

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The initiative of an organization first known as the Mother's Club was responsible for the procurement of a traveling library and donated collections of books, the basis of which later became the Laurens Public Library.

Through rigid control and hard work of the early workers, and through the loan and donations of books, the book collection slowly grew. When money was needed for early library operations, subscriptions for funds were procured by the ladies who predominated the ranks of library workers.

The passage in 1904 of a city tax levy established the first library board, and paved the way for a permanent library building owned by the city. Mrs. E.C. Strain acted as the first librarian, starting in 1904.

Through correspondence by Mrs. R.N. McCombs with Andrew Carnegie, and a resolution by the city council for perpetual maintenance, a permanent library building was erected in 1910 with donations from local citizens and Andrew Carnegie.

In the spring of 1914, when Mrs. E.C. Strain began feeling ill, Mrs. Edna Coffin took over the library duties.

The entire library collection, through the assistance of the Iowa State Library, was cataloged in 1927.

In 1955 an addition was added to the library which added much needed space to the library interior.

The resignation of Mrs. Edna C. Coffin as librarian and the appointment of Mrs. Lulu B. Cook as librarian late in 1957, ended Mrs. Coffin's forty-three years of service to the library and the community.

A revampment of the library interior in 1959 placed the children's area in the library addition, and made room for more shelving in the main room.

Another revampment in 1962 placed the children's area in the basement, and books from the main room were moved into the addition to allow space for a lounge and reading area in the main room.

This paper has shown that through an interest in books and children, and painstaking effort by a group of women, a library was eventually established. This group of women had such a devotion to the work of the library that they often took over library work usually reserved for a librarian. This was due, at least in part, to the lack of library education for the librarians, and the fact that at first the librarian's work was more as a caretaker of books than as a librarian.

Many of the board members through the years were intelligent persons, including educators, ministers and educated housewives, who helped to keep the library, to progress with the times, and to provide more and more services.

Organizations and interested individuals contributed their share to the progress of the library through donations of equipment, furniture, redecorating, books, and a story hour for the children.

The librarians contributed much to the development of the library through attendance at workshops and in-service training.

All in all, it took the initiative of a group of mothers to obtain a library, and the perseverance of board members and other interested individuals to maintain it and progress through the years to produce the status of the library in 1964.