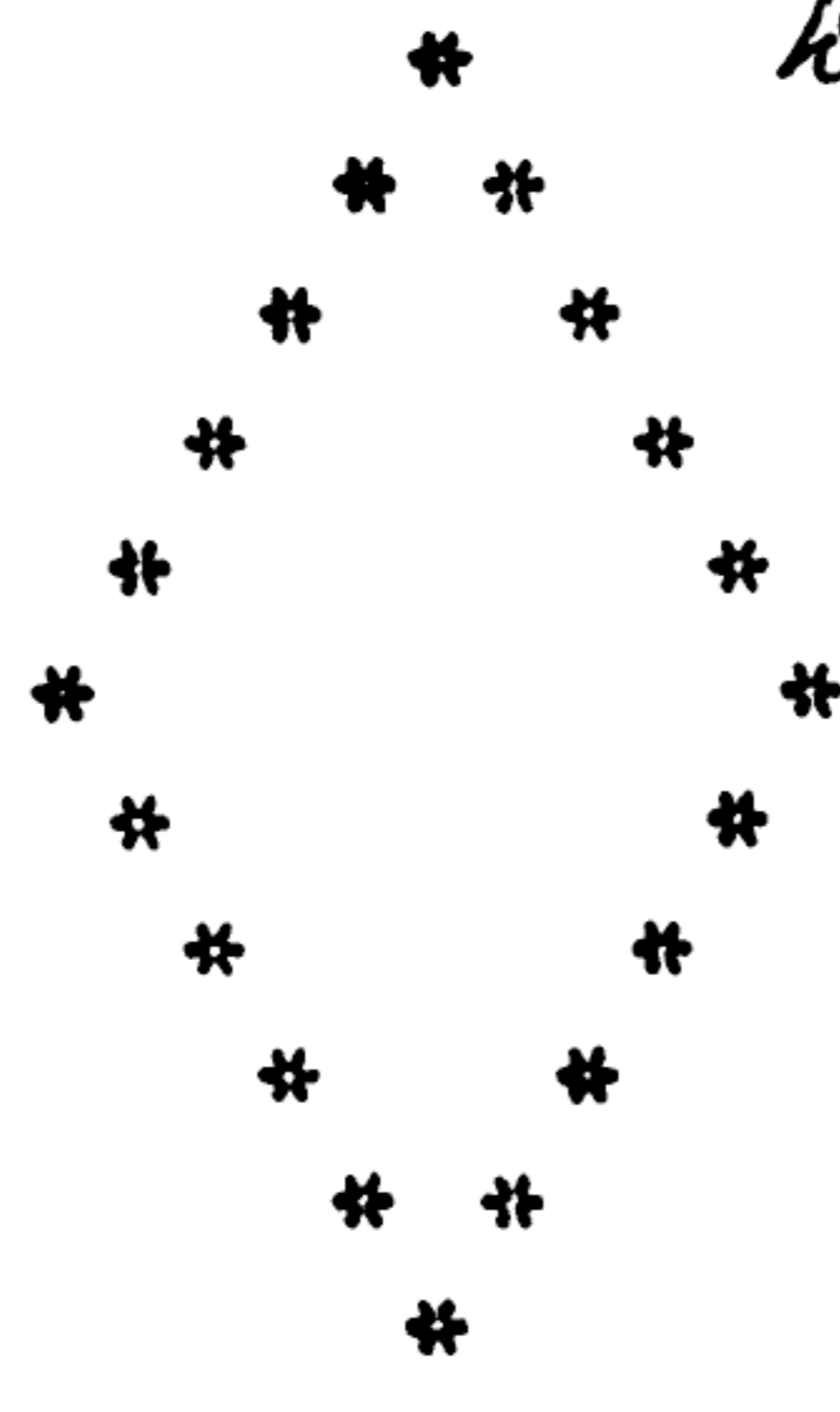


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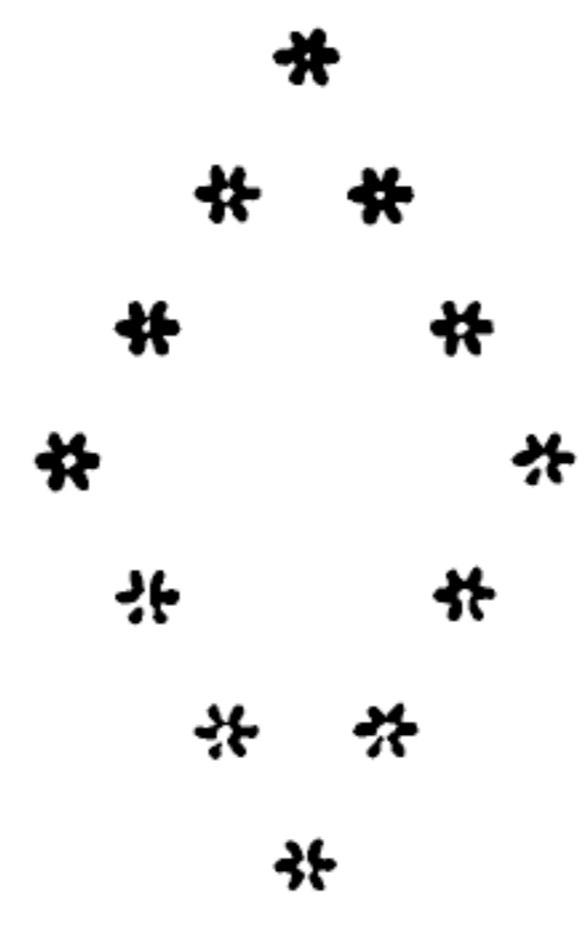
W O R T H I N G T O N   L I B R A R Y

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BY

Worthington Public Library  
Worthington, Ohio

MRS. CAROLINE P. WARD



## HISTORY OF THE WORTHINGTON LIBRARY

There is no published history of this Stanbery library so far as I know. It must have been named for Jonas Stanbery, the Revolutionary soldier in New York state who originally owned most of Sharon Township. All kinds of investigating has been made and in the various accounts of the early days of Worthington there is no definite mention of it; however I will show you the original By-Laws and a book which belonged in the Library and there is written in it this: The property of Stanbery Library in Worthington. So you see this is proof of its existence. This particular volume was printed in 1800 and is one of the volumes belonging in the series of Rollins' Ancient Histories. It was published in England and is labeled Ninth Edition. Worthington was certainly up-to-date in books at that time; you realize what it meant to bring a book from England and then transport it into the wilds of the Northwest, for that is what this country was in 1803. The great unknown Northwest Territory. Here are the By-Laws and I want to pay tribute to Miss Ruth Griswold for deciphering them. As you will see the paper on which they are written is yellowed and the writing dim. Labelled "Laws of Stanbery Library" Found among the papers of Ezra Griswold Esquire, Pioneer. By-Laws of the Stanbery Libray in Worthington.

### Artickle 1st

There shall be four Library meetings in each year which shall be on the 1st Wednesday of the months of September, December, March and June at one o'clock in the afternoon and the 1st Wednesday of September in each year shall be the annual meeting of the proprietors of said Library on which day the necessary officers for the ensueing year

shall be appointed and the mode of appointment shall be the Majority of votes of the members present, given in by ballot till otherwise ordered.

#### Artickle 2nd.

And the Library shall always be kept in Worthington and each proprietor shall have right to draw two volumes whenever there are books enough for those proprietors who shall call or send for books on Library meeting days before the meeting is closed but if there are not books enough for that purpose, then each proprietor shall draw but one volume and the book at the time of the draw shall always be put up to the highest bidder and the money bid to be paid down if required by the meeting and no proprietor shall draw any books at any time without bidding or paying at least two cents for the benefit of the Library.

#### Artickle 3rd.

Every person who shall not return his book or books by the time they are called for the 2nd time on any Library meeting day shall pay a fine of ten cents and on the days of the annual meeting, a fine of 17 cents and shall pay one cent per day for each book till the same be returned or declared to be lost and if lost shall pay twice the value of the book lost and be obliged to buy at their full value all the other volumes of the set to which shall not be presented at the 2nd call, with a piece of paper containing the person's name fairly written who drew it out of the Library shall be considered as not returned and the fines collected accordingly and every proprietor who shall lend a book belonging to the Library to any person who is not a proprietor, shall pay a fine of 12½ cents and all damages which shall be done to any book while in the care of any person shall be examined by the Committee or Trustees of the Library and the proprietor

in whose hands the book suffered change, shall pay such fine or fines as the Committee or Trustees shall assess.

Artickle -- (The following was added to the By-Laws and a portion of the above 2nd Artickle crossed out)

When books are to be drawed out of the Library they shall always be put up to the highest bidder but no person shall have right to draw any book from the Library until he shall pay all fines which the Committee have charged him with and otherwise complied with all the regulations of the Library.

Adopted by the Proprietors of said Library in Legal Meeting. Test.  
December 23rd 1803

Glass Cochran

John Topping

Azariah Pinney

Pinney Case

Job Case

N. W. Little

Abner Pinney

Samuel Bachgun

Ezra Griswold

Israel Case

Noah Andrews

Alexander Morrison

Ebenezer Street

James Kilbourn

Levi Buttles

Samuel Beach

David Bristol

Alexander Morrison, Jr.  
Lemuel Kilbourn  
Nathan Stewart  
John Good ?  
Thos. ? Phelps  
Josiah Topping  
Moses Byxbe, Jun  
Joel Allen  
James Kilbourn for Jonah Kilbourn  
Jonas Stanbery  
Wm. Kilbourn  
Ichabod Phem  
Jeremiah Curtis  
John Ingham  
Seth Hart  
Brissal ? Athater  
Levi Buttles for Levi Hays  
Crosswell Wilson  
William Vining  
Asahel Hart  
Thomas Moorhead  
Levi Pinney  
Aaron Strong  
Ezra Griswold for Ephraim Bonaham ?  
Thomas Palmer  
I subscribe for one right, Nathan Carpenter

In 1835 Worthington was incorporated as a town.

In 1839 Col James Kilbourne introduced a bill in the Legislature thus: Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio, that Theodore Comstock, William Abbott and Thompson Pinney their associates and successors, be and are thereby incorporated as a body politic, by the name of the Worthington Literati, for the purpose of establishing a library and lyceum in said Town of Worthington; the three persons above named shall be authorized to call the first meeting of their associates at such time as they may think proper to organize the corporation, that it may go into effective operation agreeable to the statute in such case provided.

(Signed) James J. Farran,  
Speaker of the House of  
Representatives  
William Hawkins, Speaker  
of the Senate.

Among the acts favoring the extension of knowledge and science always a deep subject of public interest, was that of a liberal charter to the "Worthington Literati". Having been the founder of this association, and presiding at its deliberations, when present was elected first president thereof under the charter, but have for some time past declined further service in that capacity.

Above from Autobiography of Col. James Kilbourne.

Evidence of ther libraries... etc.

After "Worthington Literati" of which no further evicence can be found.

In 1853 the Ohio Legislature authorized an annual levy of 1/10 mill tax for books to be distributed under the direction of the

Commissioner of Common Schools in accordance with the enumeration of the scholars the same as the general school fund. Local School boards were to appoint librarian and to select central places so as to accommodate all the families of the district. The Library was to be open all through the year. From 1854 to 1860 these libraries flourished and then the law had to be repealed because of the Civil war.

In 1870 is the first mention found of the People's Library which consisted of something over 100 books published by the Harper Brothers, New York, and sent to villages where enough subscribers could be found to make it worthwhile. One of these libraries was placed in the Worthington Post Office; it consisted of less than 200 books and was kept in a case of shelves on top a table in our local post office, which was a little brick building close to Hotel Central. This building was fenced in and a friend of mine recalls distinctly how much she enjoyed going thru the gate to get the mail. Mr. Frank Bishop was the postmaster at that time and remained in that position until 1885. There are some of the books in our present library which originally belonged to the Post Office library. Only the proprietors (those who subscribed) could draw books; it was not a free library; sometimes several subscriptions had to be paid if a large family were to be accommodated with books. Dr. Charles Edward Jefferson, who became a famous Congregational minister in New York City, was at one time in the early 80s a superintendent of the Worthington Public Schools; he was especially interested in these post office libraries and did all he could to further them. In speaking of famous men who were at one

time connected with our village we must not neglect one of the best known Dr. Frank Gunsaulus, of Chicago, who made a great name for himself in that city.

During these years of growth there were undoubtedly church and school libraries after the p.o. libraries ceased to exist. I understand that due to lack of financial support these had to be given up and the books were turned over to the schools.

In 1897 a club of ambitious women in Worthington, who were studying American History conceived the idea of a public village library, since they had felt the lack of books for reference. The problem of financing the project was a serious one, but nothing daunted the women went about it with all the spirit possible. We finally interested some of the men; among them Mr. C. L. Dickey, our township superintendent of schools, Mr. Lyman Gardner, president of the Worthington Savings Bank, Dr. D. H. Welling, Mr. W. C. Lewis, Col Harry P. Ward, and others. It was decided to organize a Worthington Reading Room and Library Association, every one in the village was asked to join, and each member was pledged to subscribe regularly toward the support of the undertaking. Books were donated, a room was secured over what is now the Snouffer Furniture store; someone gave a large canon stove for heating, Mr. Frank Wright donated coal, others gave chairs, book shelves and tables, the room was lighted by large coal oil lamps; it was a conglomerate outfit, I must say; no "period" furniture in this library. But it was the realization of a dream, however the incongruous appearance! Mr. C. L. Dickery was the first president of the Library Association, Mr. J. D. Harlor, Vice president, Miss Ruth Griswold, the



first secretary and Miss Stella Gardner, the first treasurer; the Board of Control consisted of the following: Mr. C. L. Dickey, chairman, Mr. J. D. Harlor, Ruth Griswold, Stella Gardner, Col H. P. Ward, Margaret Flickinger, Walter Bell, Mr. W. C. Lewis, Mr. Justin Penney and Mr. Harry Brand. Miss Bessie Herrman was made librarian. When this Library had its formal opening in fall 1898, Dr. James Canfield then President of Ohio State University, made the dedicatory address. Every one was enthusiastic and things moved along cheerfully for some time; then due to the financial puzzle since membership dues were not kept up, some of the pledges unpaid, the library was forced to close; the books were once more placed in the school building. The Woman's Club had in the meantime given up the study of History and had become interested in Shakespeare, renaming itself the Fortnightly Club. Mrs. Joseph Parsons, one of the best Shakesperian scholars in this part of the state became the leader. In 1901 or 02 Mr. Harvey Gruver superintendent of our schools, realizing that a library in Worthington would assist the High School in getting the proper rating at Ohio State University, importuned the Fortnightly Club to make another start toward a village library. After due consideration the club did as requested; a room was secured in the building now owned by Mr. S. E. Corbin; this seemed a fitting place for another beginning since the building was a part of the first home of Colonel James Kilbourne, the founder of the village. The building's second story was not in use at that time and Mr. Frank Goble who was then Worthington's undertaker, offered the club one of the up-stairs rooms. Mrs. Welling and I undertook to bring it into some kind of order.

Mr. Robert Lewis donated his services in papering and painting the room. Mrs. Welling found that the old floor was white ash, so we determined to bring it back to its pristine beauty. Dr. Welling carried "Suds" from the Welling kitchen and Mrs. Welling and I scrubbed and scoured; the floor was once again discovered..and incidentally was beautiful..but our knees and elbows were almost total wrecks. Bookshelves and chairs, tables and stove were again unearthed. and with three hundred books the Worthington Library once more began an existence. For many months the members of the Club were volunteer librarians; we each took our days at the work and there was no shirking. Mr. Gruver, who knew the handicap under which the club was laboring organized a men's league, to aid in the financing. This proved a fine help; we were able to employ a librarian at the munificent salary of \$8.00 per month. Mrs. B. C. McCullough gave of her best efforts when elected librarian even at that small remuneration. The number of books increased thro' various efforts, book receptions, etc. and the room grew too small. It was decided to move back to the former place over the, then Leasure's Drug Store. This was accomplished financially thro the Men's League and thro markets and bazaars given by the members of the Fortnightly. One Christmas Bazaar was a record breaker. It lasted for three days. The room now occupied by the Kroger grocery was then empty, and was given the club to use by Mr. Frank Bishop. The sale was a success from start to finish. The women worked like Trojans making articles etc. weeks before the event. I had charge of the Fish Pond and had the time of my life hanging various ridiculous "fish" on the lines of the patrons. The Fortnightlians all suffered from over work; their families were illy fed for few of the members were home long enough to

do more than sleep. But it was a grand help to the struggling library - and the new books purchased gave it a new impetus. In 1903, the hundredth anniversary of the founding of Worthington a wonderful celebration was perpetrated by the club for the benefit of the Library at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Welling. All the old moveable furniture, relics of earlier days, was put on exhibition, dishes candlesticks, old time cooking utensils used in the big fireplaces and Dutch ovens of the settlers were carried to the centennial; and all the old gowns that could be found were worn at this celebration. It was an event, great and glorious! Mrs. Wm. G. Deshler, Colonel and Mrs. James Kilbourne of Columbus were present and gave generously to the Library fund which was the object of the occasion. This was perhaps the most noted social happening of thirty years ago in the village. Every one came and had a beautiful time. The silver offering asked met with cheerful response and the library flourished. Sometime later on it was found that it was possible to levy a tax to support the library through the township trustees and the village council. Mr. Gruver, Mr. Nelson and Mr. Ward investigated this and found it feasible; a meeting was called, a library association was formed and incorporated as the Worthington-Sharon Township Library Association, January 15, 1908. with the following incorporators; Mr. W. S. Wilson, Mrs. Joseph Potter, Mr. R. E. Keys representing the township, and Mr. Gruver, Mr. Nelson, Mr. G. B. Landis, Mrs. Joseph Patsons and Mrs. D. H. Welling representing the village. Mrs. Geo. Cless was elected president of the Association with Mrs. D. H. Welling as sec'y and Mr. Nelson, Treasurer. Miss Grace Robinson was

made librarian.

Colonel James Kilbourne the grandson of the founder of the village was interested in seeing the library have a home of its own; he hoped to be able to buy the Goble place on High st., since it had belonged to his grandfather; but this was not available and the project for financial reasons had to be abandoned. In 1909 Mr. Nelson made a sincere appeal to the Carnegie Foundation for a Carnegie Library; this was refused due to the size of the village; the reply to the appeal was that "so small a place could not support a Library". The financial affairs through the management of Mr. Nelson were growing easier. The Worthington Library was so equipped at this time that it was furnishing travelling libraries for the township schools; these were kept in exchange by the superintendent of schools for the township. Miss Grace Robinson who had given such excellent service as librarian died in 1914 and Mrs. Willis Parsons was appointed to her place. The Library lost one of its best friends and hardest workers in the death of Mr. Nelson in 1914. Mr. B. S. Wellman who became president of the Worthington Savings Bank taking Mr. Nelson's place, was made a member of the Library Board of Trustees. In 1914 the library was properly cataloged, the Dewey system used by Mr. Hockett, Dr. Hockett's father. In 1915 another effort was made by Mr. Wellman and a committee to get some recognition from the Carnegie Foundation, but the request was turned down because several small towns in Ohio had not lived up to the requirements in the maintaining of the libraries given them. Ohio had a very bad reputation with the Carnegie people, since

some of the city libraries had failed to make good according to the demands of the organization. However the trustees, the officers and the book committee of the Association worked to increase the number of books and the number of patrons grew in proportion. It is impossible in this review to give the names of all those persons who worked so hard to keep the Library a going concern. In 1917 it was well known that the room over the Snouffer Furniture Store was entirely inadequate; things were crowded; all of those interested hoped that something could be done. The World War took every one's attention at that time; and although the Library was kept open and was popular, the other greater interest filled folks lives and the Library building had to be postponed. In 1924 the trustees through the new Laws made for Ohio Libraries found that Worthington and parts adjacent could have the library financed through taxation under the jurisdiction of the School Board. The change was advised; on October 13, 1924 because of the requirements of the law the name of the Library was made to read "Worthington School District Public Library". The school board elected a library board to consist of seven members, who hold meetings each month and administer the affairs of the library. All the former library property, books etc., was turned over to the newly appointed board. I do not need to go much farther into the present history of the library since it is well known. Mrs. Wm. G. Deshler, in memory of her grandfather gave the original library building in 1927; this year she has added to this the north wing in memory of her mother, and the south wing in memory of her grandmother. It is in this wing that the fine portrait of Colonel Kilbourne hangs; this last is the gift of Miss Emma Jones, another grand-daughter, who has given one of her most prized possessions to the village of Worthington -- a portrait of its founder.

We are also delighted to have Mrs. Deshler's portrait hanging in the north wing.

We now possess one of the most beautiful small library buildings in this part of the country; we are proud of our Library inside and out and we feel an immense debt of gratitude should be extended to Mrs. Deshler for giving to us this fine memorial which is the "vision realized" for those of us who began to dream of it back in 1898.

The Library Board now governing its affairs are: Mr. Vance Smith, Pres. Mr. Webb. Sec'y., Treas. Mr. Howard Potter, Dr. Longenecker, Mrs. S. E. Corbin, Mrs. Stella Gardner Nelson and myself. Mrs. Rose Little has been the librarian for the past fifteen years. Mrs. Carl Gay, whose death occurred this summer, was an efficient and devoted president of the board for seven years.

The number of books has increased from the 200 in 1898 to over 10,000 in 1931. The Library is serving a large area and has more than 2,000 regular patrons. The executive committee of the board, to whom all complaints, compliments and such like commodities should be brought, is Mrs. Corbin, Mrs. Nelson and myself. We ask for constructive suggestions for the library; we like to have titles of books handed in; there is only a small amount of money to be spent on books, but we hope that some good fairy or some increase in tax may afford us more.

As to the future..I have spoken of Col Kilbourne's proposal 100 years ago that Worthington should have a museum and Library. We have the latter why not have the museum? There is room for it in the basement and there are things of great interest which might be collected gradually to be placed therein. Let us all work to that end -- and once again revive the intention of Col Kilbourne when he organized the Worthington Literati.