

= Klas August Linderfelt =

Klas August Linderfelt ( 1847 ? March 18 , 1900 ) was an American librarian . A native of Sweden , he emigrated to Milwaukee , Wisconsin and became a teacher and a librarian . As the first librarian of the Milwaukee Public Library , he became a significant figure in the city and in the library profession , becoming the seventh President of the American Library Association . He left both the city and the profession permanently following his arrest for embezzlement .

= = Early life and education = =

Linderfelt was born in Sweden in 1847 . He became an orphan after the deaths of his mother when he was five and his father when he was eleven . Linderfelt persevered and earned a doctorate from Uppsala University . He emigrated to Milwaukee in 1870 and taught classics at Milwaukee College . In 1875 , he was married to a woman whose name has been reported as Maggie Cooper or Margie E. Parker . By 1880 they had the first two of their four children , a son and daughter , and lived modestly at 278 Pleasant Street .

= = Milwaukee Public Library = =

The Milwaukee Public Library dates to February 7 , 1878 , when the Wisconsin State Legislature authorized the city to form a public library . Linderfelt had taken an interest in libraries and was hired to be its first librarian in 1880 . With his new post , Linderfelt joined the ranks of Milwaukee 's elite and his family took up residence on Grand Avenue . He also made the acquaintance of numerous important figures in the library profession , and was especially close to William Frederick Poole .

Under Linderfelt 's leadership , the Milwaukee Public Library developed a new charging system and a pencil dater for due dates that was widely adopted by libraries . He wrote professional articles and his book *Eclectic Card Catalog Rules* , based on the work of Karl Dziatzko as well as numerous English language librarians like Melvil Dewey , was published by Charles Ammi Cutter in 1890 . He also wrote on other topics , such as the book *Volapük : An Easy Method of Acquiring the Universal Language* ( 1888 ) , about the constructed language .

Linderfelt was a founder and the first president of the Wisconsin Library Association in February 1891 . He was active in the American Library Association , serving as a councilor from 1883 to 1891 and vice president from 1890 to 1891 . He was instrumental in local arrangements for the ALA 's 1886 annual conference in Milwaukee , including an eight @-@ day , 1500 mile post @-@ conference train excursion afterwards arranged by Linderfelt , which included a steamboat trip on the Dells of the Wisconsin River . In 1891 , he was elected to follow Samuel Swett Green as President of the American Library Association .

Linderfelt 's most significant achievement was the arrangements for the construction of a library and museum building at 814 Wisconsin Avenue . A national competition was held and 74 designs were proposed . One of the entrants was a 25 @-@ year @-@ old Frank Lloyd Wright , whose entry was helpful in publicizing his blooming career . The winning entry was a neo @-@ renaissance structure from the Wisconsin architecture firm of Ferry & Clas , which was constructed at a cost of \$ 780 @,@ 000 . It opened on October 3 , 1898 . Today , the building is still in use as the Milwaukee Public Library 's Central Library and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places .

= = Embezzlement charges = =

Beginning in at least 1883 , Linderfelt began embezzling large sums of money from the Library , chiefly by double @-@ billing the board for Library expenditures and pocketing the difference . He never provided a motive for his theft , but it was widely speculated , and argued by his lawyer , that the financial demands of Linderfelt 's prestigious position in society were not met by his modest public salary .

He was first investigated in 1888 over a shortfall in the collection of library fines , but the missing

money was reimbursed , reportedly by two members of the Library board of trustees , and the matter was dropped . However , following the revelation that Milwaukee School Board secretary A.H. Schattenberg had embezzled over \$ 50 @,@ 000 , and his subsequent suicide , a city @-@ wide audit was conducted . City accountant Carl Jackwitz discovered Linderfelt had embezzled over \$ 4000 and following a meeting with some of the trustees , including Harrison Carroll Hobart , and Mayor Peter J. Somers , Linderfelt confessed and was arrested on April 28 , 1892 .

The library profession was stunned by Linderfelt 's arrest . The news was " a great shock " , Green wrote later in his history of the profession . Green wrote to Poole " I should have as soon suspected myself as Linderfelt " and others had similar reactions of disbelief . Many librarians wrote letters of support for Linderfelt . The ALA acted swiftly to mitigate the damage to the image of the profession . On May 22 , the executive board of the ALA moved that William I. Fletcher be appointed president following Linderfelt 's resignation , and that he be officially recorded as president retroactively for the entire term , essentially erasing Linderfelt from the historical record of the ALA . A month later , Melvil Dewey was elected ALA president for the next term . The incident was seen as a triumph of newer librarians like Dewey over the " old guard " represented by Poole , of whom Linderfelt was seen as a protege .

In Milwaukee , Linderfelt received strong support from members of the board of trustees and the city 's elite , who pushed to reimburse the city and reinstate the librarian . However , local newspapers objected , especially following revelations of the previous investigation and that Linderfelt had stolen nearly twice as much as initially thought , over \$ 9000 . On July 12 , Linderfelt pleaded nolo contendere and Judge A. Scott Sloan , saying that " further punishment would be wrong " , issued a suspended sentence . Linderfelt left Milwaukee that day for a promised job at the Library Bureau in Boston .

The lenient sentence was met with outrage in the city . Newspapers inveighed against the decision and residents held " indignation meetings " to agitate against it . Within days , upon the urging of Mayor Somers the district attorney scrambled to find new charges to file against Linderfelt and ordered his arrest in Boston . But Linderfelt had already left Boston and was sighted in England later that month . Poole wrote " They let him off without punishment , and are now chasing him around the world to arrest him for another trial . "

= = Later life = =

Linderfelt settled in Paris and studied medicine . His wife and children joined him there . At the end of his life , Linderfelt worked for the journal *La Semaine Médicale* . Instead of going to Paris , his eldest son , Karl E. Linderfelt , dropped out of Beloit College and lived with uncles in Cripple Creek , Colorado . He joined the Colorado National Guard and was one of the commanders at the Ludlow Massacre , noted for his aggression and profanity and for assaulting and allegedly murdering strike leader Louis Tikas .

= = Legacy = =

Linderfelt has been ignored or received cursory treatment in histories of both Milwaukee and the library profession in the United States , including the work of Linderfelt 's immediate successor at the Milwaukee Public Library and longtime assistant Theresa Elmendorf . Noted library historian Wayne A. Wiegand wrote about Linderfelt in a two part article published in 1977 in *American Libraries* , the official magazine of the American Library Association . In the article , Wiegand expressed hope that librarians would remember Linderfelt " to provide some balance against the too @-@ frequent eulogistic treatment accorded the Winsors , Pooles , and Deweys of library history " and that the ALA would officially acknowledge Linderfelt as a past ALA President for the sake of " historical accuracy " . A librarian responding to Wiegand 's article echoed his sentiments , noting Linderfelt 's absence in the *Dictionary of American Biography* and the *National Cyclopedia of American Biography* and Wiegand 's upcoming article about Linderfelt for the *Dictionary of American Library Biography* . As of 2015 , Linderfelt has not appeared on the official list of past ALA Presidents .

In 1991 , the centennial of the founding of the Wisconsin Library Association , former WLA presidents began the tradition of annually passing an urn with non @-@ human ashes representing Linderfelt to each president at the end of their term . Linderfelt was inducted into the Wisconsin Library Hall of Fame in 2009 .