

# Libraries in Lancaster

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

**A** LIBRARY company organized in the borough of Lancaster in 1796, continued in existence for about fourteen years.<sup>1</sup> A brief description of its appears in Vol. XXXIII, pp. 244-5, of the Proceedings of The Lancaster County Historical Society.

In the spring of 1807, Mr. Bernard Hubley, author of a work on the American Revolution, presented a copy of his book to this library. The Intelligencer and Weekly Advertiser of Tuesday, March 31st, 1807, contained the following correspondence on the subject:

“Lancaster, Pa., March 14th, 1807.”

“To the President and Members of the Library Company in the town of Lancaster.

“Gentlemen:

“Permit me the satisfaction to present to your laudable institution a copy of the first volume of ‘Hubley’s American Revolution,’ should you conceive it worthy to be deposited in your library.

“I am, gentlemen,

“Your most obedient humble servant,

“Bernard Hubley.”

He received the following reply:

“Lancaster, Pa., March 20th, 1807.

“Mr. Bernard Hubley.

“Dear Sir:

“The President and Members of the Lancaster Library Company received, with pleasure, the first volume of ‘Hubley’s American Revolution,’ and return their thanks to the author for the present.

“By order of the President,

“John Ross,

“Librarian.”

About the year 1811, this library was discontinued. A notice appeared in the Lancaster Journal, under date of Friday, February 15th, 1811, as follows:

---

<sup>1</sup> Der Deutsche Porcupein und Lancaster Anzeigs-Nachrichten of Wednesday, October 24th, 1798, contained the following:

“The Directors of the Lancaster Library Company are requested to meet at the Library, in the new building, at 4 o’clock, next Saturday afternoon.

“A. Graff, jun.,  
“Librarian.”

## “BOOKS WANTING.

“All persons having books belonging to the subscriber, or to the Lancaster Library Company, are requested to return them without delay.

“John Ross,  
“Librarian, L. L. C.”

After the last-mentioned notice, all trace of the Lancaster Library Company seems to be lost. Doubtless a lack of financial support caused its discontinuance.

In the following year, the Juvenile Society of Lancaster solicited subscriptions for a library. The enterprise, launched under the auspices of the society, was called “The Lancaster Union Library.” It was discontinued about the year 1819.

In the spring of the following year, an effort was made to advance the cause of education in Lancaster. The *Intelligencer* and *Weekly Advertiser* of Saturday, May 20th, 1820, contained the following:

“A number of ladies in the city of Lancaster, having lately formed themselves into a society, auxiliary to the Education Society, have remitted fifty dollars for the benefit of the said institution; the receipt of which is acknowledged by Dr. Ely, their corresponding secretary.”

In the spring of 1821, another effort was made to have a library in Lancaster, or else to unite the three library organizations, which at one time or another existed in the town, into one active organization. It is greatly to be regretted that the attempt proved unsuccessful.

The *Lancaster Journal* of Friday, March 16th, 1821, contained the following editorial on the subject:

### “LIBRARY

“An effort has been made by one or two writers in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* to draw the attention of the good people of this city, to the necessity and utility of establishing a public library.

“To argue upon the general advantages arising from such an institution were almost as useless as to demonstrate that two and two make four.

“For ourselves we can say that though having access to a great many books, we almost daily feel the want of a public library, as we, in the course of our reading, (circumscribed as it is) are frequently referred to books which from their scarcity, bulk or cost, are not to be found in private libraries.

“There are the remains of three libraries in this city, which, we have no doubt, would be immediately put into the possession

of a new company, (should a respectable one be established) ; and would, when brought together, make a very interesting and valuable collection of books ; but which, dispersed as they now are, have become totally useless. These, together, with the books that might be purchased by the sale of fifty or one hundred shares in a new company, would, no doubt, lay the foundation of an institution, the eminent advantages of which will not only be felt by ourselves, but may be extended to our posterity for ages to come.

“We would, therefore, suggest that a meeting of the citizens friendly to the establishment of a public library be called ; and that the surviving shareholders of the Juliana and Lancaster Libraries and the trustees of the Juvenile Library, be particularly invited to attend.”

Whether a meeting was held, as suggested, is not known, but we do know that a library company was not then organized. The subject, however, was revived in the spring of the following year, as the Lancaster Journal of Friday, March 1st, 1822, contained the following :

“An attempt to establish a public library in this city is contemplated by a number of our citizens. And as a preparatory step thereto, we have been requested to issue the subjoined notice, requesting a meeting of the shareholders in the Juliana and Lancaster Libraries and of the trustees of the Juvenile Library, for the purpose of effecting a union of the three establishments, organizing them into a single company, collecting the books, etc., now belonging to each, arranging them in proper order in some convenient place, where the citizens may have free access to them, and of adopting such other regulations as may be deemed necessary, in order to secure the permanent establishment of a public library.”

The notice referred to was as follows :

“The shareholders in the Juliana and Lancaster libraries and the trustees of the Juvenile library, and such other citizens as are disposed to promote the establishment of a Public and Apprentices' library, are requested to meet at the house of Col. Jacob Slough, on Friday, March 8th, at two o'clock in the afternoon.”

At the meeting, which was held as suggested, a committee, consisting of Rev. Dr. William Augustus Muhlenberg, associate rector of Saint James's Protestant Episcopal church, Jasper Yeates Smith, Dr. Samuel Humes, a prominent physician, John Reynolds, editor and proprietor of the Lancaster Journal, and Hugh Maxwell, was appointed to draft a constitution and rules for the government of the library company. They were to report at such time and place as the committee might appoint.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Lancaster Journal, Friday, March 15th, 1822.

In a "Life of the Rev. William Augustus Muhlenberg," written by Anne Ayres, appears a somewhat distorted picture of Lancaster at this time. It will be recalled that in December, 1820, Mr. Muhlenberg entered upon his duties as assistant to the Rev. Joseph Clarkson, rector of Saint James's Protestant Episcopal church, this city. He was deeply interested in education, and while here did much to advance its interests. "Religion and learning were at a low ebb in the city of Lancaster, Pa.," wrote Miss Ayres, "when Mr. Muhlenberg entered upon his cure there. . . . Public education seemed to be as little in advance as that of the church, and an indifference existed in this regard which at once roused Mr. Muhlenberg." Soon after his arrival, he wrote, in part, as follows:

"The apathy on the subject of education which prevails in this place, is fearful. I hope a better day is dawning. Happy shall I be if I am at all instrumental in its progress."

In the "Life of Muhlenberg," page 62, appears the following:

"Another beneficent work was greatly furthered if not actually originated by him. Unlike almost every other city of equal size in the Union, there was no public library of any kind in Lancaster, and the young mechanics and apprentices of the town were in a state of great mental as well as moral indigence. In the spring following his advent, we find a meeting of the citizens called to form 'A Public and Apprentices' Library.' Very few attended, but a committee was appointed to draft the constitution of the library, and Mr. Muhlenberg was made chairman. A little later, this library committee met in his study on the question of founding an Athaeneum."

In the spring of 1827, a reading room was opened in Lancaster, and a small library of well-selected books was maintained in connection with it. A brief history of the "Lancaster Reading Room" appears in Vol. XXXIII, pp. 249-254, of the Proceedings of The Lancaster County Historical Society.

On Wednesday evening, July 8th, 1829, a number of mechanics of Lancaster met at Mrs. Eichholtz's tavern and formed an organization known as the "Mechanics' Society of the City and County of Lancaster."<sup>3</sup> A library was maintained by this society for the use of its members and others.

The Lancaster Journal of Friday, November 6th, 1829, contained the following announcement:

#### "APPRENTICES' LIBRARY.

"The members of the Mechanics' Society of the City and County of Lancaster are notified that the Apprentices' Library will be opened on Friday next, at 5 o'clock, P. M., and be kept open

<sup>3</sup> Lancaster Journal, Friday, July 10th, 1829.

until 9, and every Friday evening thereafter, during which time the librarian will attend to deliver books, according to the rules and regulations, to every applicant entitled to the gratuitous benefits of the library. Mechanics, members of the society, will give written orders to such of their apprentices as are desirous of availing themselves of the opportunity now offered them of improving their minds.

“All persons, not members or the apprentices of those who are not members as above, are informed that a book will immediately be opened to receive subscriptions to the library, by the year, half year or quarter. Those wishing to become subscribers will please apply to A. Thomas, librarian, at the library, [South] Duke street, opposite the [Trinity] Lutheran church.

“Gentlemen of the city and county of Lancaster are respectfully invited to call and examine the library.”

In the Lancaster Journal of Friday, November 13th, 1829, appeared a catalogue of nearly three hundred volumes in the Apprentices' library.

It is interesting to note that the Mechanics' Society is still in existence and contributes books to the A. Herr Smith Memorial Library of Lancaster.

---

## Lancaster Military Band

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

ON Saturday evening, July 18th, 1829, a number of persons met at the public house of Jacob Rathfon for the purpose of organizing a military band.<sup>1</sup> John A. Landis was called to the chair, and James Johnston acted as secretary. At this meeting Jacob Gerber was appointed bandmajor, James Johnston, leader, and John A. Landis and Daniel Weidler trustees.

At the organization of the band, the instruments were played by the following: French horns, John A. Landis and Peter Gerber; German flutes, Henry Metzger, Daniel Dorwart and John Bachman; octave flute, Peter Getz; second octave flute, George Buckius; C. clarionets, Daniel Weidler, Jacob Baumiller and Jacob Gerber, Jr.; half moon, Frederick Smith; and patent Kent bugle, Clarkson Freeman, Jr.

How long the band existed is not known.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lancaster Intelligencer, Tuesday, July 21st, 1829.