

A HISTORY OF LAKEWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY

by
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History of Library
Summer, 1954

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Chronological Development

The first step in the establishing of the Lakewood Public Library was taken in 1914 when the Board of Education of Lakewood secured a Carnegie Corporation grant of \$45,000 for a building. Land on the corner of Arthur and Detroit avenues was purchased for \$9,728. The money for the latter came from unused tax allotments. Construction on the building was started in 1915. During this time, the newly appointed librarian, Miss Roena A. Ingham was selecting, purchasing, and cataloging the book collection. When the formal opening took place on May 19, 1916, the Library had a collection of 10,069 books.

For the first five years, the Library was governed by the Board of Education. In 1920 a law was passed by the General Assembly of Ohio enabling the libraries of the state to have their own boards. Lakewood was one of the first communities to take advantage of this law. The Board of Education appointed seven outstanding citizens to terms from one to seven years. As a term expired new members were appointed by the Education Board. This plan is still used today.

There was a great deal of interest and use of the Library in those early days. This was encouraged by Miss Ingham

and her staff who worked very closely with the community and the community projects. By 1922, however, the Library had outgrown its building, and a bond issue for \$180,000 was put to the citizens of Lakewood for a vote. This issue for a new wing was successful, and construction was begun to better house the book collection which by 1923 had reached 26,287 volumes. The work was completed by June of 1924 at which time the second opening took place. The new addition allowed for an increase of more than twice the size of the original building. The wing was built onto the front of the building giving more space for the Boy's and Girl's Room, the Circulation Department, and the stack area for the general adult collection on the first floor. On the second floor was located the new Reference Room, an auditorium, two club rooms, and a staff room.

The expansion of the Library was continuous to meet the needs of the public. In 1919, the need for a branch in the south east section was met by the rental of a second floor dance hall on the corner of Madison and Newmen avenues. This arrangement soon proved inadequate, but it was not until 1929 that a building was obtained for this branch. This building, designed by Mr. A. K. Murway, was erected in Madison Park at a cost of \$47,000. It is one of the few instances where a bond issue was not necessary for such a project.

The Library's service to the community extended next

to the schools. Branches were established in Lakewood High School¹, Emerson and Horace Mann junior high schools, and various public and prochial schools, by 1924. Soon after this branches in the Lakewood Hospital and Harding Junior High School were set up.

Disaster struck the Madison Branch in April 1932. A fire caused by a short circuit destroyed more than 2,000 books and demanged many more. This forced the branch to close for a month's repairs. The branch, however, quickly recovered from it's mishap and the reopening found newly rebound books, and redecorated walls.

In 1934 a change came in the financial support of the Library. Prior to that time, library funds came from the real estate tax. The support was changed to intangibles. Now the Library is entirely supported by Classified Property Tax Funds proceeds.

During World War II, the Library turned it's attention to the war effort. A Victory Book Campaign headed by the Librarian donated some 9750 books to the armed forces in 1939. The Library was also one of those selected by the Federal Government as a Démonstration War Information Center. Material designed to keep the citizens up-to-date on the happenings of the War were deposited at the Library.

¹

Lakewood High School later established it's own library.

As time went on, the space problem in the main building came back to haunt the Librarian and staff. The auditorium had to be used for stacks, and one club room was made into a mending and binding room. A small addition was made in the back of the building to accommodate the administrative offices so that more stack space could be had on the first floor. This was just a temporary measure, however. The book collection in 1947 stood at 108,004 volumes, and the Library could not put another shelving unit in the building. Additional space had to be made, and so another campaign for adding to the building was started. In 1953 the citizens of Lakewood again passed a bond issue. This time it was for \$800,000, to enlarge and modernize the building. Garfield, Harris, Robinson and Schafer are the architects. The work is to start August 15, 1954. The addition is to be made toward Detroit Ave. It will allow for more storage space, a meeting room, and auditorium in the basement. On the first floor there will be in addition to the present adult collection, a lounge for adults, a trustee's room, the Librarian's office, a mending and binding room, and greatly enlarged sections for the Young People's Room and the Boy's and Girl's Room. The Reference Room will occupy the entire new wing on the second floor, including a magazine reading section. In the older part of the same floor will be the Catalog Department, a public typing room, a record listening room, an enlarged

staff room and more stack area.

Librarians

Roena A. Ingham, 1915-1938. Miss Ingham was born and raised on Cleveland's West side. She was a graduate of Hiram College and Western Reserve Library School. She received her practical experience starting in 1896 in the Cleveland Public Library system where she was a cataloger, supervisor of branches, and finally librarian of the Carnegie-West Branch Library. She left this position in 1915 to establish the Lakewood Public Library. She remained as librarian there until her death in April 1938. She was active in community and professional organizations including the American Library Association, Ohio Library Association, Lakewood Woman's Club, the W.C. T. U., and Lakewood Business and Professional Women's Club. She was president of the Ohio Library Association in 1934. The system of organization which she used at Lakewood was followed by several suburbs established after that. She was well-loved among her staff and the community, and is still spoken of in revered tones.

Mary P. Parsons, 1938-1944. She was voted unanimously by the Board of the Lakewood Public Library to succeed Miss Ingham in June 1938. A graduate of Smith College and New York State Library School, Miss Parsons received her doctor's degree from the University of Vienna. She was head of Morris-

town, New Jersey Library for a time and organized and served as director of the Paris Library School. She also conducted some classes at McGill and Michigan Universities. During her six years as librarian at Lakewood, she instituted the mechanical charging method, and developed a staff organization that could function well even when she was away. In 1943 she was granted a leave of absence to establish an Office of War Information library in New Zealand. The following year the O. W. I. asked for her release in Lakewood because of the need for her further assistance in the South Pacific.

George W. Grill, 1945-1948. The only non-professional librarian in the Library's history, Mr. Grill was well equipped in other ways to head such an organization. He had been superintendent of Lakewood schools and closely connected with the Library, having served as both secretary and treasurer on the board for many years. He was well versed in administration and library finances. It was he who started the campaign for an addition to the library building. In 1947 Mr. Grill was granted a leave of absence because of poor health, and he resigned the following year for the same reason.

Mary B. Bloom, 1948-. Mrs. Bloom was appointed Acting Librarian during the leave of absence of George Grill. She was made Librarian in April 1948 upon his resignation. Mrs.

Bloom, a graduate of the University of Michigan, was Order Librarian and later Assistant Librarian at Lakewood. She is active in many community programs among which are the P. T. A., the American Library Association, Ohio Library Association, and the Phi Beta Kappa. She has continued Mr. Grill's project for the enlargement of the Library, and is at present concentrating her interest upon the ultimate completion of this work.

Special Collections.

The Roena Ingham Collection is a memorial to the Library's first librarian. It consists of fine books on flowers and gardening that could not be included in the Library's regular book budget. The section on the first floor which is used to shelve this collection is marked by a bronze plaque, and a book plate designed by Mrs. Arthur Wolf of Lakewood appears inside each book. Contributions for the fund came from the friends of Miss Ingham. The gift, which was presented to the Library in 1941 by Mr. Grill, is a very popular section with the patrons of the Library.

The Lynch Collection was established in 1934 and is composed of books on character, education, religious education, and child training. It is memorial to Charles P. Lynch, one time superintendent of schools. The basis for the collection came from Dr. Lynch's own library, and was added

to with funds collected by the teachers and ministers of Lakewood. At present this collection is badly out of date because after the initial donation, very little money has been contributed from the founders.

Present Library

Today the Library consists of one main building, a Madison Branch at 13229 Madison Avenue, the Lakewood Hospital which operates two days a week, twelve school branches including three junior high schools, and nine elementary schools. The Reference Room answers thousands of questions during a year, and keeps a staff of three full time people and two part time people busy all the time. Both the Boy's and Girl's Department, and the Young People's Department are very active. Elementary and junior high school reading programs receive much enthusiasm among the children. The outstanding programs in the teen-age group are the American Heritage and the Young Adult's Summer Forum. The latter was under consideration for cancellation because of the pending building project this summer. The young people in the community protested so much that it was decided to continue them at the Madison Branch.

Close community contact is maintained with adult groups also. Organizations such as the Great Books, started in Lakewood in 1949, World Politics, and the League of Women

Voters are very dependant upon the Library's support. Other clubs such as the Golden Age club, a club for older people, use the Library's resources for their activities. Contests, films, travel talks, and exhibits such as those from the Art Museum and the Museum of Natural History are going on constantly to keep the community aware of cultural activities.

NOTE ON SOURCES

This paper has not been documented due to the fact that so much of the available material has been obtained from newspaper clippings which either lack notation of source or date, or both. In general the main part of the historical information between the beginning of the Library in 1916 to 1947 has been obtained from the chapters on the Lakewood Public Library in the Butler and Lindstrom books. The statistics come from the annual reports of the Librarian. Recent data has been collected from clippings taken from the five newspapers cited in the Bibliography, and the writer's own knowledge of the Library, having been a member of the staff for the past three months.

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