Alexander Calhoun

b. Nov. 17, 1879, Fenelon Falls, ON; d. Feb. 15, 1979, Calgary, AB

Alexander Calhoun, n.d. Credit Calgary Public Library.

Education:

1901 BA (Queen’s University)
1902 MA (Queen’s University)
1906 Hamilton Normal School teacher training

Positions:

1901-1902 Tutor, Queen’s University
1902-1904 Lecturer, University of Manitoba (Manitoba College)
1904-1905 Graduate fellowship in Greek at University of Chicago
1905-1906 Lecturer in classics, Queen’s University
1906-1910 Teacher at Fort William Collegiate Institute and Trustee, Fort William Public Library
1910 Training as intern at Ottawa Public Library and McGill University Library
1911-1945 Chief librarian, Calgary Public Library
1918-1919 Served in Canadian army Siberian Expeditionary Force in far eastern Russia

Publications:

Calhoun, Alexander (1905). “Higher education in the Canadian West.” Queen’s University Journal 32 (9): 343-348.

Calhoun, Alexander (1944). “An extension programme for Alberta public libraries.” In Canadian Library Council, Canada Needs Libraries, 37-41. Ottawa: Canadian Library Council, Inc.

Calhoun, Alexander (1944). “Library training in Canada.” Wilson Library Bulletin 19 (3): 193–194.

Calhoun, Alexander (1945). “Alberta Library Association reorganizes.” Canadian Library Council Bulletin 1 (3): 25.

Calhoun, Alexander (1945). “Community centres and the public library.” Canadian Library Council Bulletin 1 (4): 38–39.

Calhoun, Alexander (1954). “A backward glance.” Alberta Library Association Bulletin 2 (Nov.): 9–10.

Calhoun, Alexander (1956). “The future of the book.” Alberta Library Association Bulletin 4 (Dec.): 8

Associations/Committees:

President, Alberta Library Association 1944-1945
Alberta director on Canadian Library Council, 1944-1945
President, Calgary Allied Arts Council, 1946-1949 (founding member in 1946)
Chair, Alberta Library Board, 1946-1948
President, Calgary Knights of the Round Table, 1932-1933 (founding member in 1925)
President, Calgary Golden Age Club, 1950-1954 (founding member in 1950)
President, Alberta division of Canadian Cancer Society, 1946
Chair, Calgary Allied Arts Council
Member of Canadian Library Association and American Library Association

Honours:

1954 LLD, University of Alberta at Calgary
1955 Alberta Golden Jubilee citation
1963 Elected life member, Alpine Club of Canada
1969 Honorary lifetime member, International Knights of the Round Table
1954 Alexander Calhoun Branch named in his honour [know as the Giuffre Family Library since 2018]
Life membership, Canadian Cancer Society

Comments:

Charles McCombs concluded that “Alexander Calhoun has made an excellent record in the many years that he has been at Calgary” in his report to the Rockefeller Foundation in 1941. Indeed, Calhoun arrived in western Canada at a time when library service was in a formative stage and, through two World Wars and the Great Depression, he played an instrumental role in offering social and cultural leadership to Calgary and in providing regional library leadership in Alberta. Calhoun is still remembered as a man of many tastes, a community activist, and progressive force in library service.

Sources:

Dingwall, Gloria A. (1996). Alexander Calhoun: Calgary’s first librarian, 1911-1945. MA thesis, Calgary, AB: University of Calgary.
Giles, Suzette (2017). “Libraries named after librarians.” ELAN no. 61 (Spring): 10.
Lohnes, Donna, and Barbara J. Nicholson (1987). Alexander Calhoun. Calgary: Calgary Public Library.

ELA biography compiled by Lorne Bruce

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