many books during the last months of his life. But, upon an examination of his library, I find that the books are standing promiscuously; being placed according to the size of the book, and not according to the subject or language.

This letter also explained that the real obstacle to determining how many books Allegheny was to receive was the question of whether the term *classical* was to be interpreted strictly or understood to include English, French, Spanish, and Italian classics.

Fowle's correspondence with Alden during the time between the death of Bentley and the shipping of the books to Allegheny reveals that as executor he devoted a great deal of time and care to the interests of the very young college. He tried to get a catalog of the Allegheny donation made and finally was obliged to finish the list himself. Alden had requested the catalog, as well as copies of Bentley's miscellaneous writings and a portrait of him. He made, also, the rather unfortunate suggestion that the members of Bentley's Salem congregation might like to contribute toward the first building on the Allegheny campus, to be named after their late minister. Isaiah Thomas was to carry out

this idea, but after the announcement of it had appeared in the papers he abandoned the attempt, "having discovered that they"—the people of Bentley's congregation—"were not pleased with the idea of his Library & Cabinet being given to distant Societies." They were not the only persons made unhappy by the terms of Bentley's will. Bentley's library was known at Harvard, where authorities probably wondered why these books were allowed to leave New England to be transported at great risk to a wilderness town where no fit place was even ready to receive them. Bentley, the master of twenty-one languages, was known to be provoked because Harvard, from which he had been graduated in 1777, had never given him an honorary degree. It did so belatedly, bestowing upon him a Doctor of Divinity in August, 1819; but three months previously he had accepted an offer from Allegheny to become a charter trustee. By all accounts, at the time of his sudden death four days after Christmas, he was still most favorably inclined toward Allegheny.

Transportation of such a collection as the Bentley library was no small problem at this time. The general plan was to take the books to Philadelphia by water and cart them to Pittsburgh and then to Meadville. Much of the actual work devolved upon Fowle, who was obliged to secure boxes, pack the books himself, see them to Boston by water and from there to reship them for Philadelphia. The letter Alden received in connection with this business throws a very favorable light on the dealings of Fowle in connection with the bequest to Allegheny:

By the politeness & friendly attention of Mr. W. B. Fowle, I am now enabled to inform you that yr books are shipped for Phila^a. The vessel is to sail on sunday or monday. . .

I cannot omit stating the very handsome conduct of Mr. W. B. Fowle, who kindly took charge of the books at Salem, & attended personally to seeing them carefully packed, &c. Being accustomed to business of this kind he could perform it much better than was in my power, & I assure you he volunteered his services in your behalf with great zeal and alacrity. The expenses incurred are eleven dollars thirty five cents . . . I beg you to consider these as my cheerful contribution to yr institution.

As a final expression of good will, Fowle sent the library a dictionary of his own making. "Will you have the goodness," he wrote, "to place the Dictionary which accompanies this in your College Library. It cost me some labour, & may save some, where a better is not at hand." The Bentley legacy, as it was finally received in Meadville, was described by Alden as providing the college with:

. . . oriental books and a variety of the best works in numer-

ous modern as well as ancient languages. Such a collection is seldom to be seen in any private gentleman's library—nay—many of the colleges in the U. States can furnish nothing of the kind to be compared with our Bentley Legacy.

The gift of Isaiah Thomas to the Allegheny Library was a direct result of the Bentley bequest. Thomas had represented both his own organization and the frontier college in seeing that the provisions of the will were carried out. As a result of the enthusiasm for the Allegheny project that Thomas developed while working with the Bentley collection, on February 3, 1820, he presented some five hundred books to the college. He revealed an attitude rather unusual among benefactors, as is shown by his own words:

It has been my intention to leave by will or to forward to you during my life, a Selection from my Book stock, to the amount of 400 or 500 dollars, for your College Library—I am as willing the College should have this donation now, that is, this Spring, as at any future time.

Perhaps Thomas had seen enough of the confusion resulting from even a carefully considered will like Bentley's to convince him that he should distribute his books at once if he wanted them to be dealt with according to his wishes!

The transportation of the Thomas collection to Meadville was similar to that of the Bentley legacy; as in the case of the earlier gift, the books were to travel to Philadelphia by water and from there to Meadville by way of Pittsburgh. Because of technicalities it was necessary for the books to be sent from Worcester, Thomas's home, to Boston; from there to Salem; and then back to Boston on May 10 "in a waggon."

The most valuable single gift that Allegheny received for its library was undoubtedly the legacy left to it at the death of The Honorable James Winthrop of Cambridge, who died on September 26, 1821, at the age of seventy. Winthrop was a descendant of John Winthrop, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. His father, who for forty-two years was a professor at Harvard, is credited with founding the science of seismology. James Winthrop was for a time the librarian of Harvard and then was a judge of the Court of Common Pleas and Register of Probate. He received his Doctor of Laws degree at the first commencement held at Harvard.

Winthrop's bequest to Allegheny did not represent his first expression of interest in the college. In a letter of November 11, 1815, Alden expressed his thanks to Winthrop for books that he had donated, estimated by Alden to be worth one hundred dollars. In his usual manner of asking for gifts, with his obvious dislike of begging tempered by

his desire to do everything possible for his college, Alden went on to suggest that, since Winthrop had no family to whom to leave his books, he could perhaps contribute still more to Allegheny.

By means of Winthrop's bequest, six years later, Allegheny gained "national pre-eminence," although its collection had been remarkable before it received the addition of 1821. The *Boston Patriot* announced that The Honorable James Winthrop "had devised his library, one of the best private libraries in the Union, to Allegheny College. This college beyond the mountains stands a fair chance of possessing the best collection of books of any seminary in the nation." The gift was made public on October 3. Further estimate of its extent is contained in the following extract from a letter from the firm of Cummings & Hilliard of Boston, dated November 22, 1821, which concludes with an offer to assume the task of packing and forwarding Winthrop's books:

The most valuable part of the Library of the late Judge Winthrop is bequeathed to your College. We have just finished the appraisement, & it amounts to seven thousand two hundred dollars, six thousand four hundred of which will be considered as included in your donation . . . It will be necessary for some person to pack the Books with great care, to prevent injury in the land carriage. Perhaps there cannot be found in the whole range of Literature a more valuable collection of Books. They were appraised at about the cost & charges of importation.

The Winthrop gift was regarded as too valuable to submit to the dangers of a sea voyage such as the two other collections had experienced. So the three tons of books, packed into thirteen boxes, were hauled in wagons driven by Boston teamsters to Meadville by way of Albany and Buffalo, arriving at their destination on September 3, 1822, exactly eleven months after the announcement of the legacy.

The chief interest of the Winthrop bequest is its exemplification of a nearly complete private library of its time. It has been described as "an outstanding example of what constituted the library of a cultured and scholarly New Englander." As in the case of Bentley's gift, Allegheny did not receive the entire collection, but of Winthrop's books only the English literature (including poetry, novels, and sermons) was given to other legatees.

The nature of the three main early book collections at Allegheny was studied quite carefully by Henry W. Church in an article written for the alumni news bulletin in 1933. He concluded that the books given by Bentley and Thomas were more widely varied in content than the terms of the donations might imply, perhaps because Thomas

planned his books as a supplement to those already given by Bentley. Winthrop's gift, however, except for its specified omission of English literature, represented the complete, well-stocked private library of an eighteenth-century gentleman. Because of the character of the times, the traditions in which Winthrop had been reared, and his own personal interests, religious books dominated the collection by sheer number of titles. But it is remarkable in many other areas: history; foreign literatures—no important Greek or Latin writer is unrepresented, and the splendid set of the Diderot *Encyclopédie* is probably the most striking work in the entire early library; and grammars and dictionaries, perhaps the outstanding part of Winthrop's gift. The profusion of languages in which these books were written must have made a strange contrast with the near wilderness in which the college was started. The coming of the Winthrop legacy to Allegheny, Mr. Church comments, was "one of the miracles of Early American education."

A complete contemporary catalog was made of the early gifts to the Allegheny College Library. The question of how the catalog came about is probably answered by the mere fact of Timothy Alden's being the person chiefly interested in the welfare of the college. Alden had had experience in cataloging the collections of both the Massachusetts and the New York State Historical Society Libraries. Without this previous discipline he probably would not have felt qualified to attempt the drawing up of the 139-page "Catalogus Bibliothecae Colegii Alleghaniensis," which was issued in August of 1823, printed at the shop of a Meadville printer, Thomas Atkinson.

Alden's avowed object in distributing the catalog was to show gratitude for the generosity that had been displayed toward the library. Probably he also thought it advisable to have in easily consulted form a list of the works already possessed by the college, so that prospective donors might know what was lacking in the collection and therefore what contributions would be most welcome. At any rate, a large edition of the catalog was printed and copies were sent to a number of men of literary interests in the United States. Their reactions to this plan are the most interesting part of the story of the "Catalogus." No letter was received in reply from Adams or Monroe, but both Madison and Jefferson wrote extremely courteous responses to the gift. Jefferson's letter in particular is valued by the college as a keepsake, its contents having been placed in the form of a plaque directly outside the door of the present library building. Its text includes the following:

I am very sensible of the kind attention of the Trustees of Allegany college, in sending me a copy of the catalogue of their library, and congratulate them on the good fortune of having become the objects of donations so liberal. That of Dr. Benley is truly valuable for it's classical riches, but mr Winthrop's is inappreciable for the variety of the branches of science to which it extends, and for the rare and precious works it possesses in each branch. I had not expected there was such a private collection in the US. we are just commencing the establishment of an University in Virginia but cannot flatter ourselves with the hope of such donations as have been bestowed on you.

Since the college had not completed a building even for the purposes of classes and administration, finding space to house the newly donated books was no small problem. Even at the time of the Winthrop bequest, no housing was available but the "public office building" of the county on the main street of Meadville. In 1826 the books were moved from this place to the newly erected log court house, of which the first floor was occupied by the county jail. After the construction of the first college building, Bentley Hall, named for the first great contributor to the Allegheny Library, had been started, Timothy Alden wrote as follows of the ideal location that he expected to have for the new collections of books when the hall would be completed:

In the edifice, whose majestic walls have already reached their intended height, there will be one chamber, 60 by 44 feet, with a tier of alcoves, from one extremity to the other, for the location of the books of this invaluable collection, the arches of which will be adorned with the names of the chief donors.

It was to be seven years from the time of this vision to the accomplishment of the goals that it set forth. Finally, in the latter part of November, 1830, townsmen and alumni worked for three days loading the books on wagons and ox carts and carrying them up the hill from the central location in the town to their new home in Bentley Hall, piling them on the floor to wait for their final accommodations, since the alcoves for them were even then not prepared. In the volume of "Donations for Alleghany College" appears the following account of this transfer of the most valuable possessions of the college at that time:

The books belonging to the college Library, which had been placed in one of the chambers of the new courthouse for several years, were removed to the upper chamber in Bentley Hall in Nov, 1830—to wit—three wagon loads on the 6th, 2 on the 8th and 2 on the 16th day of the month—John Ellis Esq. gave the use of his wagon with one yoke of oxen for haling the three first loads, Thomas Foster of Snowhill and William Henry of Vernon with their two horse wagons took two loads to the college, 8th Nov. Solomon Lord with his wagon and two yoke of oxen and the wagon of David Dick

with his teamster took the balance of the books to the College on the 16th. Nov.

A number of people at the court assisted in loading on the 8th. Men also in town and from the country assisted in loading. On the 20th. 16 young men assisted in carrying the books from the great entry to the upper story—the names of those who assisted in loading, unloading, or carrying the books into the library chamber, so far as recollected, follow, to wit— . . .

This serves to give some idea of the detail in which early events in the history of the college library have been recorded, for the many citizens who made themselves useful during this time, which must have been one of Timothy Alden's happiest occasions, are listed here.

On the Fourth of July, 1817, Timothy Alden was officially made the college librarian and "cabinet keeper" in addition to his post as president of the board of the faculty of arts. In the minutes of a meeting held June 17, 1820, is a list of regulations for the use of the library, prepared as the report of a special committee. Members of the faculty or board of trustees, those who had donated at least fifty dollars toward the college, undergraduates, and probationers who had reached the age of fifteen could use the library under the conditions that were outlined. Only two books could be withdrawn at one time unless the borrower had a special permit signed by the members of the prudential committee, who were named at the end of the list of rules. The books could be kept for three weeks; twenty-five cents would be charged as a fine for every week they were overdue.

Since the book collection was for some years practically the only asset of Allegheny College, it is natural that the books, far from passively lying on the shelves, should assume a vital role in encouraging the development of the college itself. It is said that the two bright spots in Timothy Alden's dreary but hopeful connection with the college were the laying of the cornerstone of Bentley Hall and the acceptance of the Winthrop legacy. From the very earliest days of the college, the library figured in almost every important event in the development of the struggling institution. On many occasions the library was the factor that determined along what path the college would develop and what its philosophy of education would be. Seven years after the founding of Allegheny, when its faculty consisted of two, student body of twenty-one, and physical plant of one as yet unfinished building, the library had already attracted national attention. In 1825, when it was hoped that the Presbyterian Church would found a theological seminary at

Allegheny, the library was used as an inducement for its doing so. It was described at that time, for the commissioners of Western Theological Seminary, in the following terms:

The Library of Alleghany College contains about 7000 vol. principally noted in the Catalogue herewith tra[ns]mitted; and by reference to which, it will be seen to consist of a tr[uly] valuable collection of books, among which are many rare works of intrinsic worth. The same number of Volumes of ordinary select[i]ons might be procured at a rate iar short of the value of those. So valuable a Library, it is understood by the Committee, is to be found in but very few of the Colleges of the Union—perhaps, in none but that of Harvard in Massachusetts—\$20.000 is considered a very low estimate of its value.

In the same connection, Benjamin Mills, who was for a while head of Washington Academy, now Washington and Jefferson College, wrote in January of 1826:

Such a collection of books is perhaps unequalled on the Western Waters. Many of them I discover are critical & explanatory of the Scriptures, and of the languages in which they were written, and among them is a complete collection of the fathers of the first centuries, which adapts the library particularly to a theological seminary.

The Prospectus of Allegheny College, published in Meadville on September 25, 1829, described the attraction of the library as follows:

The library has been universally admired by literary gentlemen who have visited it. It consists of about eight thousand volumes well selected, and with a few additions, will embrace every thing which will be ordinarily required for reference. It is already decidedly the best Collegiate Library west of the Alleghany mountains, and may be ranked among the first in the Union.

In 1829, also, fear for the welfare of the library motivated in part James Hamilton's opposition to the establishment of a military academy at Allegheny, an action which he believed would violate the implied contract between a donor and a beneficiary. If the character of the college should be changed, Hamilton said in his written protest, "then Samuel Lord Esq may Justly lay Claim to the College Ground . . . and the Donors of Books to their respective Donations."

When the Methodist Episcopal Church assumed control of the college, the valuable library was in all probability a reason for its interest. The Catalog of September, 1837, gave a prominent place to the remarkable book collection, describing it in these words:

The College Library contains upwards of 8000 volumes, well selected, among which are many rare and valuable works. Few institutions in this country possess one of equal extent and value. The importance of such a library to the reading student, during his college course, is too obvious to need

remark. Any student may have access to the library by paying one dollar per session.

In the Catalog of 1837 the course of study to be followed by students enrolled in every class of the college is indicated. The preparatory school studied arithmetic, bookkeeping, English grammar, geography, and Greek and Latin. For admission to the freshman class it was required that one have "a knowledge of Arithmetic; English, Latin, and Greek Grammar; *Historia Sacra*; Caesar's Commentaries; Virgil's *Aeneid*; Greek Testament."

During the freshman year the students studied elementary Greek literature, Cicero, the civilization of Greece and Rome, algebra, Euclid's geometric theory, and English composition and elocution. The next class read Sallust and many Greek writers, studied Latin composition and had a general review of the subject, in addition to logarithms, plane trigonometry, mensuration, geography, history, and English composition and elocution. Horace, Tacitus, Juvenal, various Greek writers, surveying, spherical trigonometry, navigation, conic sections, Cavallo's natural and experimental philosophy, chemistry, and the same English as before were included in the juniors' course of study. During the last year geology and mineralogy, "astronomy with the globes," logic, moral philosophy, intellectual philosophy, political economy, rhetoric, criticism, natural theology and law, United States constitution and government, and forensics were taught. Many of the philosophical, scientific, and mathematical courses were listed as the work of a particular person, apparently meaning that only one book was studied to any extent. The course of study in the early years of Allegheny, as well as its emphasis on books, reflected the example of the New England institutions of higher learning. The ambitiousness of the program for a college that had had only two teachers in its earliest years and had only five at the time of this catalog and that during the fifteen-year regime of its first president had produced only twelve graduates is truly remarkable. It is not too extreme to find the sole justification of the program set forth in the Catalog of 1837 in the library, then already more than twenty years old. But even this soon the growing confidence of the college was apparent. The time of its struggle and uncertainty was almost over. Timothy Alden's day was past. But his influence was still strong, and especially the results of his perseverance were still apparent in the book collection he had had so much ado to bring together. The early history of the Allegheny College Library, as of the college itself, is a tribute to the mingled idealism and stubbornness of its founder.

Among the libraries of Crawford County, the library of Allegheny College certainly had the most spectacular story of early development. But it must not be supposed that the college library was the only one in the area during the first half of the nineteenth century. As a matter of fact, it was not even the first to be founded. That distinction, apparently, is held by the Meadville Library, or the 1812 Library Association. To a remarkable extent our early settlers, when they considered forms of organized recreation, preferred those that combined amusement with purposes of serious self-improvement. This first library in Crawford County was started in 1812, when a group of citizens collected one hundred fifty volumes as a beginning. Before long, the library contained four or five hundred volumes of standard literature—including history, travel, biography, and English classics, but no fiction. The books were housed in John Reynolds' office. Some of them found their way into the library of William Reynolds, who mentions them in his "Public Enterprises of the Early Citizens" as having been published chiefly in 1810 to 1812. Although the Meadville Library flourished for a number of years, no records of it exist and information about it is therefore difficult to obtain. Certainly it was the direct ancestor of the present Meadville Library, which is a continuation, or at least an outgrowth, of this early idea.

The success of this library inspired a group of citizens of Fairfield Township to organize a similar circulating library with a collection of "standard works." This was the Sugar Creek Library, which for many years was well patronized by residents of that locality. It was perhaps better known as the French Creek Library or the Union Library. Its resources appear to have been used by residents of outlying districts, as the Meadville Library was popular in the town itself. In the second decade of the last century, many notices about the business of the Union Library appeared in the *Crawford Weekly Messenger*, curiously inserted among long news accounts of the war with England, reporting events of three to six weeks before; and local items such as shop advertisements, notices of dissolved partnerships and runaway apprentices, and farm animals lost and found. Most of the library notices were for the purpose of calling shareholders' meetings and included rather sharp reminders about returning books and paying fees. We can guess that the officials of the organization—David Nelson, president; James Cochran, secretary, later treasurer, had no easy time enforcing the rules. An announcement signed by Cochran from the *Messenger*

of August 25, 1813, notified subscribers of a meeting to be held at the house of James Thompson in Wayne Township. The secretary made a plea for punctual attendance at the meeting and warned that, "An advance of 50c will be required from each shareholder, at this meeting, in order to discharge debts already contracted." By December of 1813 a threat was in order:

The shareholders who have neglected to return their books, are hereby informed, that for the future, unless they comply with the rules and regulations of said institution, they will be excluded from drawing any book, until the fines imposed by the constitution are paid.

The threat was not immediately carried out, however; at least, it was repeated weekly that December and also appeared early in 1814. On March 16, 1814, a new notice appeared, calling for a meeting of shareholders at which a set of rules was to be approved and a president elected. Disciplinary measures were still in the air, however, for all members not present at ten o'clock were to be fined. A campaign was also under way to get some new books for the collection:

As it is the wish of every one to have a fresh supply of books, it is hoped those in arrears will be punctual to settle up their accounts, as well as those who have made themselves liable to fines under the existing rules of the said constitution. Those who neglect this notice will be neglecting their own interests, and the committee will be under the necessity of compelling a more strict compliance with the rules of the institution.

The plea was sharpened, in April, to:

Those who know that they have not complied with the rules of said association, are requested to come forward on the above stated day, otherwise, compulsory measures will be adopted to enforce a compliance therewith.

This phase of the story of the French Creek Library has a happy ending, to be read in the August 12, 1815, issue of the *Messenger*. This is the very same paper in which appeared Timothy Alden's announcement regarding the opening of Allegheny College, in these words:

We, therefore, give notice to all, who may be disposed to commit their sons to our care for a liberal education, that the same branches of literature and science are to be taught at this, as at other colleges in the United States; that the tuition will be \$6 a quarter; and that boarding in respectable families will be \$1.75 a week, or, boarding and washing \$2 a week.

It was, then, on the same day that French Creek Library shareholders were "informed that a large additional supply of valuable books has

were warned that "no further indulgence can be given." The organization was resolved to look forward to the future; therefore at the meeting "there will be a general revision of the proceedings of the company, with a hope of adopting a system better qualified to promote the views and objects of the establishment." The coincidence of the notices of the Union Library for its new books and of Timothy Alden for his new college is intriguing for several reasons. On the one hand, the gifts of books from New England that were to arrive in Meadville within a few years as donations to the college would make the efforts of the French Creek Library authorities to collect fines and keep their books circulating appear less important. On the other hand, it may be surprising to realize that, before Allegheny College had been so much as mentioned, Crawford County citizens were sufficiently interested in books to organize several groups for the purpose of circulating them.

Some of the outstanding citizens of Meadville had, of course, their own private libraries. The Reynolds collection I have already mentioned as one of the most outstanding. Another, and earlier, example is that of Judge Jesse Moore, who during his residence in Meadville bought hundreds of dollars' worth of books from such publishers as Matthew Carey of Philadelphia, William Connely of Franklin, and Zadok Cramer of Pittsburgh. In addition, he subscribed to several newspapers, including, beside local ones, the *Freeman's Journal* of Philadelphia and the *Baltimore Register*. Judge Moore was a subscriber to the Meadville Library and the Erie Library. He must have been generous with his own books as well, for after his death in 1824 his administrators announced, "All persons in possession of Books belonging to the library of said Estate, will please return them without delay, as an inventory of the library is about to be taken." Judge Moore's library is a notable instance of the presence of men of culture among the early settlers—men to whom the acquisition and the sharing of books were important even in the course of a hard and busy life.

Many of the books published and read during the last century had a religious emphasis. It is therefore not surprising that among early book collections in the Meadville area there should be some devoted to this kind of literature. A project of this sort was the library of the Crawford County Sabbath School Union, organized in the early eighteenth twenties. At first there were eleven member Sunday Schools, and the number increased rapidly. By the end of the first year, more than a hundred books were available for the use of pupils. This fact is sig-

nificant not because of the size of the collection, for larger displays of books may well have been available in some private homes of the time—although probably not many, but because it represents an interesting early attempt to distribute knowledge, and because it reveals the serious purpose characteristic of the time.

Timothy Alden, always eager to help where books were concerned, was the patron or librarian of the Union. The rules for borrowing books from the collection read as follows:

Those pupils who may distinguish themselves by their acquisitions in the Sabbath schools of the Union, and who shall have recited memoritor 5000 verses from the Bible shall have the right to take one volume, those who shall have recited 10,000 verses memoritor, shall have the right to take two volumes, and those who shall have recited memoritor 15,000 verses shall have the right to take three out at one time and this right duly certified by the patron to continue for life.

Surely very few of us today would be eligible to withdraw any books at all from this library! The requirements of this frontier Sunday School collection seem formidable; yet to quite a number of early Crawford Countians they were apparently a small obstacle. By the end of 1829, sixty-eight members had been issued life certificates for quoting five thousand Bible verses; four for ten thousand; and two for fifteen thousand.

The 1850 volume of the *Memoirs* of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania contains the responses to a number of questionnaires sent out to representatives of the various counties of the state as guides to the writing of reports on county history and progress, by individuals in each county. The correspondent for Crawford County, writing in 1846, was Alfred Huidekoper. In answer to a question about libraries, he wrote:

There are two libraries of some magnitude, in this county. The principal is that one attached to Allegheny College. The other library is that connected with the Meadville Theological Institute, and containing between two and three thousand volumes.

This judgment may come as a surprise. It was, however, quite logical. The library of the Theological School was largely the result of the generosity of one man, Frederic Huidekoper, youngest son of Harm Jan Huidekoper. The school itself was founded in 1844 on a solid background of education in the sciences and humanities, derived from teaching methods observed at Harvard by its founders. Frederic Huidekoper fitted well into this picture. He himself had attended Harvard

but had been forced to leave because of the poor eyesight that plagued him all his life, making study extremely difficult. He managed, however, to travel and study in Europe, working at universities in Geneva, Leipzig, and Berlin, and collecting a private library well stocked with classics, the church fathers, and the work of his contemporary German theologians. Furthermore, he was interested not only in collecting books but in distributing them; he originated a rather successful plan for circulating religious literature among ministers in the then western part of the United States. The situations of Frederic Huidekoper and Timothy Alden make an interesting comparison. They shared an intense belief in the power of the written word. Himself eager for study and learning, but because of his handicap unable ever to satisfy this inclination, Huidekoper had available the money that Alden was always trying to obtain. His was an ideal position for philanthropy toward an educational institution or library.

The appeal of the Meadville Theological School reached Huidekoper at an advantageous time. In 1844 the Reverend James Freeman Clarke wrote in an article in the *Christian World* about the earliest beginnings of the school, describing it as "an attempt, in its infancy to be sure, without endowments, buildings, library or apparatus of any sort." He included in the article a plea for donations of books. By the end of May, twenty or thirty volumes of theology had been received. When the school actually opened in October, however, the members of the Huidekoper family were its greatest benefactors. The first building, on Center Street, was presented by Harm Jan Huidekoper, with space for a chapel, lecture and common room, and a combined library and classroom. At this time, also, Frederic Huidekoper began to play his very important role in the history of the school, which was the project to which he dedicated the rest of his life, with much of the same enthusiasm shown by Timothy Alden for his college. Huidekoper had, furthermore, more years to devote to the cause than Alden had, for he was only twenty-six or twenty-seven at this time. At the opening of the school he supplemented its inadequate library by allowing the students the use of his private collection. It is said that he gave books outright to many poor students who could not afford to buy them. The campus of the school on upper Chestnut Street was also his gift. He was the first professor of church history in the Institute and was on its faculty for many years. He must have kept a careful watch on the development of the library; in a letter of April 30, 1847, to the Reverend Henry W.

Bellows, he reported that at the beginning of its first year the school had 500 books; the second, 1400; third, 2300; and estimated by the fourth, almost 3000. Mr. Huidekoper spoke in this letter of two recent gifts: one of twelve hundred books from New York; another of five hundred dollars from Baltimore. He judged the library good but wished that it were more complete and especially that it had more holdings in the area of literature. It had, he felt, a responsibility to be as good as possible, since it was so far, as he said, from "other large libraries." His omission of any mention of the Allegheny College Library is interesting, as we know that several of its early gifts were especially rich in theological works.

When Frederic Huidekoper died, he bequeathed his books to the school, which then owned fully what it had had the use of for so long. The gifts of his whole family to the school were generous and extended over a long period, but Frederic Huidekoper was really the leading figure in the early development of both the school and its book collection.

The history of the public library in Meadville, while beginning later than that of the other libraries mentioned here, is similar to them in that it was filled with difficulties and also with examples of courage in the face of disappointment. The early expression of the public library idea in Meadville was marked by several separate attempts at organization, each failing after a brief time but providing a basis for further experimentation. The first attempt was made in 1857 under the chairmanship of William Reynolds. This was apparently a very short-lived project; it fell apart, according to Bates's county history, over the question of whether access to the books should be free. In any event, nothing further was done about the library until November 7, 1867, when an organizational committee, again headed by William Reynolds, held its first meeting. Beside Mr. Reynolds, there were present at this meeting C. W. Winslow, the secretary; G. P. Delamater, in whose office it was held; Dr. A. A. Livermore; R. Lyle White; L. C. Magaw; Dr. A. B. Robbins; and H. L. Richmond, junior. At this first meeting it was decided to name the new organization The Meadville Library Association. The next meeting, however, which was held five days later, heard the statement of Joseph Shippen to the effect that a Meadville Library Association already was in existence; this was, of course, the 1812 Library, the original expression of the public library idea in Meadville. In order to avoid duplicating the name, therefore, the com-

mittee decided to call the new organization The Meadville Atheneum.

Even at this very early meeting the group saw fit to express an interest in expanding its project beyond a book collection alone. The object of the Atheneum was put into words as "the diffusion of general intelligence and the cultivation of public taste by the establishment of a public library and reading-room, with discretionary powers to hold public lectures and collect works of art." During the next meetings various persons volunteered to lecture for the benefit of the library; discussion about buying at least one art treasure also took place. But first many details had to be decided. That obstacle to agreement ten years before, the "fee or free" question, was settled in favor of the more democratic free system. If one could use the library for nothing, however, he could not be a voting member of the association on the same terms. For that privilege a ten-dollar fee was charged; if a member paid more than that amount, he was to have an additional vote for each additional ten dollars.

In spite of its brave start, The Meadville Atheneum lasted only into early January of 1868. In the record book that contains the minutes of its few meetings and the first records of its successor, the accounts of the last two January meetings are followed by an inserted letter written by the secretary, C. W. Winslow, to H. L. Richmond. It reads:

Friend Richmond,

As my last bequest, before leaving the shady walks of old Meadville, allow me to hand you the minute book of the Meadville Atheneum.

Wishing that it is not dead, but only sleepeth.

No more minutes were to be written into that book until 1879. In the meantime, however, some of the most important events in the story of Meadville's public library took place. The year 1868, when the Atheneum failed, is itself of special significance, for it decided the important issue, perhaps still carried along from the "fee or free" controversy, as to whether the library needed to wait for solid financial backing before making its start. In another sense, this meant the question of whether the library needed the support of the most substantial citizens of the town, or if it could make its way under the sponsorship of a larger number of persons with enthusiasm but of moderate means.

The dramatic way in which this was decided was recounted in the *Tribune-Republican* of December 12, 1907, in a letter to the editor written by Thomas Roddy, one of the most important persons in the

early affairs of the library. He recalled how, in 1868, a public meeting was called at the courthouse for the purpose of raising an endowment fund to establish a library. The agreement was that ten thousand dollars had to be pledged before any subscription should be binding on the donor. The meeting was well attended, and one thousand dollars each was quickly pledged by William Reynolds, G. B. Delamater, and Joshua Douglas. This, however, was the end of the subscriptions and the meeting was brought to an unsuccessful conclusion after what was apparently a heated discussion. It was after the gathering was officially disbanded that the main business was transacted. The story is most effectively told in Mr. Roddy's own words:

After the meeting adjourned a few of the younger and more impecunious members gathered at the curbstome, among whom were Allen Coffin, a printer; Joseph H. Lenhart, George O. Morgan, Dr. Dewey, J. H. Herrington, Wm Roddy; the writer; and others I do not now remember. After discussing the non-success of the meeting Mr. Coffin, a bright New Englander, startled those present by saying 'Why not start a library? Let each give a book and a dollar and we have a library.'

These words, spoken in it is hard to say what spirit, became highly important ones for the people of Meadville who were interested in organizing a library for their use and enjoyment. Not a ten-thousand-dollar minimum subscription, not even a ten-dollar fee for each vote in the committee, was now being considered. "A book and a dollar" were the new terms. The change is a significant one. It represented a commendable immediate, practical—even if impetuous—interest on the part of these young men. They did not have much money to give, and therefore they skipped that intermediate step and went immediately to talking of books—which, after all, were the final goal of the ten-thousand-dollar subscription.

With amazing speed the new group managed to overcome obstacles that had been impossible to the larger meeting that had just failed. A room for the library was offered by Edward H. Henderson, the internal revenue collector, whose office was over the post office. Within a few hours, forty dollars and forty books had been donated. Books came in with a frequency and of a quality that were surprising even to the enthusiastic founders. In less than a month nearly two hundred volumes, many of them subscription books that had cost the donors two to four dollars, a considerable price for a book at that time, were in the collection. One of the largest gifts was made by R. Lyle White, at that time the editor of the *Republican*. Crude shelves made

out of packing cases were installed in the office and the books arranged on them. A register was provided where members were to sign out and in the books they borrowed. Temporary officers were appointed, so that the library would not be altogether without organization. L. F. Margach became the first librarian.

The organization of this group took place on July 23, 1868. Not until April 22 of the next year was the library incorporated, as The Meadville City Library, or City Library of Meadville. Doctor E. H. Dewey was the first president, and Brooks Butterfield, secretary and treasurer. Nine trustees were to administer the library, three to be elected every six months. Thomas Roddy's letter, just quoted, makes the entire development of the library sound as if it might have taken place all in that one evening of 1868 when the subscription meeting broke up in failure. Actually, of course, many years of struggle were to follow this optimistic beginning before the library was securely established. After the library was incorporated, the requirements for becoming a voting member with the right to hold office remained the same—the donation of one dollar and one book yearly. As Mr. Roddy put it, "The kind and character of the book was not stipulated. Hence, its character was often amusing." This easygoing attitude on the part of the members, however, apparently was only an outcropping of real enthusiasm. Library meetings in these early months were well attended and lively. Later, committees were organized to canvass Meadville systematically by sections and collect money and books for the library. While highly successful, this method lacked something of the rather haphazard, but somehow effective, way of the original organizers of the library.

The City Library had various locations during its early years of existence. It remained two or three years in the post office building and then was moved to a small room over Porter's hardware store on Chestnut Street—rented at \$150 a year—with a different librarian in charge, who kept the library open at certain definite hours: Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, and Saturday evening until nine. This convenience apparently had not been available before. An interesting source of information on this period in the history of the library is available in the form of a newspaper clipping of a report of a meeting held January 18, 1871, which includes the report of the secretary, G. W. Delamater, for the year 1870. The president of the organization at this time was William Reynolds, the leader, thirteen years before, of the first attempt

to start a library; George B. Sennett was vice-president. Perhaps looking backward to its original informal beginnings, the library association was now seeking to establish a firmer financial basis for itself. The committee hoped, within the next year, to endow the association generously enough that it would become completely self supporting. It had, however, not yet arrived at a conclusion as to how this would best be brought about. The eighteen seventies were still years of struggle for the library project.

The secretary's report was, however, chiefly optimistic. Mr. Delamater pointed out the growth of the book collection and reader circulation, as follows:

The Board of Trustees, by their personal efforts during the past few months, have added many valuable books to [the] catalog [of the library], and have increased, very materially, the number of its readers. . . . Only about one dozen volumes have been lost during the year, and some of these may yet be found by a committee appointed for that purpose by the Board of Trustees.

The library had at this time more than seventeen hundred volumes, and 230 members, 140 of whom borrowed books regularly. Books were lent for two weeks, and only one could be taken at a time. Prospects for 1871 were apparently bright from the readers' viewpoint, for the Board authorized the purchase of one hundred dollars' worth of new books, "which," the secretary said, "will furnish to the public most of the late popular works." In addition to being well pleased with the book collection, the secretary was especially proud of the leaders of the association. In this quotation, also, he revealed a mood of triumphant indignation justified by the success of the library in the face of undue pessimism from others in the community:

It will be seen that the gentlemen having the immediate management of the library are young and energetic, and above all, honest, while the gentlemen elected to the offices of President and vice President cannot but give our citizens confidence in an institution which too often has been regarded as a mere experiment and likely to fail.

Mr. Delamater had two suggestions for improving the management of the library. One was a problem of administration, concerning his position as secretary. The rules for this office, he complained, were "so ambiguous that I have often been at a loss how to act." Two secretaries had been provided for—one for the association, and one for the Board of Trustees—and their duties were not clearly defined. As a result of his remarks, a committee was appointed to make new rules. The secretary's other suggestion concerned the arrangement of the books:

I would suggest the propriety of placing the books on the shelves according to subjects as they are catalogued, thus making it easier to find a particular book, and giving the librarian less trouble, at least after the plan is well understood by the members; certainly causing the Library to appear better to the cursory observer.

Here was an advocate of subject arrangement, several years before Dewey's classification scheme was published! The suggestion was apparently followed, for a catalog of the association, printed in 1873, stated that its books were arranged in twelve cases lettered from A to L, A being travels, B and C prose fiction, D juveniles, E science and education, F biography, G and H history, I poetry, J belles-lettres, K miscellaneous, and L religion. So the subject classification principle become established.

After Porter's, the next place of business for the library was in the Richmond block on Chestnut Street, where a free reading room was established in connection with it. Next, the library was located in the Derickson block, also on Chestnut Street, in a room at the rear of the offices then occupied by the Honorable Arthur L. Bates. The variety of housing arrangements for the library in this early period reveals its unsettled quality, to be sure—but also its resilience, its power to outlast small changes and still grow in popularity.

The event in the history of the library which was to change it from a struggling institution into a well-established one occurred in 1879. In the development of most organizations there is a turning point of this kind—or else the organization may be destined to failure. For instance, such a crucial occasion in the history of Allegheny College was resolved when the Methodist Church decided to take over its sponsorship. In 1879, from January 16 to February 3, the library held a Loan Exhibition in the Richmond Building. Samuel P. Bates was the leader in organizing this exhibition, which realized a profit of \$1637.60. The suggestion for it had come from a member of the *Republican* staff, N. B. Hofford, who wrote a letter describing the success of similar measures in other towns and proposing that a public meeting be called to discuss holding such an exhibit here. At the meeting, only three persons were in attendance, including the writer of the letter; but the three must have been of a type not easily discouraged, for they proceeded to select a number of prominent citizens to make up an arrangement committee. Most of the persons chosen responded favorably, and the loan exhibition proved highly successful.

A catalog of the exhibit—1789 items in all—was published which reveals the ambitious nature of the project. Committees were appointed

to take care of the following classes of materials: paintings, bronzes and statuary, etchings and water colors, home art, ceramics, precious stones and woods, books and relics, autographs and manuscripts, laces and jewelry, and textile fabrics. Of interest to anyone curious about the books and manuscripts available in the area at that time are the old newspapers, documents, and autographs that are mentioned. All of the items were lent for the occasion by their owners; some interesting private collections might be indicated, but for the most part the loans probably represented chance acquisitions. Some of the miscellaneous items are described in very intriguing terms. For instance, one finds mentioned, among old pieces of silver, Indian relics, souvenirs from Africa and the Holy Land, antique dishes, needlework, samples of minerals, the following: "Pin Cushion, by lady 75 years old," "2 Petrified Roots," "Shoes of Melvin Jones, the Alabama giant, who weighed 425 pounds when 18 years old," and "Two Chairs from one of which Lafayette dined"—apparently there was some confusion about which one! While these items may not seem pertinent to the distribution of books and the founding of libraries in the Meadville area, the fact yet remains that before this exhibition took place, the library seemed to many people a new, weak organization; when it was over, the library had somehow become a definitely established part of the community.

The year 1879, after the impetus provided by the success of the Loan Exhibition, proved to be an important one for the Meadville City Library. In addition to the library proper, there had for some time been groups of citizens organized in two separate organizations, one for the study and encouragement of art, another for local history. On February 27 the library, under the committee chairmanship of William Reynolds, voted to merge with these organizations, and on May 10 the resulting society was incorporated as the Meadville Library, Art and Historical Association. In the same year the newly formed association bought for its headquarters the property on Park Avenue and Center Street which was the old Huidekoper woolen mill, more recently remodeled and called Center Hall. More than eleven thousand dollars was raised for the purchase of this building. At this time the library contained almost three thousand volumes, which were transferred to the new building. The president of the Meadville Library, Art and Historical Association was William Reynolds; vice president, S. P. Bates; and treasurer, G. W. Adams. It was however, Thomas Roddy who took the lead in obtaining the new building, causing the *Crawford Journal*

to refer to him as "one of the three founders of the library, and from the day of its founding until the present day its most steadfast friend."

These are some of the early attempts to form libraries in Crawford County. Some of them failed, while others prospered and are thriving today. All but a few exist at the present time in some form—perhaps not as the original institutions, but as offshoots or developments from them. In any case, whether or not they succeeded, all of these early endeavors are a striking testament to the foresight and persistence of men who believed in a worth-while goal and were willing to make a real effort to achieve it.

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Also used extensively was the collection of the Crawford County Historical Society, including various clippings, leaflets, local newspaper files, and miscellaneous material.