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V.F. Beeton - History

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

EARLY HISTORY OF THE BEETON LIBRARY  
1886-1914

TERM PAPER II

LIS 1510

INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT AND USERS

PROFESSOR M. CARIOU

FACULTY OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

BY

JANINE GRADY

LOCKER NUMBER 44

APRIL 3, 1991

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NOTICE.—All those who have subscribed to-  
wards the establishment of the Beeton Mechanics'  
Institute are requested to meet in the Workmen's  
Hall, Tuesday, Nov. 30th, at 5 p.m. promptly for the  
transaction of necessary business. Members are  
desired to bring lists of such books as they would  
desire to see in the library.

C. W. LAWTON.  
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is the consideration mentioned in the  
invoice, it is claimed by the purchaser  
in justice to the wife this must not be over-  
looked—that other payments, reaching  
all \$67, have been made. This is prob-  
ably the first attempt made in Canada to set a  
valuation upon a wife. But it must not be  
taken as a precedent, as some wives are  
worth more than others.—Toronto Mail

The Mail is slightly in error, says the  
Dufferin Post. This is not the first time  
which a valuation has been set upon a wife  
in Canada. Mr. A. Sutherland, our efficient  
jail governor, has given the Post the particu-  
lars of a very interesting auction, which  
took place at the village of Bradford  
in the county of Simcoe, in the winter  
1856. In the early part of that year a rich  
prepossessing young woman came to Brad-  
ford, where she engaged as a servant in a  
respectable family. She soon became  
acquainted with a wagon-maker, named  
Jim Mannel, then working in the shop of  
Mr. Archie Brown, Mr. Sutherland's un-  
derling. Jim was soon led captive by the charms  
of the sprightly and active housemaid. The  
latter reciprocated Jim's love, and in an

## EARLY HISTORY OF THE BEETON PUBLIC LIBRARY: 1886-1914

### BEETON MECHANICS' INSTITUTE: 1886-1895

On November 25, 1886 a notice was prominently located on the front page of The Beeton World. "All those who have subscribed towards the establishment of the Beeton Mechanics' Institute are requested to meet in the Workmen's Hall, Tuesday, Nov. 30th at 8 p.m. promptly for the transaction of necessary business. Members are desired to bring lists of such books as they would desire to see in the library." (1)

The timing of the event, so soon after the passing of the 1886 "Act respecting Mechanics' Institutes and Art Schools" (49 Victoria Statutes of Ontario 1886), suggests that it was this Act which encouraged the residents to organize. In 1882 the "Free Libraries Act" (45 Victoria Statutes of Ontario, 1882) had allowed for free libraries to be established by incorporated villages and funded by a municipal levy "not exceeding one half of a mill in the dollar". Beeton had incorporated as a Village in 1884. The 1886 Act allowed for a Mechanics' Institute, funded by public subscription and provincial government grants, to function solely as a library, without the requirement that it also act as an educational institution for the betterment of the working man and the middle class (2).

The Beeton World had been advocating for some time the formation of "such a desirable institution" through articles that outlined the necessary steps to take, the many and profitable advantages, and the existence of "a good supplementary Government

grant". It had announced the organizational meeting on November 18, with confidence that now "the ball has started to roll in earnest, success is almost assured." The ladies and all interested were invited to meet with D. Boyle Esq., of Toronto, who would be "present to aid in the work of organisation." (3)

While no record could be found naming the first directors of the Institute, there is little question that the driving force from the beginning was David Alanson Jones (4). D. A. Jones had arrived in the community of Clarksville, Township of Tecumseth, in 1864 with his wife Jessie. A staunch Liberal, he was Postmaster of Beeton from 1866 until his death in 1910. He was also an entrepreneur, a land speculator, an inventor and a visionary. The 50 acre parcel of land he bought in 1867 formed the boundaries for much of the early development of the community. From the store he ran with his brother (later Senator L. M. Jones of Toronto) he went on to develop or influence the growth of many of the industries and institutions in the village, such as the newspaper, a planing factory, the Grand Trunk Railway station, building developments, the Presbyterian Church and the bee industry. It was the domesticated honey bees he brought to the area and the factory for manufacturing bee equipment which gave Beeton its new name (5).

By 1886 Beeton was a thriving, active community with 77 commercial and industrial businesses, including 4 hotels, 7 grocery stores, a hosiery plant, a photographer, 2 musicians, 4 stationers and an oyster parlour. The Beeton World alone employed 14 people to publish the paper as well as the Canadian

Poultry Journal and the Canadian Bee Journal. Although the population of the Village itself was only about 500 people, it was the center of a productive farming area. In a 2 month period A. N. Hipwell shipped 40 carloads of cattle from Beeton to the markets in Boston and Montreal from the Grand Trunk station (built on land given by D. A. Jones). Since the line from Toronto branched at Beeton to travel north to Collingwood and northeast to Alandale near Barrie, the Village was also the stop-over for numerous salesmen and suppliers (6).

The subscription rate to join the Mechanics' Institute was \$1 (7). The first books were purchased in April 1887 for prices ranging from 47 cents for Carlyle's Frederick the Great to \$1.00 for Parkman's various works of North American history (8). Circulation began in May (9). The Directors of the Institute were quite active in these early years. In 1889 The Beeton World noted a \$25 grant from Council which, added to other funds, allowed for \$150 to be spent on new books. It also mentioned that the Bradford Mechanics' Institute received only \$52.25 to spend on 63 new books. In October a catalogue of books was prepared to be distributed free to members. In December the directorate met to discuss the organization of evening classes. However, it was "deemed impractical" to expect that the young men in the community would be willing to give their evenings to a commercial course and instead a Literary Society was formed. The first event was to be a debate on the continually contentious issue of the family milk cows which freely roamed the streets of Beeton, D. A. Jones arguing in favour of a by-law to control

their wanderings (10).

By April, 1890 the newspaper was able to report an Institute membership of 112 with a number of these being farmers. It had been decided that "To meet the wants of those not residing in the village and coming to town on the average of but once a week...that payment of the annual dollar entitles a member to take out two books at a time." The 900 volumes in the collection had been purchased for a total of \$600 with the printed catalogue making the selection of books to borrow "an easy matter". The writer pointed out that "The Institute is deserving of even still greater patronage than at present accorded." (11).

A further addition was made to the collection in October, 1891 with the Institute "closed for a day or two in order that the library committee might classify and arrange a large number of new volumes". These had been chosen by Messrs. Wigglesworth and W. H. Hammett (local M.P.P.) who were commended for selecting "a splendid list of valuable books...at a very low price", including the writings of John Ruskin, Wilkie Collins and Darwin, as well as 34 volumes in a Social Science series "which embrace the leading authors on these interesting topics". It was the opinion of the writer that the "addition to the library, though containing several of the lighter class of fiction, is on the whole much more substantial, useful and edifying reading than the majority of works now on hand, and will be much praised by the class of readers who like to read, but who are not particularly interested in the struggles and perplexities which befall Emelin Jane from the time she left school until she became the happy

bride of Adolphus George". He went on to recommend to the young men of the village that becoming members of the Institute would better "occupy the time they now squander around the village corners and stores". (12) The 500 catalogues which were made available to the members took 48 to 50 pages to list all the books (13).

No mention was found of where the Institute was located in the first years but later evidence indicates that it was probably in the Post Office and that the librarian was officially D. A. Jones and unofficially his wife, Jessie (13). The first location of the Post Office with D. A. as Postmaster was in his house on Centre Street. Later it was moved to his store on the northwest corner of Main and Centre Streets. This would have been after the fire of 1892 when he built the block of 5 brick buildings which still exist at 2 Main to 10 Main Street West. The fire of 1892 was a devastating blow to the Village, in one night destroying most of the heart of the commercial area on both sides of Main Street as well as homes and livelihoods. (14) However, the Post Office and the Institute's collection both survived.

#### BRETON PUBLIC LIBRARY: 1895-1909

The Mechanics' Institute supporters were again quick to take advantage of provincial legislation with the passing of the 1895 "Act to amend and consolidate the Acts respecting Free Libraries and Mechanics Institutes." (46 Victoria Statutes of Ontario 1895) which allowed a municipal council to enact a by-law to convert a Mechanics' Institute into a free public library. Such a public library could not be supported through taxes but the province

would grant up to \$100 to match a municipal grant from the Village for the purchase of books. (15)

A communication was sent from the Board of Management of the Mechanics' Institute to the Village Council on July 30, 1885 requesting that the Village take over control of the Library. It was then "Moved by Councillor Smith and seconded by Councillor Scott that the petition of the Board of Management of the Public Library to have the library transferred to the corporation of the Village of Beeton as per Statute be adopted and the Library be forthwith transferred and that the Council now appoint the following as managers Thos Lannen to retire 1st Feb-96 Joseph Wright 1st Feb-97 J A Macpherson 1st Feb-98 and that the Clerk notify the School Board of this resolution at once as provided by Statute" (16). Joseph Wright was a Reeve of the Village for 6 terms and the Town Clerk for many years following. Joseph Macpherson was Principal of the Beeton School. Council started out well with a grant of \$100 for books in November and another \$40 a few months later. In the Council appointments for 1896 A. L. McArthur replaced Thomas Lannen for a two year term. All three men were subsequently re-appointed for 3 year terms and Mr. MacPherson was also appointed Treasurer of the Library Board and school auditor for an annual salary of \$5. (18)

Around 1898 D. A. Jones built a 2 building brick block at 12-14 Main Street West. 12 Main Street West became the location for the Post Office and the Library until the death of Mrs. D. A. (Frances) Jones, the Postmistress from 1910-1918. According to Marjorie Drury's brief history of the Library, "The story goes

that when the property was staked out for construction of other buildings D. A. Jones moved the stakes on to his property unknown to the builder. Thus the walls were built leaving Mr. Jones the two end walls to finish." (19) Presumably this was the additional space required for the Library. In May, 1899 Council granted \$180 on the request of the Library Board but there is no mention of why. Since this is \$80 more than the province would match for book purchases, perhaps the new location required additional shelving. A new catalogue was also written that year and added to until 1913. In a beautiful copperplate hand it records all the books still in the collection from April, 1887 on. (20) Using it and the Public Library Roll and Record Book for 1901 it is possible to trace the types of books on the shelves and what titles the members were actually reading.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Collection</u>	<u>Circulation</u>
History	321	286
Historical Tales	41	94
Biography	132	10
Voyages	202	227
Travel and Adventure	32	37
Science and Art	114	19
General Literature	380	634
Poetry and Drama	67	19
Religious Literature	308	304
Fiction	561	1339
Miscellaneous (Juvenile?)	307	343
Works of Reference	47	47

According to the instructions to the librarian on the first page of the Library Stock Catalogue, the books were to be labelled with the first letter of their category followed by a number in order of its entry under that category. This would explain why cataloguing was such a major undertaking, requiring the closing of the Library for up to a month while all the books were collected, reordered, numbered and listed by title, author, publisher, price, and acquisition date.

It is difficult to know exactly what the Library was called at this time. Inside the Library Stock Catalogue is a stamp that says Beeton Free Library. In Council Minutes the reference was always to the Beeton Public Library Board. However, it is possible that the common usage was still the Mechanics Library. In Never a Day so Bright Kate Aitken, later known as Mrs. A. to thousands of Canadian housewives, reminisces about her childhood in Beeton in the early 1900's. She remembered the "Mechanics' Library...[as] a poky little hole behind the post office, and Mrs. Jones administered it. The books were on a par with the surroundings; pretty dull." (22) She must have found some books to read. In the 1901 Roll and Record Book Kate Scott is listed as owing the Library \$.26 (23).

The Mrs. Jones mentioned would be Mrs. D. A. (Jessie) Jones who died in 1908. Married since 1863, Mrs. Jones had no children but was the social leader of the community, "a porcelain-like little figure, tiny, straight as an arrow, beautifully dressed". (24) In her speech on "Woman's Lawful Place in the Kingdom of God" to the A.W.F.M.S., she had said "we the sisters...claim the

right of freeborn citizens to the privilege of being co-workers in the glorious cause of extending God's Kingdom to the ends of the earth." (25)

The Library seemed to operate placidly throughout the early 1900's with only a few disturbances. J.A. Macpherson was again appointed to the board in January, 1901 but resigned in March. His replacement, A. A. Carpenter, was himself replaced by the Rev. W. W. Wallace in June. In 1902, for the first time, the January board appointment was made through a by-law with an unnamed board member appointed along with the Town Hall caretaker and the Truant Officer. Another member resigned in March, 1906. Council called a public meeting to discuss the Public Library and the Niagara Power Company. (26) While most of the meeting centered around the Niagara power question, the library unfortunately received its share of attention. "In reference to the public library, it was decided to dispense with the reading-room and to issue tickets for 25 cents, with the privilege of receiving twelve books. There are two vacancies on the board, and it is likely they will be filled at the next council meeting." (27)

The Council grant varied in these years, perhaps depending on the health of the Village economy and the success of the crops: \$90 in 1900, \$255 in 1902, \$30 "half year's grant" in March, 1903. In 1904 is found the first mention of a December payment of \$50. In 1907 this is listed as a payment to "D. A. Jones librarian," an amount to cover rental, heating and care of the library that can be compared to the \$50 paid to the caretaker

of the Town Hall the same year. (28)

YEARS OF POSSIBILITIES: 1909-1914

The newspaper of December 18, 1909 carried the complaints that people were not using the library, the books were "a splendid" lot but old, and Council was not providing enough money. "It seems too bad to throw out such a lot of fine books. And yet, why pay rent for something hardly ever used?" On the same page is an article about the first library institute for the Collingwood district to be held January 20-21 under the direction of the Ontario library association. Each library in the district was required to send one delegate or have \$5 deducted from the provincial grant, the delegate's expenses to be paid by the department of education. The program was to include topics on library work and addresses by "prominent library workers", including Mr. W. E. Morsey, provincial inspector of public libraries. (29)

It can be assumed that Beeton responded because 1910 was a year of new initiatives for the Library Board. The first Minutes and accounts date from that year. In the accounts for 1910 the Treasurer reported on April 6 "D. A. Jones pd me receipts from sale of cards", while November 3 and December 31 the notation read "Received from Librarian receipts of fines and card sales" (30). When \$100 was granted by Council for new books it was decided by the board to spend \$40 on fiction and \$50 on nonfiction (31). The library was closed so that all the outstanding books could be returned and the 130 new books classified. The Board ordered the printing of 500 members cards,

each to cost 10 cents and to be good for the loan or renewal of 12 books (32). The Beeton World wrote that interest had revived with the reopening of the Library and 50 membership cards had already been issued. On November 7, Mr. Aitken "gave a report of the public library, which showed that a great deal of interest is being taken in it and that the duties of the librarian are being satisfactorily performed". (33)

D. A. Jones died on November 30, 1910. In the same issue as his long and affectionate obituary, was the information that candidates for the Postmaster's job were already announcing themselves, but that "A petition has been circulated and largely signed, asking for the appointment of Mrs. Jones, who is very capable of filling the position". The former Frances Barton of Toronto had married D. A. the previous year. (34) Although her appointment as Postmistress was not made official until October of 1911 (35), she continued to run the Post Office and the Library in the interim. At the December 5 meeting, Council authorized \$50 paid to Mrs. D. A. Jones for "rent for library room" (36).

Another matter of significance to the Library at that meeting was a motion "Moved by Pringle sec by McCutcheon that the Council of Beeton agree to furnish a free site for a public library if Library Board should succeed in getting a grant from Andrew Carnegie to build and equip said library building" (37). This followed a meeting of the Board on December 2 when two members of the Board of Trade attended to discuss the possibility of approaching Mr. Andrew Carnegie for a grant. The Board passed

a resolution "in favor of taking steps for making application to Mr. Andrew Carnegie for a donation of Five Thousand Dollars for a Public Library and resolution be submitted to the Town council Board". (38)

In February, 1911 a squib in The Beeton World noted that Markdale had received a commitment of \$5000 from Mr. Carnegie providing certain conditions were met (39). The usual conditions for building a Carnegie library included an agreement from Council to commit an amount equal to 10% of the grant to the operation of the new library in each following year.

At the March 6 Council meeting it was "Moved by Wray sec by McCutcheon that Messers Hayes [Councillor] and Aikens [Board Secretary] be a committee appointed to draft a resolution on behalf of the council to be forwarded to Mr. Carnegie regarding petition for a library grant." (40) The 1911 accounts read "Mar 17 postage to Andrew Carnegie 2c" (41). On Monday afternoon, June 5, 1911 a public meeting was held to discuss the Carnegie library building but was poorly attended due to a rainstorm. A second meeting of property owners was called for Saturday night, 10th in the council chamber "to discuss the question and also to consider what steps shall be taken to provide more shed accommodation for the town. Farmers and all others who are interested" were requested to attend. (42)

This is the last mention of a Carnegie library in Board minutes, Council minutes or the newspaper. No information is given as to why the grant was never received, whether the application was turned down or whether the Council or the

property owners could not accept the conditions. At the August 11 Board meeting a motion was passed to request \$50 from Council for new books and a notice was to be inserted in the paper announcing the Library would be closed for August and requesting the return of all books (43). That December, Council motions were passed to approve the opening of a bowling alley and a billiard and pool room (44).

At the January Board meeting communication was received from Mrs. Jones requesting \$4 per month salary in addition to the \$50 annual rent for the library space. At the same meeting it was decided to send a committee to the Tecumseh Township Council to ask for a grant "in consideration of the number of out of town members partaking of the benefits of the Library on the same footing as residents of Beeton". (45) This issue was not resolved until the November meeting when it was decided that "nonresidents of the village, paying no taxes towards its upkeep and not attending the Beeton Public School, who wish to take out books be charged a membership fee of (\$1.00) One Dollar per year this to cover all charges for cards or other form of record that may be used". (46)

A committee from the Board met with Mrs. Jones to discuss the issue of her salary. It reported to the February meeting that Mrs. Jones had agreed to \$25 per year to be paid quarterly or monthly. The Board also decided to present an estimate of necessary annual expenses to Council. (47) Council "Moved by Wray sec by McCutcheon that the annual grant paid to Mrs. D. A. Jones for rent heating and clerks services for public library be

fixed at Seventyfive Dollars and that a further sum of Fifty Dollars be paid to the Public Library Board when demanded for the purchase of books cataloguing and extra". (48) The Council did grant \$40 on request in December for new books (49). The provincial grant was \$45.45 and for the first time the Library received a \$10 grant from the County of Simcoe (50).

Mrs. Jones attended the Georgian District Library Institute meeting held in Midland July 29-30, 1913 and reported back to the Board at the August 13 meeting. It must have been an informative training session as a number of issues were then discussed by the Board. It was decided that a regular monthly meeting would be held. The notion of a reading room with a limited number of magazines subscriptions was discussed then tabled. The secretary reported having made application to the Inspector of Libraries, Toronto for the services of the Official Cataloguer to supervise the cataloguing of the Library as early as possible. It was also moved to recommend to Council that the number of appointments to the Board be increased by four, with Mrs. D. A. Jones, Mrs. M. L. Aitken, Mrs. W. H. Hammell and Mr. A. G. Gaul suggested as candidates. (51) Council eventually responded in October by appointing 3 additional Board members, Mrs. W. H. Hammell, Mrs. D. A. Jones, and Mrs. M. L. Aikens (sic). At the following meeting Miss Renee Wright was appointed in place of Mrs. Jones, as her appointment was discovered to be illegal. (52)

Despite their intentions the Board did not hold its next meeting until November 27. The reading-room was voted against, the three new women members were to form a book selection

committee, Mrs. Jones was asked to prepare book reviews for the newspaper and 3 of the men were sent to Council to request \$20 for books. (53) Council must have been feeling particularly generous since the grant made was for \$30 (54).

Seven Board meetings were held in 1914. The Board lost Rev. Lambert as a member because he was not a property owner and therefore did not qualify under the Public Library Act. It was decided that the books should be insured with Perth Mutual Insurance Co. for \$800. Mrs. Jones attended a district institute meeting in Meaford and returned with several new ideas. New books should be purchased throughout the year rather than annually to sustain the public's interest. Damaged books should not be left on the shelf in disrepair and it was suggested that a ladies committee could undertake the repairs as they were not difficult. A storytelling hour could be held for smaller children once a week with volunteers. An annual allowance of \$1 was voted for Mrs. Jones for housecleaning the library. Mrs. Jones also successfully repeated her previous request for a writing desk as this would be needed by the Official Cataloguer who would be commencing with the cataloguing on August 20. (55) The cataloguing was completed September 2, listing 1063 nonfiction, 823 adult fiction and 231 juvenile books (56). This same Accession book was in use until 1942 when a fire in the library room destroyed most of the books.

ENDNOTES

(Full citations for the following sources are provided in the Bibliography.)

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28. Council Minutes. March 4, 1902 to Jun. 14, 1907, p. 85, 95, 106, 121, 199, 330, 258.
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30. Library Accounts. 1910, p. 245.
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38. Board Minutes. Dec. 2, 1910, p. 11.
39. Beeton World. Feb. 2, 1911, p. 5.
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44. Council Minutes. Dec. 4, 1911, p. 366; Dec. 16, 1911, p. 369.
45. Board Minutes. Jan. 30, 1912, p. 15.

46. Board Minutes. Nov. 22, 1912, p. 21.
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51. Board Minutes. Aug. 8, 1913, p. 25-27.
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53. Board Minutes. Nov. 27, 1913, p. 29.
54. Council Minutes. Dec. 1, 1913, p. 417.
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Kate Aitken's memories of her childhood in Beeton are a valuable aid in giving a feel for the times and the lives of the people then.

2. Beeton (Ont.). Village Council. Minutes. 1885-1892, 1892-1899, 1899-1916.

The Council Minutes give a consecutive legal record of the actions of the Council in relation to the Library. Very little mention is made of the Mechanics' Institute in the Minutes but after 1895 it is possible to find continuous references to the Public Library.

3. Beeton Public Library Board. Minutes and Accounts. 1910-1957.

If a record was kept of the activities of the Mechanics' Institute or the first years of the Public Library, it has unfortunately been lost. The existing Minutes do not begin until 1910 but after that date are a useful record of Board activities, employees and expenditures.

4. The Beeton World [newspaper]. Beeton (Ont.), 1886-1887, 1889-1902, 1906, 1908-1913.

The County of Simcoe Archives holds not a continual run but many of the early issues of the paper on microfilm. Reading the newspaper of the time provides good background information that is not part of the formal Minutes and also gives a sense of the ambience of the community.

5. Bow, Eric C. "The Public Library Movement in Nineteenth Century Ontario". University of Toronto, Toronto, 1987.

This article is a lucid and informative history of the development of public libraries in Ontario pre-1900. It contains a good explanation of the various provincial Acts affecting libraries during that time.

6. Condensed Accession Book. Beeton, Sept. 1914 to May 1942.

Provides interesting information on the types and numbers of books which were added to the collection throughout this period.

7. Drury, Mrs. Gordon (Marjorie). A History of the Beeton Public Library [pamphlet]. Beeton, 1977.

This one page history is mainly concerned with the move to a library building in 1962 but did provide some useful pointers and dates for the period I was working on.

8. Library Stock Catalogue: Beeton Free Library. Beeton, April, 1899 to December, 1913.

It was helpful to have actual lists of the titles bought.

9. Platt, Bert. Beeton 1874-1974. Canada, 1974.

While the book did not contain a great deal of information on the history of the Library, it was possible to trace various bits and pieces, such as the locations of the Post Office and Library. It was also a useful source of background information on the Village.

10. Public Library Role and Record Book. Beeton, 1901.

The record book contained the circulation numbers and types for 1901 by patron. It is useful to form a picture of what books people were borrowing compared to what books were selected as important.