1920 CENSUS ARRIVES

The Clarke Historical Library was among the first in the nation to receive microfilm copies of individual returns from the 1920 federal census. The CHL received 60 rolls of microfilm detailing the life of Michigan's residents, sixty-nine rolls of which are the actual census returns and the remaining 291 rolls the invaluable soundex index.

The decennial federal census represents the most accurate portrait available regarding the nation in which we live. In it genealogists find a wealth of information regarding their descendants, including such pertinent data as the names and residences of their ancestors, their ancestors date and place of birth, and in some cases more detailed information about employment, housing conditions and other family information.

Historians find in the census returns a wealth of data that allows them to examine the life of the "common person," through a variety of statistical tools. Equally important, historians can often identify various sub-groups within the population to create detailed studies regarding the growth and development of various economic, social, ethnic, and racial groups.

Although a vital source for historical and genealogical study, copies of the census material do not come cheap. The 360 rolls of film that discuss Michigan cost $8,280 to purchase. Funding for this purchase has come from a variety of sources including the annual appropriation received by the CHL to purchase new material and a gift of $2,000 by the Friends of the Library, a group dedicated to the development of the CMU's libraries. The lion's share of the money, however, was made available by generous contributions to the CHL's associate account over the past several years. Without these generous contributions the Clarke would simply be unable to obtain important resources such as the federal census.

For those curious about the relationship between research and privacy, federal law initially closes individual census returns to researchers. The law, however, allows researchers to examine the material seventy-two years after the census enumeration date. Thus on March 2, 1992 the 1920 census became publicly available for research. For those curious as to why so few libraries buy the complete census returns for the nation, the complete 1920 census and soundex index fills 10,664 rolls of film and costs $245,272.

Michigan Oil and Gas Association Supports Library

The Michigan Oil and Gas Association recently donated $500 to the Clarke Historical Library. The money was presented in honor of John R. Harkins, who was Chairman of the Michigan Oil and Gas Association from 1990 to 1991. The Clarke Historical Library has copies of the Michigan Oil and Gas News dating back to 1932.
New Director Named

In August 1991 Frank Boles became the director of the Clarke Historical Library. Frank received a doctorate in history from the University of Michigan (UM) and has over a decade of experience working in special libraries.

Prior to coming to Mt. Pleasant, Frank served at the Bentley Historical Library, one of the special libraries at the University of Michigan. While at the Bentley he was responsible for a variety of tasks. His first responsibility was to appraise for research value, arrange, and describe historical records. Later he served as interim manager of the university archives. When Frank left the Bentley he was responsible for developing policies to deal with historical documentation in computerized format. Over the past five years Frank has also held an appointment within UM’s School of Information and Library Studies.

In addition to his work at UM, Frank has spent a year in the archives of the Chicago Historical Society, and also spent a year as a program officer at the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington, DC.

Women's Club Establishes Book Fund

The Mount Pleasant Women's Club recently established a $2,500 book fund endowment to benefit the Clarke Historical Library. The gift was made in recognition of the Women's Club's 98th birthday and CMU's centennial. The Women's Club was established in 1894, and many of the original members were associated with the university. The organization's records are housed at the Clarke.

The Women's Club established a loan fund in 1942 for worthy students in recognition of the college's 50th birthday. That loan fund, valued at $1,400, was converted last April to an endowed book fund, and a check for an additional $1,100 was recently presented to Frank Boles. The endowment will be invested by the university and its earnings used to secure books to enhance holdings regarding Mt. Pleasant and Isabella County.

Thanks to the Library's Supporters

Donations (Books, Manuscripts, Etc.)

LeRoy Barnett, Lansing
Frank Boles, Mt. Pleasant
Fay and Bob Bovee, Grayling
William T. Bulger, Mt. Pleasant
Leslie Carlin, Mt. Pleasant
R.V. Dietrich, Mt. Pleasant
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David Swayne, Mt. Pleasant
Kathy Ann Swem, Fisher, IN
Eugene and Lois Woodward, Midland
RACKHAM ARTWORK ON EXHIBIT

Books Illustrated by popular British artist Arthur Rackham are on display in the current Lucile Clarke Memorial Children's Library.

Rackham's versions of Peter Pan and Cinderella, as well as the goblins, fairies and elves of Hans Christian Anderson and the Brothers Grimm, have endeared him to many generations of young readers, according to Evelyn Leasher, public services librarian.

"Arthur Rackham illustrated adult as well as children's books, but he is best known for bringing to life imaginary creatures of fairy tales and folk tales" said Leasher. "He made his visions of fairy tales the international vision. His fairies are what we see when we see fairies."

His richly detailed color illustrations of folk and fairy tale characters always reflected a sense of reality, said Leasher.

"He's known for his sense of humor and his great sense of detail, which made his creatures so believable," said Leasher. "His drawings are meticulous. His trees are real trees, but if you look again, they could be something else. His silhouettes also impart a great deal of detail."

The exhibit includes early 20th century limited edition copies of J.M. Barrie's "Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens," "The Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm," Rudyard Kipling's "Puck of Pook's Hill" and "The Arthur Rackham Fairy Book." Also on display is an "Alice in Wonderland" illustration poster that varies in concept from the drawings of original "Alice" illustrator John Tenniel.

"Illustrated by Arthur Rackham" runs through April 25 and is open to the public. Exhibit hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. the first and third Saturdays of every month. The Lucile Clarke Memorial Children's Library is contained in the Clarke Historical Library.

Picture: British illustrator Arthur Rackham is best known for his ability to bring to life the imaginary creatures of folk and fairy tales. Examples of his drawings, including this one from "Elfin Hill" in "Fairy Tales of H.C. Anderson," are on display. Photo by Peggy Brisbane
A Final Word

The Clarke Historical Library is rich in material and tradition. Sadly the infrastructure which supports access and use of this material has not kept pace with the collection’s growth or the demands of modern researchers.

Today many researchers do not write letters of inquiry to determine an institution’s holdings, they search national computer databases. The CLH’s material is not adequately represented in those databases. Of our over 3,000 manuscript collections, less than 100 have machine-readable records available. We also have a large backlog of books which are, uncataloged and essentially unavailable to those who seek them. In addition to problems created by new technology, other basic needs have sometimes gone unmet. A shortage of microfilm storage cabinets kept hundreds of reels of film housed on carts rather than available for use in the library’s reading room. Overall a lack of space led to boxes being piled on top of boxes with little or no control over the material inside the cartons.

We have begun to address these problems. A cooperative project with the technical services department of the Park Library has begun work that will eventually make available all of the CLH’s holdings in computerized files. Over the past several months we have purchased four new microfilm cabinets. Additional storage space has been made available to us in the Park Library’s off-site storage facility.

Despite our progress many additional needs remain. For example many of our most recent acquisitions come on audio and video tape. Ten years ago a community celebrating a milestone would routinely publish an anniversary book. Today many communities have abandoned a centennial volume in favor of a centennial video. These videos continue to document our state’s heritage and while the Clarke Historical collects them it lacks the equipment to allow researchers to view the videos.

Although the Clarke Historical Library is well supported by CMU, private contributions fill a vital need in forwarding the library’s purpose. Purchases such as the 1920 census would be impossible without private funds. Equally important, our ability to develop the library’s infrastructure, is significantly enhanced by private contributions. Infrastructure investment allows researchers to discover and make use of the wonderful resources we possess.

Elsewhere in this newsletter we acknowledge those who, since the beginning of the fiscal year, have donated either material or funds to the library. I would like to add a personal word of thanks for this past generosity and express my hope that individuals throughout the state will continue to help us meet the Library’s needs.

Frank Boles

Clarke Historical Library
Central Michigan University
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859

Please Notify Us of Any Address Changes

The Clarke Historical Library is open Monday-Friday,
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; (517) 774-3352.