

# THE BIRTH OF A LIBRARY

As I read about the beginning of the library in Culver, I was immediately struck by the enthusiasm and cooperation of both the town and the lake communities that led to the successful creations of the library. The money, talent and energy donated by merchants and business people in town and by summer residents was just plain awesome. Here's an excerpt from the Culver Newspaper of April 2, 1914.

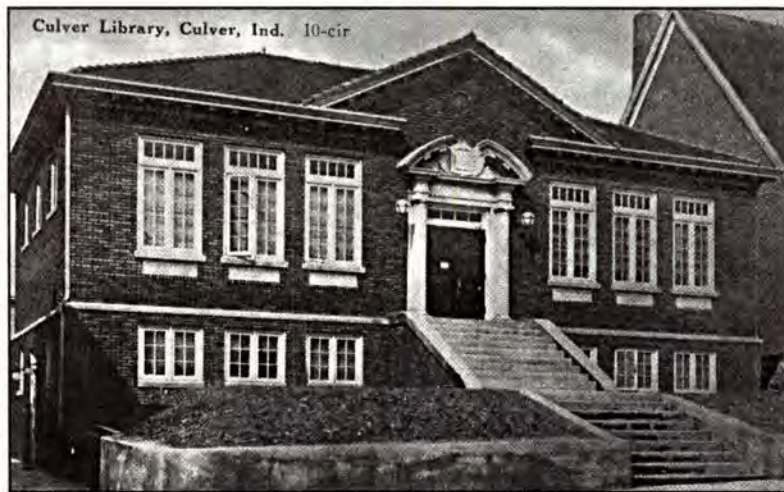
*"The first step has been taken toward securing a Carnegie Library building in Culver. A committee of seven was appointed at the Commercial Club Meeting the other night to correspond with the State Library Association to get information and to solicit the people of Culver and Union township for donations of books as a nucleus for a library. For an indefinite period the use of three rooms above Dr. Tallman's office will be donated for the library and reading rooms by S.C. Shilling."*

On September 29th of the same year the library board held its first meeting and organized as follows: Book Committee: A.B. Holt, Rev. Michael and Edna Stahl; Building Committee: J.P. Walter, Mrs. I.G. Fisher and Dr. E.E. Parker (Pres.); Finance Committee: Dr. N.S. Norris (V.P.), W.S. Easterday and Mrs. W.O. Osborn (Sec.)

It must have been a dynamite board because things began to move immediately. An application was made to the Carnegie Corp. and a grant of \$10,000 was approved. They rented rooms for the temporary use of the library and hired a janitor. They solicited the citizens of Culver City and Union Township for donations of books. Miss Zola Moss was hired as librarian (all married ladies were eliminated) and the men of the committee agreed to maintain the heating in the reading rooms. By the end of December, there were 1500 books on the shelves. The book Committee was instructed "to catalog books as best they could".

On November 30th, a group of merchants and business people pledged the purchase price of \$1450 for the lot on Main Street between the bank and the Methodist Church. They were W.H. Porter, Alva L. Porter, John Osborn, Speyer Bros., H. Tallman, O. T. Goss, P. V. Wickizer, Henry Pecher, D. H. Smith, N.W. Rector, Mitchel Stabenow, Wm. Hollett, W. Hand, W. O. Osborn, F. J. Easterday, and S. C. Shilling. An architect was chosen, and contractors hired for construction to begin. There was a building on the lot which was sold for \$10.00. Mrs. Bee Nolin remembers that it was a log cabin and Fran Butler tells us that a bachelor had been living there and that the children were afraid of him. In December, 1914, the library was named the Culver City-Union Township Library.

At this point, a group of eight summer residents sent a pledge to the library board to let them know they were "interested in the welfare of proposed free public library, therefore and in consideration of the benefits that we may receive by being permitted the use of said library, we do respectively pledge and agree to pay as donation" the sum of \$350. Signers of the pledge included C. C. Perry, Elizabeth Marmon, the Robinson sisters, Charles Coffin, J. G. Mueller. This was not the end of the interest and contribution of the summer people, as we will see.



On May 3, 1915, Mr. Brookie was selected as architect for the new library. The general contractor was M. Cutshall of Akron, who had built the Carnegie library in Akron, Ind., and had the reputation of being an "honest and capable builder". The plumbing contract was given to A. M. Roberts of Culver, heating to O. Stengel of Rochester and lighting to G. Emanaker of Plymouth. The brick selected was manufactured by the Western Brick Co. of Danville, Ill., and was of a light tan shade, pointed with chocolate colored mortar and which would "make a beautiful exterior". The rear wall was covered with the same brick instead of common red brick, for an added cost of \$25, which cost was approved because "the appearance of the building will be much improved". The roof was covered with Spanish tile. The library was built with subscriptions by the citizens of the township and the city, a tax levy, Carnegie Grant, and a donation of \$1000 by Mrs. Elizabeth Marmon, grandmother of Ann Greenleaf, who continues her family's tradition of supporting local endeavors to this day.

On Jan. 5, 1916, the first meeting took place in the new library. The Piano Committee decided on a Hobart M. Cable Piano from Welcome Miller for \$225. Mr. Miller agreed to keep the piano in tune for three years without charge. The Culver City Club donated the electric light fixtures. Mr. Speyer loaned a clock to the library until they were financially able to buy one. Three large portraits of General Foch, General Haig and General Pershing were given by the Robinson Sisters, who also gave money. Mr. and Mrs. J. G. Mueller of Indianapolis gave a set of the Encyclopedia Americana. Mrs. Marmon donated many rare volumes, as well as popular books for adult and juvenile reading. Anne Greenleaf tells us that when her grandmother came in possession of a book she did not like she burned it to make sure no one else would read it. A twenty-volume set of the Book of Knowledge and many music books were also among her gifts. Mrs. Marmon paid for magazine subscriptions to the library for many years and finally donated \$2000. The income from this money was to be used to continue these subscriptions. Mrs. Marmon, according to record, seems to be the biggest contributor to the library, second only to Andrew Carnegie, but did not want her name used in connection with her contributions. We know of them from the minutes of the Library Board, which are available at the Library.

*(continued on page 2)*

*(continued from page 1)*

# THE BIRTH OF THE LIBRARY

John Osborn and Mr. & Mrs. W.O. Osborn were also very interested and supportive of the library. John owned the Osborn Hotel, which many of us remember as being an outstanding landmark in the view of town from the lake. His son W.O. Osborn, was cashier of the State Exchange Bank and together they made a generous contribution to the purchase of the property on Main Street. Mrs. W.O. Osborn served on the library board and on various committees for many years. Fran Butler remembers her mother (Mrs. Osborn) as being active in the church, the Culver City Club and the Library. Fran's maternal grandfather, Mr. Schilling, president of the bank before W.O. Osborn, was also one of the initial benefactors of the library.

And so the library was built and I suppose there was as much comment about the design and construction as there is today about the addition and renovation of that venerable building. The ground floor of the library was originally an auditorium used by many groups: churches, the high school, the Red Cross Sewing Ladies during World War I, the Boy Scouts, and probably many groups not noted here. It was agreed that activities considered worthwhile were not charged the usual fee of \$3.00, which commercial groups paid, and which included time for one rehearsal. Ruth Mackey remembers playing the piano in the auditorium in a recital by Mrs. Hubbell's piano classes. Donna Edgington, age 5, was the bride in a production of "Tom Thumb's Wedding". This mysterious entry in the minutes of May 1, 1916, "Moved not to let the auditorium for the use of special lectures by elder R.S.L. Scott" has me wildly curious about Elder Scott. If anyone knows the story behind this decision by the library board, please let me know.

The first library card was issued to Edna Stahl on Jan. 26, 1915. Miss Stahl was an original member of the board and also one of the trustees, appointed by Judge Bernetha. She was a schoolteacher and her team won a spelling bee in Culver in 1905, which news made the

Culver paper. Fran Butler remembers that Miss Stahl never married. Mrs. Mabel A. White was the librarian most of my informants remember. She was promoted from assistant in 1918 and served as librarian for 24 years. She is remembered as being "very formidable and strict the essence of the librarian who wants complete quiet and respect for the collection". Her notes inform us:

... "the staff work hard to circulate as much non-fiction as possible, and with success. Children's work is very well looked after, and the entire place has an atmosphere of welcome. It is the purpose of each one in charge to make each visitor feel at ease and at liberty to browse around the books and magazines as much as he likes, and to use the reading room at any time."

From my experience with the library staff of 2002, it appears that Mrs. White's philosophy remains the same and will move, along with those knowledgeable and pleasant people, into the new library. It is our hope that permanent residents and summer residents will acknowledge each other's contribution and worth to the value of the library. It is an important way for "lake" people to connect with "town" people and for Culver to become "our town" to all of us who share citizenship in the unique experience of Culver.

*(In writing this article I mainly relied on the minutes of the library board, notes by Mrs. Mabel A. White, and newspaper articles by Teri Levett and Marshall Brown. These were kindly furnished to me by Librarian Scott Pletka. I was also helped by the cordial lady in the history section of the Marshall County Historical Society Museum, whose name I shamefully neglected to note. I consulted with Ruth Mackey, Ann Greenleaf, Fran Butler and Bee Nolin, through her daughter, Mimi Miller. My thanks to all.)*

## FACT or FICTION?

By Marcia Adams

We, the keepers of the history of our Lake Maxinkuckee community, are often faced with choosing which historical happenings are worth recording. Narrative or oral history is ticklish, for in the years of repeating what took place an event can be elaborated. For this reason some stories are difficult to authenticate. Recordings and individuals have told the stories I repeat here. I record them for you to read and to be the judge of their authenticity. I know they make for interesting reading!

The eldest son of George V, great-grandson of Queen Victoria born in the year of 1894, christened "Edward Albert Christian George Andrew Patrick David" by the Archbishop of Canterbury, became the Prince of Wales in July of 1911. At the death of King George in January, 1936, the Prince of Wales was given the title "King Edward VIII, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, Ireland, and the British Dominions Beyond the Seas, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India, Sovereign of the Most Noble Order of the Garter". As such, he shared in the official life and public ceremonies of his country a little over ten months: January 20 to December 11, 1936. He abdicated the throne before his coronation. His brother George became the new king on June 3, 1936. All over the world the tabloids picked up the story: THE KING OF ENGLAND ABDICATES HIS THRONE FOR THE LOVE OF A COMMONER! The English subjects were shocked. It was unconscionable! Disgraceful! The crowned head of state refused to take his rightful position as the leader of one of the most powerful countries of that time all for the love of Wallis Warfield Simpson. Edward had forsaken his royal heritage to marry a twice-divorced woman who, as such, was unacceptable to the Archbishop of Canterbury and to The Church of England.

At his first accession council meeting King George VI created

the title "Prince Edward Duke of Windsor" for his older brother who had refused to be king.

THESE FACTS ARE WELL DOCUMENTED IN HISTORY BOOKS.

At this point, two men come into the story that concern Culver, Indiana.

There was a man from Logansport, Indiana, named Walter Foskett. In the late thirties he and his wife, Bertha, had a cottage at 2500 East Shore Drive, on Lake Maxinkuckee. They made their home in Palm Beach, Florida where Walter practiced law. In Palm Beach the Fosketts met and became close friends of Sir Harry and Lady Oakes—but I get ahead of my story.

Long before being titled "Sir" by the Queen of England the Canadian, Harry Oakes, of Canada and Dover-Foxcroft, Maine, had earned a college degree, had studied to be a doctor of medicine for two years, and had left the academic life to pan for gold. His search took him from central Africa, Australia, Pacific Islands, New Zealand and to the gold rush in California. In 1914, after over fifteen years of hand-to-mouth existence and unwavering determination, Oakes found his gold near Ontario, Canada, in the bottom reaches of Kirkland Lake. At the time, it was the greatest gold discovery in Canada and the second most productive gold mine in the world. The crown recognized the man of wealth with the title "Sir".

Sir Harry and Dame Oakes acquired several homes in England, Canada, Maine, and Palm Beach, Florida, while maintaining their primary residence in the city of Nassau on New Providence Island in the Bahamas.

As one of the wealthiest men of the British Commonwealth Sir Harry was well respected for his philanthropic endeavors. He

enriched the city of Nassau with a golf course and an airport. He participated in the rejuvenation of a failing hotel and donated generously to charities. His lavish giving made him a driving force in Nassau and earned him a spot in the socially elite circle of the Duke of Windsor who also lived in Nassau, having been appointed governor of the Bahamas by his brother King George VI of England. The Canadian philanthropist was a diamond in the rough who demanded respect but cared little for the opinion and feelings of others. Such a demeanor earned him as many enemies as friends, with some hating him enough to wish him dead.

While socializing in Palm Beach, the Oakes met Walter and Bertha Foskett of Indiana and the two families became close friends. Walter Foskett became the attorney for the Oakes family. The Foscetts entertained the Oakes at their lake home in Culver, Indiana and the Oakes and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor entertained the Foscetts when the Indiana couple visited Nassau.

The Indiana couple and the entire Nassau community were shocked, if not somewhat surprised, when Sir Harry Oakes was murdered in his home—torched in his own bed. At the time of the murder Dame Oakes and daughter Nancy and family were in the States. Nancy's husband, Alfred de Marigny (known as Freddie), had remained on the island and was arrested for the murder of his father-in-law. The trial was a long, drawn out affair and ended when circumstantial evidence was not enough to convince the jury that Freddie was guilty.

This is where Culver and Lake Maxinkuckee come into the story. An undocumented report claimed that Dame Oakes asked Mr. Foskett to defend her son-in-law. Shortly after the sensational murder trial and acquittal of Freddie de Marigny, Walter Foskett was at the lake. Bob Discher (deceased), who lived on Lake Maxinkuckee and who was a friend and fellow fisherman of Walter Foskett, asked Walter if the son-in-law had committed the crime. Mr. Foskett told Bob that he had been retained for one million dollars to help acquit the young man. He was not about to let Freddie be guilty.

It is true that Walter Foskett and his wife, Bertha, owned a home on Lake Maxinkuckee. The Foscetts were friends of Bob and Tamar Discher at the lake and in Logansport, Indiana. But the story of the Indiana lawyer's part in the news-famous murder trial of Sir Harry Oakes is questionable. Documentation says that Foskett was retained as the legal council for all of Sir Harry's family and business matters. Sources relate that Nancy Oakes, who had married de Marigny without the consent or approval of her parents, hired an investigator from New York to help with Freddie's defense and that she herself defended her husband during the trial. Recordings do not mention that Dame Oakes participated in the defense procedures and in some of the same recording the Foscetts are mentioned as being faithful friends of Dame Oakes. That being the case, it is unlikely that Mr. Foskett took part in Freddie's trial.

Another interesting story has been told about the Foscetts. The Foscetts had met the Duke and Duchess of Windsor in Nassau. During the trial of Alfred de Marigny the Duke and Duchess were in the States and the Foscetts invited the royal couple to make a visit to their Lake Maxinkuckee home. The Windsors accepted the invitation, came incognito and preserved their privacy while hidden away in the Foskett guesthouse. The small house is behind the main lake house at 2500 East Shore Drive. The only one who knew of the Windsors visit were some local folks who were hired to attend to the couples needs and privacy. Dave Burns (deceased) is one of those who helped with their needs and related the facts of the visit to other Culverites. Bob Discher, as a friend of Walter Foskett, told that same story. Tamar Discher, who still lives in Culver, says she remembers her husband repeating the story about the royal couples visit.

Fred and Marcia Adams bought the 2500 East Shore Drive property from the Carl Steely family in 1979. In renovating, Marcia found a soot blackened fireplace screen in the small guesthouse. Her son, Bill Adams, took the screen to Indianapolis to be restored and cleaned. Upon cleaning the screen, the antique renovator said it was



**Is it possible that this firescreen could be a thank-you gift from the Duke and Duches of Windsor?**

made of solid brass and the fire screen was a very fine brass mesh of the kind made in England at the turn of the century—could the crest at the top of the brass screen be the crest of the Stuart Clan of Scotland, a part of the royal family of England? And could the screen have been a thank you gift from the Duke and Duchess of Windsor to their hosts Walter and Bertha Foskett when the royal couple visited the Indiana couple on Lake Maxinkuckee?

Books have recorded these facts:

- 1—The Mob wanted to establish gambling in Nassau and Sir Harry Oakes was against the idea.
- 2—Sir Harold George Christie, Sir Harry's friend and partner in some developing deals, was for the gambling. Some sources say that Christie's part in Sir Harry's death is questionable.
- 3—The Duke of Windsor intensely disliked Alfred de Marigny, the accused murderer. After the trial, the Duke ordered the acquitted man off New Providence Island.
- 4—The Duke and Duchess left Nassau during the murder trial of de Marigny and made a hurried trip to the United States—destination unknown.

Could it be that Culver was the hide-away spot chosen by the Duke and Duchess? Did the royal couple wish to be absent during the murder trial of Alfred de Marigny for some reason? And could the solid brass fire screen be connected in some way with that visit?

Perhaps there is another chapter to history. Or perhaps only a Paul Harvey can tell "the rest of the story". I for one, having read passages of recorded and heard oral versions of history, think it's possible that the Duke and Duchess were indeed in Culver. The screen as a gift to the Foscetts from the Duke and Dutchess may be questionable, for narrative history tells of the royal pair, as invited guests of friends, taking lovely bed linens from their hosts' beds for their own use. If that is true, the two were not disposed to give but to receive.

*(Fact or Fiction? You decide. Marcia P. Adams)*

*Source: A Conspiracy of Crowns, The true story of the Duke of Windsor and the murder of Sir Harry Oakes by Alfred de Marigny with Mickey Herskowitz.*

## JULY'S SPEAKER

The Society is privileged to have Jack Smith as the speaker for our July 20 program this year. A South Bend businessman, Mr. Smith has been a dedicated collector of Lincoln photographs for forty years and now has more than 1000 original framed photographs, lithographs, engravings and woodcuts of Lincoln. His pictures were the nucleus of the exhibit, "Picturing Lincoln, the Changing Image of America's 16th President" at the Northern Indiana Center for History in South Bend in 2000 and 2001. He attends the yearly re-enactment of the battle of Gettysburg and his description of the 10,000 soldiers, with drum and bugle corps for each regiment, is emotional and powerful.

Fortunately for us, Jack Smith also loves to share his enthusiasm for Lincoln and will bring some of his collection to Culver for our July meeting. So circle July 20 on your Calendar. You will not want to miss this unique opportunity.

### JAMES F. MOORE, R.I.P.

Jim Moore died on March 1, 2002. He was one of the original members of our Society and, to many of us, a dear friend and neighbor. He was among those on the Library Board who favored the preservation and continued use of the Carnegie Library Building and was pleased to see his efforts, with the determined support of many of our members, come to a successful conclusion. Donations to the Society in memory of Jim are being gratefully accepted and will be used to honor the effort and dedication he gave to it's mission.

## SUMMER SCHOOL

The Summer School began in Culver in 1902 with the Naval program. Twenty-two midshipmen were the beginning of the proud tradition that expanded with the years. The Summer Schools grew to give young people new experiences in many areas, enriching their lives. For one hundred years there have been many dedicated people who have made these opportunities available. We congratulate the Culver Academies in this Centennial Year.

**The Antiquarian and Historical Society has invited Bob Hartman to present a program on June 29<sup>th</sup> entitled, "History and Development of the Naval School"**

## YEARLY DUES \$20.00

If you haven't already sent your check for 2002 family dues, please do it soon. Send dues to The Antiquarian and Historical Society, P.O. Box 125, Culver, IN 46511-0125

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