

# Birth of the Inez Hendrickson Library

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## Overview

Although her history has been largely forgotten, a well-to-do Indiana woman deserves credit for organizing Mott's library. While few in the community know anything about her, she remains honored here by the fact that the library carries her name.

Inez Hendrickson and her husband, Alonzo, were residents of Indianapolis when they invested in acreage around Mott. When the couple traveled to the community to check on their land holdings, Inez became concerned about the rural boomtown's lack of cultural assets.

In 1911, with the help of a number of Mott women, she started the village's first library. Hundreds of books were shipped from her home in Indianapolis and, in addition, she provided substantial financial support. In recognition of her efforts, the library was named after her in 1912.

## Inez Hendrickson

Inez was born in Indiana on March 22, 1853 to the Rev. Hayden and Matilda Rayburn, who were from Kentucky and Virginia. Her father was a celebrated minister in the Methodist Episcopal Church at Kokomo and is said to have "unusual personal charm and exceptional graciousness."

In Kokomo in 1867, Inez married Leucien Coffman, a clothing salesman, and in about 1870, they had a daughter, Pearl. That marriage dissolved, and she wed Alonzo in the 1880s.

## Alonzo Hendrickson

Alonzo was born December 10, 1847 near Kokomo to David and Ruth Hendrickson. He served in the Civil War, fighting with the Indiana Infantry in numerous battles. He would later suffer a leg wound during the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain.

He was married for the first time to Lucinda Sinclair in 1868, and they had a son, Carl, before divorcing in 1872.

After the Civil War, Alonzo was a traveling salesman. In 1880, he organized a wholesale clothing firm in Indianapolis. The store named Henley, Hendrickson, and Lefler after the founding partners, and it specialized in hats, caps, gloves, and furs. Over the next two decades, Alonzo bought out his partners, and the company became known as A.P. Hendrickson Hat Co. In 1908, he retired from the firm which continued in business for many years afterwards. Following his departure from the company, he maintained other commercial interests in a lumber business and an insurance firm. In addition, he was active in the Republican Party, serving as treasurer of the state committee.

## Doing Business

Alonzo had prospered and the couple (who did not have any children together) resided in a large home in Indianapolis, employing both a live-in butler and a cook. In later years, the house became a school for girls. During their retirement, the couple wintered in Phoenix and summered in Indianapolis, living in a hotel. The couple had mining interests and bought an irrigated fruit farm where they built a retirement home located in Phoenix.

Several years earlier, just as Mott was being established in 1905, Alonzo was approached by business associates and friends in Indianapolis with the idea of purchasing land in the area around the new villages. Although the group was on its way to tour Hettinger County, Alonzo and Inez were headed for a California vacation and could not accompany them. Nonetheless, he instructed them to buy two sections for him.

The next two years, Alonzo visited Mott to inspect what he had bought and was so impressed he purchased two more sections a couple miles south of Watrous. After the railroads arrived in 1910, Alonzo and Inez visited Mott for two to six months during almost every growing season to oversee his farming operation, staying at the Brown Hotel (later renamed the Holiday House) and purchasing more land, eventually accumulating 2,700 acres.

## The Library's Birth

Although Mott's school had a library which adults were welcome to use, the town had no public library. That changed in 1911 when Inez organized one for Mott. After returning to Indianapolis when harvest was over, she wrote back to the community that she was particularly interested in Mott and desired to contribute as much as she could to the welfare of the city. For instance, she encouraged the creation of a library and said she would send "a great many volumes of fiction for the edification of the people."

Inez wrote a letter to the Union Ladies Aid, an organization of civic minded women, suggesting they take on the responsibility. After receiving the letter, the group immediately met and accepted the idea. Put in charge was a committee of the town's most prominent women- Paula Murray, Elizabeth Trousdale, Bertha Pearce, Sarah Rounds, Emma Bonesho, and Anna Washer. An early collaborator was Stella Robinson, wife of the town druggist, who at once went to Bismarck to gather information on library organization.

Because of Inez's critical role, the library was immediately named after her. It would, said the newspaper, "stand as a most credible monument to the memory of the generous nature and benevolent spirit of Mrs. Hendrickson."

## The Library's Growth

Until 1915, when the community voted for a two-mill levy to support the library, its financial backing came from Inez, the Union Ladies Aid (and its committee), and fundraisers. On Halloween of 1911, a fund-raising dance was held in Kasper's Hall (now the empty two-story building on the east side of the Cannonball Senior Citizens Center). The newspaper urged the "every person should make a special effort to be present."

Another fundraiser followed in March – a progressive card party and luncheon at the hotel. “Every loyal citizen of Mott is expected to attend,” said the newspaper. “If we are to be anything more than heathens, here’s a good chance to show it.”

Inez started shipping books to Mott in the fall of 1911. The first installment contained 40 volumes. Books arrived from the family’s personal library, their friends in Indianapolis, and Inez’s daughter and son-in-law, Pearl and R.C. Beatty who lived in Pennsylvania.

The local community was asked to help by the library committee: “All contributions in the way of books will now be thankfully received. It is not essential that the books be news ones as the library is equipped with the necessary repair material and the volumes be in good shape. The books can be left at Robinson’s drug store or the library if open.”

On January 19, 1912, the library opened in a room over the new bank. A contest decided who got the first library card. Although it was a tie breaker between Peter Washer, the operator of the Brown Hotel, and Jacob Grest, an officer of the First State Bank, Washer was given the honor of being the Library’s first patron.

By August, the library had 300 books. Each year, Inez would ship an additional 50 to 100 books. The library continued to be supported by Inez’s friends back East, the Union Ladies Aid, the school system, and the high school glee club.

The newspaper said, “Mrs. Hendrickson will never be forgotten for the kindly interest she is taking in Mott and the library.”

In 1915, the citizens voted for a two-mill levy to support the library.

The first librarian was Lousie Wagner, whose father, Herman, had farmed five miles southeast of town. She served for many years until moving to Bismarck where she was also employed as a librarian.

By 1920, when Mott had just over 700 people, the library itself had 667 regular patrons and more than a thousand books.

### [Inez and Alonzo’s Final Years](#)

In 1921, the Hendrickson’s decided to locate their permanent home at their Arizona fruit ranch and only spend summers in Indianapolis. By then in his mid-70s, Alonzo decided he no longer wanted to continue the management of his land holdings around Mott and sold them to a Chicago real estate dealer in 1922.

Alonzo died of a stroke in Indianapolis on July 28, 1927 at age 81, Inez died on May 17, 1936 at the family fruit ranch in Arizona at the age of 83. She had been unwell for some time and was living with her daughter. She and Alonzo are buried together in Indianapolis.