Sibley Ancestry traced

(Lecture Review by Florence Wilson)

Dr. Gregg as guest speaker of the Y. W. C. A. at a recent meeting gave a talk on the ever interesting Founders, George Champlin Sibley and Mary Easton Sibley.

In years before, Dr. Gregg has given talks on the early life at Lindenwood. This time she made the history of the college even more interesting by tracing the background of the founders, from the time that the ancestors of George Sibley landed in this country till the founding of the college.

In 1828, John Sibley, with his relatives, landed in this country, settling in Salem, Mass. After a few years he drifted West to a little town called Sutton, in Massachusetts. “It is interesting to see,” said Dr. Gregg, “that the Sibleys followed the frontier in every movement.” Moving further west, they came to a spot in Massachusetts among the Berkshire Hills, called Great Barrington. This was wild Indian country at that time. It so happened that in this town of Great Barrington there was a preacher, well known for his theological views, whose name was Dr. Samuel Hopkins, his thesis being called Hopkinsian theology. John Sibley became interested in Dr. Hopkins’ daughter, Betty, and during the Revolution when he had returned home for a few days he married her. These two were the parents of George Champlin Sibley, who was born during the most critical days of the Revolution.

After the War, John Sibley and his family removed to North Carolina.

“It was not until this summer that I found a record, straight from the lips, of George, himself, about his boyhood,” said Dr. Gregg.

Then she gave an account of George Sibley’s earliest years, when his father was in the Revolutionary War, and the mother lived first with one uncle and then with another. She told of his school days at the Lafayette Academy and at Dr. William Bingham’s Academy and finally of how he learned bookkeeping in the accounting house of Mr. Winslow.

In 1865, Thomas Jefferson appointed George Sibley assistant factor of Fort Bellefontaine on the Missouri River, a little below St. Charles. Here he remained until 1868. It is stated in letters to his brother that he saw Lewis and Clark on their return down the river, and saw Pike start on a trip up the Mississippi River and on a later trip up the Missouri.

In 1868, he became the chief factor in an Indian trading post at Fort Osage, located just 19 miles east of where Kansas City now stands.

At the outbreak of the War of 1812, Fort Osage was forced to close and Sibley returned to St. Louis. His business here, because of the war, was the selling of munitions—guns and swords. While in St. Louis, George Sibley became acquainted with Mary Smith Easton, daughter of a well-known St. Louisan. On August 19, 1815, they were married, Mary being 15 years of age, and George 18 years her senior.

In 1813, George put all his savings into land, purchasing 480 acres, 120 of which were in St. Charles.

In 1822, the Government having gone out of the trading business, and the Osage Trading Post being closed, George Sibley found himself at the age of 40, without a position. The Sibleys, both having a great deal of initiative, they decided to build log huts on the St. Charles property, where Lindenwood now stands.

The Sibley homestead, made of logs, was situated a little in front of where Roemer Hall now stands, and the pines that are at the side of the Gables were on either side of the garden walk. It was in this “house” that Mary Sibley had her first school. She was a capable young woman and because of the dire financial need of her husband, she put forth every effort to do her part.

The rest, to the upperclassmen at least, is an old, but well loved story. How Anne Russell of St. Louis was the first pupil, we all know. Indeed it is through the correspondence of George Sibley and William Russell, the girl’s father, that most of the material concerning the early years of Lindenwood is obtainable.

In 1834, the Sibleys had 11 pupils and the school was increasing all the time. In 1839, changes were made in the system, whereby the girls were required to clean only their own rooms and their school room. Also stipulations were made as to Sunday dress, green coats and hats in the winter time, and white dresses with pink sashes and white hats with pink ties for summer.

In 1853, the institution obtained its charter as a college for young women.

Sibley Hall, the first real building of the campus, was erected in 1855, with the two wings added at a later date.

In conclusion, Dr. Gregg reminded her audience of the Sibley burial place in back of Nicoles Hall, and suggested that a few minutes could profitably be spent in paying respect to the Founders of our Alma Mater, George and Mary Sibley.