



A
HISTORY
1938-1987

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MUSKEGON COUNTY LIBRARY

A HISTORY OF MUSKEGON COUNTY LIBRARY
AND ITS BRANCHES

Staff members of the Library have been so busy looking ahead, since its beginnings in 1938, that they have not paused long enough to look back and write an account of where they have been and what they have been doing.

However, the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Muskegon County Library in 1987 has made the need for a history quite obvious.

Wilma Kyvig, a retired English and creative writing teacher, was enlisted to guide and direct the project.

The staff of each branch and the Bookmobile have been asked to create a history of its operation. It was suggested that the branch librarians obtain local volunteers to research and write their branch histories.

It was also suggested that photographs of historical interest be located and included.

A history of the Bookmobile and an overview of the whole Library has been prepared. The project has been gratifying to the participants.

Warren McFerran

Library Director

January 1987

THE MUSKEGON COUNTY LIBRARY, 1938-1987; AN OVERVIEW

Warren McFerran
Director 1966-1987

During the mid-1930's there were no public and few school libraries in Muskegon County outside of the City of Muskegon.

James TenBrink, the County School Commissioner, was concerned about this missing part of the county's educational resources. Responding to this need he and the Muskegon County Teachers Club organized the Muskegon County School Library in 1936 and located it in his office in the old red-brick Muskegon County Court House.

The response to this service was so great it was soon apparent that a separate organization and outside funding were needed. Accordingly, the Muskegon County Library was formed in 1938 under Michigan Public Act 138 of 1917 with the assistance of the State Library and the Muskegon County Board of Supervisors.

As prescribed by Michigan law; the County Supervisors appointed a five-member library board consisting of James TenBrink, Rena Hoeker, Raymond R. Oehrli, Helen LeJeune, and Pearl Plummer. The board elected James TenBrink as chairman, a position he held from 1938 through 1970.

The plan of operation of the new board stated in part, "It is proposed to establish library branches in each township" and "Branches will be located in schools, homes, stores, and other available places."

Development of the Muskegon County Library during the years 1938-1941 was greatly enhanced by the funds, staff, and supervision of the Federal Works Progress Administration. Direction was provided by Letha Eklund, the W.P.A. Area Library Supervisor.

Following the pattern of most county libraries in Michigan; the participating local communities furnished branch quarters, equipment, utilities, and custodial services for their library branches. In addition, small collections of books were located in stores or public places where borrowers could obtain books on a self-serve basis.

Rotating collections of books were taken to school classrooms by the library staff during the school year. Local school boards were asked to pay \$10 annually per school for book service.

The Bookmobile operation began in a modest way in 1940 with the purchase and modification of a one-wheel trailer which carried 200 books to rural schools in good weather and bad.

With the termination of federal funding in 1942, the Library Board sought and obtained an appropriation from the County Board of Supervisors.

The first professional librarian, Mary B. Kenan, joined the staff as Director in February 1942.

In May 1942 the Library Headquarters was moved from the Court House to a location in Muskegon Heights. Professional library procedures were adopted and branches were opened in Muskegon Heights and Ruddiman Terrace during 1942.

By 1943 branches were operating in Muskegon Heights, Fruitport, Holton, Montague, Ravenna, and Ruddiman Terrace. Book stations were located at C.I.O. Headquarters, Lakewood Club Village, the West Michigan Children's Clinic, and Wolf Lake. A Book Depository collection was also placed at the Whitehall Library.

Staff salaries in 1943 ranged from \$.25 to \$1.21 per hour with the median at \$.55. Fringe benefits were minimal.

The Kent and Muskegon County Libraries became joint sponsors of the Casnovia Branch in 1944. The Village of Casnovia is located in both counties.

Representative operating figures for the Muskegon County Library in 1945 included: 5,034 registered borrowers, the circulation of 144,532 items, expenditures of \$19,969, and a book stock of 24,259.

Mary Kenan, the Library's director since 1942, resigned in February 1947 and was replaced by Catherine Wilson. "Kay" Wilson started as the Muskegon Heights branch librarian in October 1944.

During the decade of the 1940's, services of the Library were expanded to include the following: book talks, branch story hours, visits to schools to promote library awareness, adult meetings in libraries, interloans from the State Library, processing of reference questions, and exhibits.

In early 1951 the Library was caught between the professional staffing requirements of the State Library and the lack of adequate local funding to employ the necessary trained staff. This was to be a continuing problem for several decades.

The Library's first "factory made" Bookmobile was built by the Gerstenslager Company of Wooster, Ohio and delivered in February 1956.

The school-based Dalton Township Branch was opened in March 1959. It was located in one of the four rooms of the old Twin Lake School. The Twin Lake School system provided the quarters, utilities, and maintenance. The branch now functions as a school and public library in cooperation with the Reeths-Puffer Schools.

Major activities in 1960 included: planning for a North Muskegon branch; the move of Headquarters into the new County Building; and the meeting at the Whitehall High School concerning consolidation of the Montague and Whitehall libraries. This was the second attempt to encourage cooperation, James TenBrink had tried in January 1944.

A branch was opened in the North Muskegon High School in May 1961 with the support of the City of North Muskegon and the North Muskegon Public Schools.

Library service was suspended at the Fruitport Branch on August 15, 1961, because the community failed to provide adequate quarters.

Library Director Catherine Wilson submitted her resignation on November 3, 1961, and the Library Board agreed to terminate all library operations January 1, 1962, because of proposed budget reductions by the Board of Supervisors. The Supervisors responded by restoring the budget. This incident is illustrative. The funding of the Muskegon County Library has been consistently below that of all county libraries in Michigan on a per capita basis. A part of the funding problem is attributable to the archaic penal fine system in place across the state as a source of funding for public libraries.

Library service in Fruitport was restored in 1964 with the opening of the new branch building, the first County Library facility designed and built for library purposes.

Highlights of 1965 included: delivery of a replacement Gerstenslager Bookmobile; a request from the Egelston Township Supervisor for a library branch; and a letter from William Luyendyk, the Mona Shores School Superintendent, stating that area residents had requested a library branch.

In addition Library Board members received copies of the interim report on library unification in Muskegon County submitted to the Muskegon Board of Education by the Hackley Library Advisory Board chaired by Harold W. Charter.

Catherine Wilson announced her plan to retire in December 1965 and the County Library was granted System status by the State Library and therefore became eligible to receive federally funded periodical and book distributions.

Warren McFerran began service as the newly appointed County Librarian in January 1966.

Major goals of the library system were: card catalogs at seven branches; telephones at six branches; delivery service; increased hours open at branches; the establishment of branches in Egelston, Muskegon, and Norton Shores Townships; improved branch facilities; enlarged adult book collections; the introduction of audiovisual materials; reading incentive and storyhour programs for children; a bookmobile designed for community service; an enlarged paraprofessional and professional staff; gradual budget increases to meet these needs and library standards; the resolution of the union representation issue; and the study and achievement of the unification of the three public libraries in Muskegon County.

Most of these goals were realized in varying degrees during the next two decades. New branches were opened at Egelston and Norton Shores. Attractive and efficient library buildings were constructed at North Muskegon, Montague, Norton Shores and Holton. Branches were remodeled and enlarged at Egelston and Muskegon Heights. Branches were closed at Ruddiman Terrace following an annexation and at the Village of Casnovia after the creation of an excellent school library.

The County Library began to move into the areas of computer technology, networking, and extensive interlibrary cooperation in the late 1970's. A headquarters computer terminal linkup with the OCLC data base in Columbus, Ohio, which provided catalog cards and an interlibrary loan base of 5,000,000 books held by 2,000 libraries in the United States and abroad. This service was shared with the two local colleges and Every Woman's Place.

The development of the Lakeland Library Cooperative, whose computer serves as a circulation system and interlibrary loan base for 64 library units with a total collection of 2,000,000 books, has allowed Muskegon County Library to automate circulation procedures in every branch. The Subregional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is a part of the Michigan Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped and the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. The Subregional was started in 1979. Eligible individuals may borrow Talking Book records, cassettes, and players without charge from the Subregional.

However another goal remains, that is the unification of the Hackley Public Library, the Muskegon County Library, and the Whitehall City Library into one county-wide library service organization. Citizens, library board members, professional consultants, and staff members repeatedly devoted time, effort, and skills in the search for a means of unification. Studies were made in 1965-1966, 1967-1968, 1978, and 1980. These efforts were not wasted. In the process those involved learned much about library standards, operations, budgets, cooperation, their library neighbors, and about themselves.

As libraries become increasingly computerized; they have ready access to regional, national, and international resources. They also find satisfaction in sharing their resources with persons they may never meet but with whom they establish the bond of cooperation.

Library unification has not been achieved in Muskegon County but it remains a long-range goal. In the meantime our libraries have grown and become providers of vital resources and services.

The County Library Board Members deserve recognition for contributions and services over the 50-year life of the System. The chairmen of the Board have been:

1938 - 1970	James TenBrink
1971 - 1978	Raymond R. Oehrli
1979 - 1985	Joseph Ward
1986 - 1988	Susan Clink
1989-	Frances Fisher

Recognition must be given to the municipalities which provide the branch facilities. Recognition should also be given to the Friends of the Library members and volunteers who have given so generously of their time, effort and financial support.

The County Library's 50th Anniversary was observed in 1987 with many gala events and activities. The 50th Anniversary Committee of 20 members was ably chaired by Frances Fisher. Main events were:

February 14	Celebration Dinner honoring the original library board and special guests.
February 14 - May 1	Book Fund Drive.
March - May	Muskegon Youth Civic Theater Performances at library branches.
May 6 and 7	William X. Kienzle, noted mystery author, spoke at a dinner program and at several branches.
September 25	Public Library Conference at Muskegon Community College.
October 27	Jim Trelease, author of "The Read-Aloud Handbook," spoke at the final dinner program.

The preparation of this history has been a part of the 50th Anniversary Celebration. Recognition should be given to Richard Vettese, the innovator of the celebration, and to the Muskegon County Commissioners, Raymond Grennan, Chairman, and to Frank Bednarek, County Administrator, for their support and cooperation.

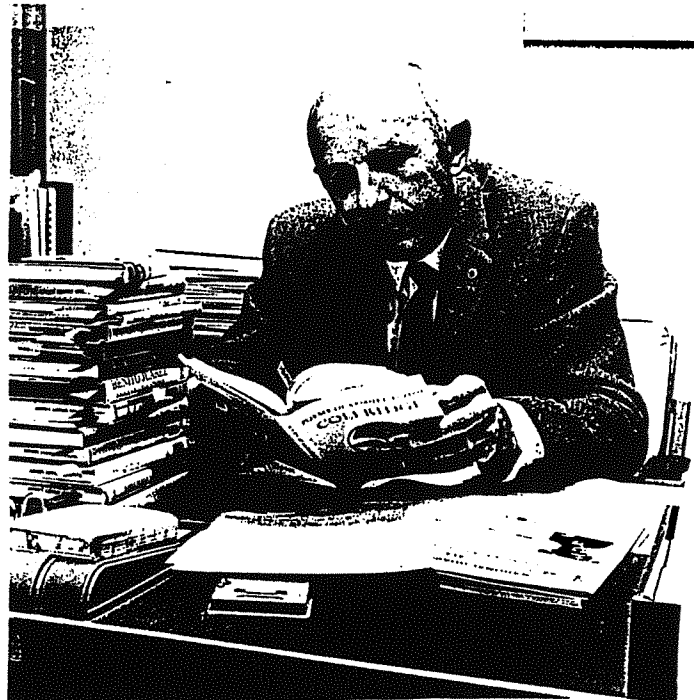


Muskegon County Library Board, 1943
R.R. Oehrli, Anton Seifert, Pearl Plummer, James TenBrink,
Rena Hoeker, and Mary Kenan (County Librarian).



Katherine Wilson
County Librarian
1947-1966

Warren McFerran
County Librarian
1966-1987



HISTORY OF BPH

Faith Jernigan

The Muskegon County Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped opened in July 1979. Prior to this time, about 200 patrons had been served by mail from the State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped in Lansing. Currently, there are over 300 individual readers and 13 institutions registered in the County of Muskegon.

The Muskegon BPH, as it is popularly called, is part of a national network of libraries for the blind under the National Library Service (NLS) of the Library of Congress. Each state has one or more regional libraries (Michigan has two, one at Lansing and one at Detroit), with subregional libraries under them. The Muskegon BPH subregional serves all of Muskegon County and is one of 12 subregionals which operate in Michigan.

How can blind people read books? By listening to books recorded on records or on cassette tapes. Volunteers, some of whom are quite famous, such as the late Alexander Scourby, do this recording or "narration."

Persons with other handicaps which prevent them from holding or reading books with ordinary print are eligible for this service also. Two other types of books available to the handicapped are those in large print and in braille.

The first professional local BPH librarian, Ann Kelly, organized the Library and remained until August 1983. During that time she worked with a variety of volunteers, CETA, and Summer Youth Corp Employees who handled the daily tasks of checking in returned books, mailing books out, sending out machines, etc.

Ann's time was devoted to giving talks about the new service to organizations, preparing newsletters, working with volunteers, preparing reports required by national and state BPH libraries, and making home visits to patrons who needed help in learning to operate the machines. For example, 109 home visits were made in 1980. This type of personal service is very important, especially to the elderly.

Two Telephone Pioneer Volunteers have repaired machines through the years. One, Lew Thomas, is still active. Telephone Pioneers are retired telephone company employees who assist BPH Libraries throughout Michigan.

Personal contact with our patrons is very rewarding on both sides, and has resulted in many interesting friendships. One man who is blind, comes in with his friend. She is in a wheelchair but has good eyesight. He is totally blind but is otherwise not handicapped. He pushes her wheelchair and she guides him in doing it. That's teamwork! Another blind man comes to the BPH by

bus, finds out what is available in his areas of interest and then takes a bus home all on his own.



Faith Jernigan
Blind and Physcially Handicapped Librarian
1987

BOOKMOBILE

John Briggs
Warren McFerran
JoAnn Sandgren

From the days of its infancy the Muskegon County Library has provided book service using a succession of Bookmobiles. These ranged from a one-wheel mini-trailer in 1940 to the present orange giant which once carried the name Stonewall Jackson Regional Library.

During the early years the Bookmobile offered a means of bringing library service to the expanding schools and communities outside the City of Muskegon. The following letter, written by an elementary school student of the Bookmobile:

"I am writing this letter to tell you how much I enjoyed the Bookmobile. The Bookmobile is as good as anything on earth. It helped me a lot in Reading and Geography. I like books about tales of heroes of long ago. The books on travel tell me a lot about what the boys see and do when they go across. With rubber and gasoline shortages, it is hard to get to the library downtown, so I am grateful that you can come to our school. We all like the Bookmobile and thank you for coming to Maple Ridge."

Sincerely,
Joe Simila
Maple Ridge School

The first county library was created in 1936 as the Muskegon County School Library in the office of the Muskegon County School Commissioner James TenBrink. Book centers were located in schools, stores, and homes. Books were also borrowed by county teachers when they visited the School Commissioner's office located in the old Muskegon County Courthouse. In 1938 the Muskegon County Library was organized.

To facilitate and achieve a greater distribution of books to the 35 county schools not served by the six recently created library branches, a one-wheel trailer was purchased from Sears, Roebuck in 1940. Robert Strong of Muskegon constructed a large box on the trailer frame. It was topped with a curved roof and each side was covered with two doors that were lettered Muskegon County Public Library. The books were carried in six drawers inside each set of doors. The parked trailer was stabilized by a hinged angle iron frame fastened to the front corners of the box.

The trailer was hitched to a car and traveled an average of 25 miles per day visiting rural schools. It had a capacity of 200 books including adult fiction and non-fiction for the teachers. In good weather the children came out to the trailer and made their selections, but in bad weather the books were taken into the schools. Most of these schools had only one room with instruction given to about 20 pupils in grades one to eight. Children were allowed one book each until the next visit a month later. Meanwhile, they traded books among themselves.

Bookmobile staff members are a special group. They face weather which is often too hot or cold or wet; roads which are sometimes icy, snow-drifted, or in poor repair; bookmobiles which are balky and too small or too big; and tubs of books which need to be continually loaded on and off of the bus.

However, Bookmobile staffers thrive on work, adversity, and challenge. They take pride in overcoming obstacles and their spirits are generally high. They are gypsies of the library scene. The early bookmobile staffers were distinguished by their berets.

In addition to the characteristics noted above, these bookmobile librarians are friendly and demonstrate a strong desire to serve their patrons. If the books requested aren't aboard, the librarians will borrow them elsewhere and bring them as soon as available.

In May 1943, the book trailer was replaced by a 1939 Chevrolet one-half ton panel truck which held 350 books. With its low roof adults could not stand upright inside but it represented progress. During the school year, this vehicle and staff visited 61 schools within successive five-week periods. In addition deposit collections were left at 13 suburban schools.

The Chevrolet Bookmobile was replaced in 1949 by a 1947 International one-ton panel truck which was converted for bookmobile use. Carrying capacity was increased to 1,200 volumes and the staff could almost stand upright. In 1950 this Bookmobile brought books to students and teachers at 72 schools regularly. Curiously, of these 72 schools, 44 were of the one-room variety. The role of school consolidation was not completed.

Early in 1956, while under the direction of Marie Wigren, the library on wheels became "professional" with the addition of a "new" and "real" bookmobile. It was built on a Chevrolet chassis with the body and interior designed and constructed by the Gerstenslager Company of Wooster, Ohio. Gerstenslager was this nation's best known manufacturer of bookmobiles. The 1956 unit carried 1,800 volumes, 50 percent more than that of its predecessor. During 1956 the Bookmobile brought books to every school in Muskegon County outside of the cities of Muskegon and Muskegon Heights, 70 in all. The same

service continued through 1960 but the number of schools decreased to 46 as a result of school consolidation and elimination of many of the one-room schoolhouses.

The life expectancy of a bookmobile is about 10 years depending on features, maintenance, housing, and other factors. The 1955 model was replaced in January, 1965 with a new but similar Gerstenslager unit which had a book capacity of 1,700 volumes.

It became obvious in 1966 to Warren McFerran, the newly appointed County Librarian, that the role of the Bookmobile in Muskegon County would need to change. Federal aid combined with the construction of new schools was stimulating the creation of school libraries. Therefore, the need of the schools for bookmobile service was decreasing. In 1950 the Bookmobile regularly visited 72 schools, while in 1966 children came aboard the Bookmobile at eight schools and book collections were left at 30 others.

The reduction of school service provided an opportunity to explore the need for increased community and institutional library service.

Early in 1966, Warren McFerran met with Egelston Township officials and proposed that the Bookmobile make scheduled weekly community stops in the township from mid-1966 to mid-1967 to determine the potential for a branch library. Agreement was reached and community bookmobile service began in Egelston Township in June 1966.

The experiment proved successful and plans were made for a library branch to be located in the basement of the township hall. The Egelston Township Library Branch began service in June 1967.

With a new emphasis on community service, the adequacy of the 1965 Bookmobile to provide this service was examined. A bookmobile in community service requires a constant source of light and heat. These are supplied by an electric generator and a bottled gas heater, features lacking in the 1965 unit. In addition a rear desk would be needed to separate the circulation activities from the book return and registration functions at the front desk.

Accordingly, planning for a new bookmobile and its funding began with the approval of the Library Board in November, 1967. A GMC chassis and engine unit was ordered through the N & K Service and Parts Company in Muskegon for delivery to the Gerstenslager Company in Wooster, Ohio.

When the invoice for the chassis was sent to the County's accounting department, the County Controller challenged the authority of the Library Board to order the Bookmobile without his approval.

The Library Board asked an area legislator to request an opinion from Michigan Attorney General Frank J. Kelley. In due time the Attorney General issued his opinion which stated that the Library Board had such

authority under the County Library Law so long as it possessed the necessary funds.

The funds had been obtained because the Library had acted to qualify as a System Library thereby becoming eligible to receive additional State Aid.

The Bookmobile was delivered on July 3, 1968, and cost \$17,816. Specifications included: exterior length of 27' 4"; gross vehicle weight of 18,000 pounds; propane heater; and an Onan 115 volt electric generator. The book capacity was 2,700 volumes.

The 1965 Bookmobile was kept for several years after the 1968 unit was received. It did not sell readily because it lacked a gas heater and an electric generator. The Willard Library in Battle Creek rented it from July 1969 to January 1970. An advertisement was placed in the June 15, 1970, issue of the Library Journal stating that it would be available for inspection and sale at the July American Library Association Conference in Detroit. Warren McFerran drove it to Detroit and up the circular ramp to the parking lot atop Cobo Hall to the surprise of the attendants. They provided a suitable parking space and the Baltimore County Public Library bought it for \$3,900. Baltimore County used it as a Merrymobile driving it 90,000 miles before it wore out in 1979.

Residents of the rapidly growing City of Norton Shores had no local library in the 1960's but made extensive use of library services in a variety of locations. Circulation of library materials to Norton Shores residents during 1969 was: Bookmobile community stops 19,437 and schools 6,592; Muskegon Heights Branch 38,500; Hackley Public Library 89,121. The Norton Shores Library Branch opened in 1974 and Bookmobile community stops in Norton Shores were discontinued at that time.

Bookmobile service was offered to another group of area residents in 1974 when the unit began weekly visits to the Muskegon Correctional Facility. This service continued until the Correctional Facility opened its library in 1980.

When the 1968 Bookmobile began to show its longevity in 1978, the Gerstenslager Company was asked to provide a cost estimate of a duplicate unit in 1979 or 1980. The quoted estimate was \$50,000 which was not affordable. Efforts were made to obtain a used unit and the result was an adventure. The Stonewall Jackson Regional Library, located in Buckhannon, West Virginia, had a 1977 Gerstenslager Bookmobile for sale. Following an inspection trip, arrangements were made to purchase the unit for \$15,195. Warren McFerran and John Briggs were flown to Buckhannon by private plane. They drove the Bookmobile back to Muskegon after a scheduled day at the Gerstenslager factory where various minor repairs were made.

On arrival in Muskegon, the Bookmobile looked somewhat out of place with the big blue letters STONEWALL JACKSON REGIONAL LIBRARY set against the orange background. It was soon repainted and put to work.

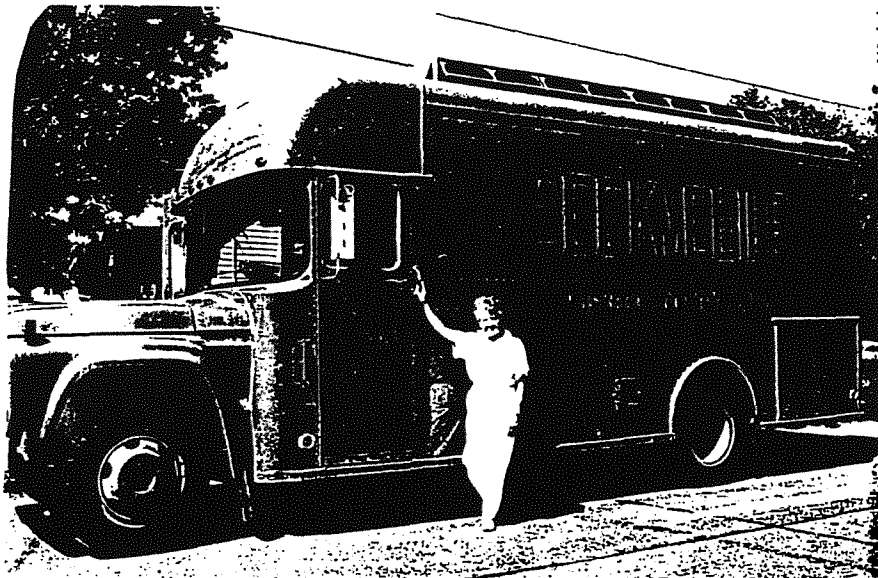
Bookmobile service is alive and well! Circulation figures are growing. About three-fourths of our patrons are children, but we also have a faithful following of adult patrons. The Bookmobile carries an excellent selection of current reading material for adults. We stock more than 3,000 items on board consisting of books, magazines, and cassette tapes.

The Bookmobile doubles its neighborhood stops during the summer when the six schools it serves in the winter go on summer holidays. There is a very successful summer reading program for the youthful patrons, ages four through fourteen, usually 250 children participate in this program.

The Bookmobile stops at the Brookhaven Medical Facility monthly with a selection of large print books and records. The Youth Home on Whitehall Road was recently added to the list of monthly custodial stops. A varied selection of books and paperbacks are left for the use of residents.

The Bookmobile provides a valuable service. It is one of the highest circulating units of the Muskegon County Library. Four librarians have taken the Bookmobile through 44 years. Lake Erie (Casey) Coughy (1944-1953), Marie Wigren (1946-1969), John Briggs (1969-1982), Last and still going strong is JoAnn Sandgren, 1974 to date.

Bookmobile service in Muskegon County has had a past filled with dedication and rewards and, hopefully, will continue with a productive future.



JoAnn Sandgren
1987



The Bookmobile in 1949 at Dalson School.

DALTON TOWNSHIP BRANCH, TWIN LAKE

Helen Myrmel

Anyone desiring to turn over a new leaf may head for the Dalton Township Branch of the Muskegon County Library which is located in Twin Lake, on Fifth Street, next to the Elementary School. They will find more than 9,000 books currently on hand; each an opportunity for adventure. Residents of this charming village will agree that the library in Twin Lake has been a community effort, individually and collectively, since its inception.

The Twin Lake area is a Mini-Water Wonderland, boasting a dozen lakes in the vicinity. Its residents and visitors enjoy boating, swimming, fishing and water skiing in the nearby lakes; as well as operating cycles on its scenic, winding roads. It also provides ample winter sports. Local working people travel to Muskegon, Fremont and White Lake areas to bring home their paychecks, as the local businesses are mostly home-owned with few employment opportunities. When leaves take on their autumn colors; many residents, particularly around the lakes, pack up and head for warmer states. Although the Twin Lake village and "downtown" district is located mostly along M-120, the actual population is widespread. The post office has four rural routes covering 2,500 homes and traveling 180 miles a day, in addition to serving nearly 300 post office boxes. The population count of Dalton Township in 1980 was 6,167. The area served by the Library is largely within Dalton Township, which provides Twin Lake services and government. A section to the east is in Cedar Creek Township.

The early 1860's saw the first homesteaders settle in Twin Lake territory where the Dalton Branch is located. Lumber mills were established early in its history, and the railroad came through in 1872. In 1873 the forty-acre village was platted by A. B. Buell and population reached 150. School classes commenced, a hotel and grocery joined the sawmills. Twin Lake Methodist Church was built in 1882. Many of the families whose names are woven into the early history of Twin Lake have descendants still living in the area today.

From the 1930's, the Muskegon County Library book trailer and bookmobiles served the school children of Twin Lake. Until 1959 a library here was only a gleam in the eye of the late Bill Betts, who "loved to read and couldn't imagine living in a place with no library." Not one to sit around and wonder why "somebody" didn't do something, Bill rallied the citizens of Twin Lake to participate in a door-to-door canvass to gain financial and moral support and to contribute books and labor. A group approached Mrs. Fern Peters, superintendent of the Twin Lake School, to obtain her cooperation in starting a

branch library in the Twin Lake area. Mrs. Peters followed through with the idea; and a meeting was held which was attended by Kay Wilson, head librarian of the Muskegon County Library, the Twin Lake School Board, the Dalton Township Board, and several other interested persons from the community. The Twin Lake School Board offered use of a room in the former four-room schoolhouse, complete with heat, lights and custodian. Dalton Township helped with funds to buy furniture and shelving, and later paid for a telephone. The Muskegon County Library Board furnished books and the salary of the librarian.

The building donated by the school system for library use was the old brick school, built in 1928, which at that time was used as a third grade classroom on the main floor and for lunch preparation in the basement. The new school building, a separate structure, had been built in 1950. The dedicated volunteers got busy cleaning and fixing up the empty room, building shelves, obtaining tables and chairs and a book cart, and proudly settling in the starting collection of between 2,000 and 3,000 books. March 4, 1959, was the Red Letter Day when the branch first opened its doors at noon to provide free service to both adult and juvenile borrowers. Its hours were Wednesdays and Fridays from noon to 5:00 p.m. and also Fridays from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Dalton was the eighth branch of the nine unit County Library system.

Marie Rademaker was the first librarian and served the community in this capacity until her retirement in 1968. Betty Johnston, who had long been active in library affairs, was then appointed to this post, and for sixteen years her loving and unstinting work caused the Library to grow and become an important and valued part of the community. Betty was considered a dear, dear friend by all the children and adults who came through its doors. The Dalton Branch Library frequently has a greater circulation than much larger branches in the county system. In 1984 Betty Johnston suffered a stroke and is now retired. Since that date, Sue Monson has officiated and won her place in the hearts of borrowers by her friendly helpfulness. Several people have assisted as substitute librarians, including Ruth Gurn (ten years), Ruth Buzzell, with Maureen Davis in this capacity at present. Over the years, library hours have been increased from 12 to 27 hours per week.

Blessed was the Dalton Branch of Muskegon County Library in 1963, when its Friends of the Library officially organized for the support and betterment of the Library in Twin Lake. Most of the persons who had spearheaded the Library plans in 1959 were among the charter members, which elected Betty Jarman as its first president; Georgia Mulder, vice president; Mary Payne, treasurer; Ruth Betts, secretary. Mrs. Betts, a wise and

witty woman now ninety years young, kept minutes of Friends of the Library meetings for nineteen years. Her chronicles and remembrances have been of invaluable help in preparing this history. She is the widow of the library initiator, Bill Betts, and mother of longtime librarian Betty Johnston.

Histories of the Library and its Friends group have been intertwined during the ensuing years. Countless hours of hard work have gone into such fundraising projects as book sales, yard sales, bake sales, raffles and paper drives. This sounds like a grim dirge of WORK, WORK, WORK; however, the undaunted women who were interviewed say, "Oh, we always had so much FUN!" In 1973, under the leadership of Karen Fowler, a cookbook, quaintly entitled "The Feeders' Digest", with recipes from the entire community sold 300 copies. It was one of the most profitable and ambitious money-making projects ever undertaken by the Friends' group, and these delightful books are collectors' items today.

A major project of the Friends of the Library as a part of the Twin Lake Bicentennial Celebration in 1976 was an illustrated history book entitled "Twin Lake - the Heritage of the Past - The Promise of the Future." This book, produced by the Friends and edited by Gary Roen, holds a treasure of information for Twin Lake citizens and their progeny and is available for sale at the Library.

Over the years the women have drafted their husbands, children and friends to aid in bulding shelves, painting, putting up holiday decorations, and providing favors and prizes for children's parties. Summer Reading Clubs have been conducted each year, and many contests sponsored. Other names appearing often in the years of minutes are Jane Turner, Neda Pearo, Nona Mattson Erickson, Martha Ellwell, Ruth Gurn, Barb Willi, Demeras Roen, Delores Foster, Millie Emmer, Alice Van Riper, Verna Peterson, Jane George and - especially - Charles (Babe) Johnston, husband of Betty. Many are still hard at work being a Friend of the Library; others have moved away or passed on, and new Friends have caught their torch to carry on work for the Library. Among the many things provided by the dedicated Friends of the Library over the years have been desks, tables, typewriters, shades, two paperback racks, stools, card catalogues, shelving, bulletin boards, record boxes and library signs. A current project of the group is to replace the worn out shades.

In 1964 the Twin Lake School became a part of the Reeths-Puffer School System. The Library is still quartered in the former school building which was originally provided by the school system. The room which is reached by a flight of stairs, is 23 by 33 feet, and seats 22. There is also a small magazine room and an

employees' room. The school system still furnishes utilities, now including phone service, and custodial care. The salaries of the librarians are shared by the county and the school district. The special needs and special touches are on-going tender loving care projects of the Friends of the Library. Grateful mention should be made on Twin Lake businesses, such as John's Market, Pawlowski Greenhouse and the Twin Lake Diner, whose wholehearted and generous cooperation in providing merchandise for prizes and fundraising projects over the years has so greatly aided the Library.

In April 1984, this Library entered the computer age, thanks to the installation of equipment worth \$6,000 underwritten by the Kellogg Foundation and the Lakeland Library Cooperative. Costs of being electronically connected to all branches of the county system within the Lakeland Library Cooperative voted by Dalton Township in the amount of \$510; and Cedar Creek Township, whose residents comprise 11% of the branch users, of \$150. The computer gave the branch access to 1.2 million books. Borrowers may request that specially desired books be obtained for them. Monthly computer maintenance expenses are paid by Dalton Township.

Among special services to adults are providing federal and state tax forms, and various area publications, such as Senior News and Reeths-Puffer School News. A favorite with the pre-school children is the Storyhour, started in 1969 with Marian Fagan. Children enjoy stories, songs, games and creative dramatics. Entire classes of Twin Lake Elementary School look forward to their trips next door to the Library for research and selection of books. Groups of orderly but active students are present in the Library most of the time on school days.

The words of Librarian Sue Monson bring out that Dalton Township Library, Twin Lake, has not only an interesting past, but also a great present and a bright future.

Sue says: "Our hope is that the Library will continue to grow with the community without ever losing sight of the individual patron's needs." Because Dalton Branch is one of the smaller branch libraries, we are able to take the time to help people with their special needs or just spend a few extra minutes to be friendly. We believe it is that atmosphere that draws young and not quite so young alike to the library.

Although this branch may not be the biggest, the oldest, nor in the most elegant of buildings; in the hearts of the hundreds who have worked for its progress, it is the BEST!

Area Groups Engage in Varied Activities

Library Friends

Friends of the Dalton Township Library have announced a second printing of their popular cookbook, "Feeders Digest," after a successful sale of the first 200 printed.

Members of the cookbook committee explained that a second shipment of 100 books will be received by the first of May from Devron Publishing Co. in Kansas City.

Recipes were collected from the Twin Lake community for the first local cookbook printed in 20 years, explained the Friends of the Library organized in 1963.

Other money raising projects throughout the year include book fairs, baked good sales, coffee lunches and the like. On schedule is a May 19 used book and baked goods sale at the library.

Funds were used from the cookbook and the book sale for a magazine rack for the library and perhaps a paperback book holder. All the equipment in the township library, such as shelving, the card catalogue, tables, chairs and desks, have been provided by the Friends group.

The 12-member organization is tentatively planning a history of the Twin Lake community as the next big project.

Circulation of the library averages 3,000 books monthly, explained librarian Betty Johnston. The branch library's hours are 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, with the addition of 7 to 9 p.m. Monday. Saturday the library is open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

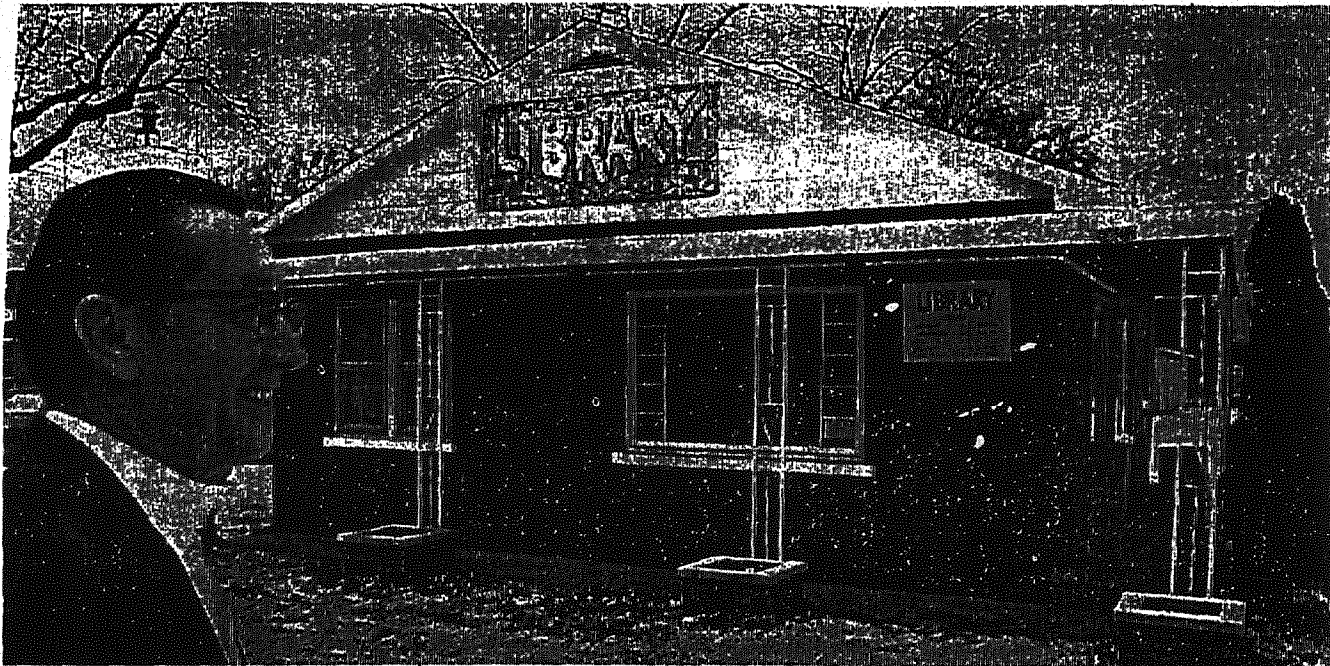
Located in Twin Lake, the Dalton Township Library also serves Cedar Creek Township.



Library Friends

Looking over their very popular cookbook are four of the Friends of Dalton Township Library (left to right) Mrs. Charles Johnston, librarian; Mrs. Fletcher Fowier, secretary; Mrs. Ruth

Betts; and Mrs. Donald Mulder, president of the group. The women sold 200 cookbooks to earn money for the county branch library.

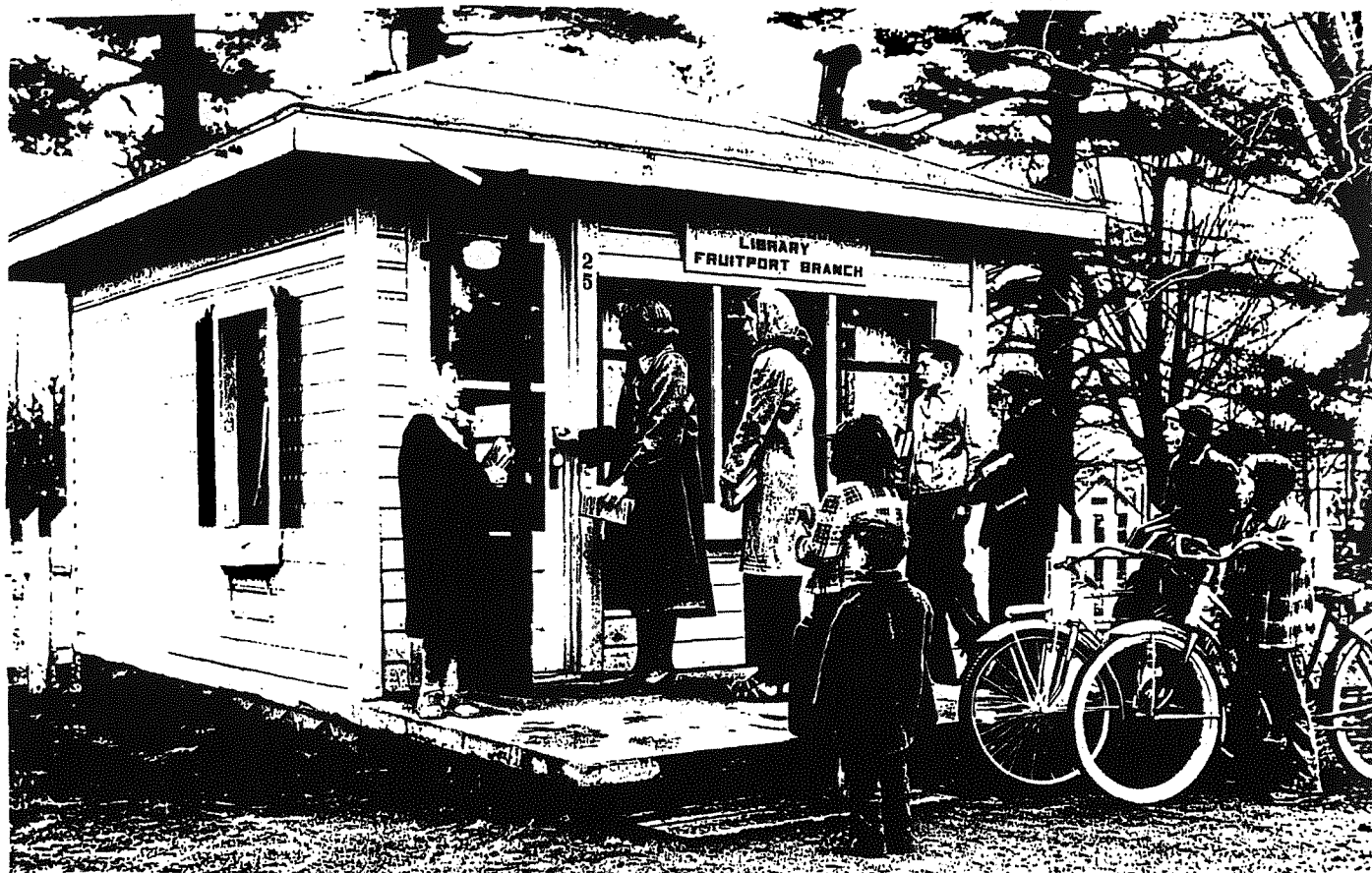


READY FOR READING — Egelston Township's new library building now is in business in the former township hall, located next to the present

township hall on Apple at Wolf Lake. Months of part-time work went into the renovation effort. According to Township Supervisor Tom J. G. Bolt,

(left), the old library site in the basement of the present township hall is to be converted into a police station.

Chronicle 12-4-72



Fruitport Branch, 1941
 Located on the corner of Park and Third Streets.

EGELSTON BRANCH

Maxine Huber

Mrs. Edna Beals was the person most responsible for the establishment of the Egelston Branch Library. In the early 1960's, Mrs. Beals was a volunteer helper at Carr Elementary School. One day Thelma Bailey, Principal of the school, approached her. Mrs. Bailey was concerned because the school had no library. They did have books, but no way to use them. Mrs. Bailey asked Mrs. Beals if she would help set up a library in one of the school's extra rooms. Mrs. Beals replied that she knew nothing about libraries but would try to set one up.

The boxes of books went up on shelves. They weren't arranged by the Dewey Decimal System but the children did have a room with books. The County Library bookmobile helped to supplement the Library by making regular stops.

"Well, that wasn't so hard," Mrs. Beals thought. So she started a library club of mothers who volunteered each week to run the Library, so the children could check out books.

The library club became a nucleus of concerned mothers who discussed the needs of their children and the community. They felt that now that the school had a library, the community should have one as well. A community library could serve the needs of the adults in the community for information and the children could use the library during the summer when school was closed.

Edna Beals went to Gene Schaub, Egelston Township Supervisor, and asked him how to establish a public library in the township. Mr. Schaub contacted Warren McFerran, Director of the Muskegon County Library. Mr. McFerran told them that the Board of Directors of the Township must approve the establishment of a branch library and be able to provide for its continued financial support. Materials and staff would be supplied by the county, equipment and up keep must be provided by the Township.

When Mrs. Beals asked John Flickema, a member of the Township Board, what to do, he said, "just leave it to me." At the next Township Board meeting, Mr. Flickema proposed that \$1,500 be set aside for the start of the Egelston Branch of the Muskegon County Library. Edna Beals seconded the motion and it was passed.

Time went by and nothing more happened. Gene Schaub's term ended and John Flickema was elected Egelston Township Supervisor, but the residents still had no library. So, again, Edna Beals approached Mr. Flickema. There was now money but still no library she reminded him. The reminder was what he needed. At a meeting on March 23, 1966, with Warren McFerran, a request was made to become a member of the Muskegon County Library.

On June 20, 1966, the Muskegon County Library Bookmobile made its first official visit to the township hall and to John F. Kennedy Memorial Park. From June through December 1966;, 4,029 books were circulated to township residents.

Meanwhile half of the township hall basement was being transformed into a library. Shelves were constructed along two walls, a center book stack was built, and a magazine display rack was made.

On June 30, 1967, the Egelston Branch Library opened. Lillias Jancek was the librarian. Although the library was hard to find hidden as it was in the basement, its use took off at a fast pace. Maxine Huber was hired as librarian on August 27, 1967, and Lillias Jancek returned to her regular job at the County Library Headquarters. At the end of 1967 circulation was 7,483. Circulation increased to 11,516 in 1968. The Library was open 17 hours a week and circulation continued to grow. By the end of 1969 it was up to 16,003 and the Library's quarters were becoming cramped with books and materials.

To help promote the Library, the art teacher at Oakridge High School, Adde Lou Schott, painted a 4' by 8' sign, decorated with birds, flowers and the word "Library" in large letters. This sign was attached to the roof of the building. For a school art project, Mrs. Huber's son Phil painted a huge white owl on the library door.

Space was at a premium and circulation was still growing. It reached 19,854 in 1971. The township realized they needed to provide more space for the growing library, so they arranged to move the library into the little building next door. The township offices were moved out of the building and into the township hall. It was a small building but had more space than the library had in the basement of the township hall. The library closed for two weeks and opened on November 20, 1972, in its new building. The circulation that year was 20,871.

Circulation continued to grow and shelf space continued to be filled with books. James Derezinski, Egelston Township Clerk, applied for and obtained a Federal Grant to share the funding of a children's room addition. Construction on the addition began in 1978 and was finished by October 1979. All picture books, juvenile and young adult books were shelved in the new room. Space was now available for weekly pre-school story hour programs; special children's programs could also be held in the new room.

There are now 9,174 volumes on Egelston's shelves, plus over 2,500 gift paperbacks. Borrowers come from Egelston, Muskegon, Sullivan, Moorland and Cedar Creek townships. The Library receives excellent support from the township. Needed repairs are quickly made, drives

are plowed and walks shoveled in the winter, and necessary equipment is purchased.

With assistance from the Muskegon County Library, the Lakeland Library cooperative and a grant from the Kellogg Foundation, the Egelston Branch was connected to the cooperative's computer system. In April 1982, Egelston went fully "on-line" with the computer system for circulation and interlibrary loan purposes. It is expected that further technological innovations will be employed in the future to enhance the Library's commitment to public service.

The Library has a small Friends group who help to raise funds through book and bake sales and who are always available to help with special events. Patricia Watts, its current President, has been the Library's Good Will Ambassador at many public functions.

Egelston Branch Library has become a fixture in the lives of Egelston Township residents. Special spring and fall children's programs are planned. First Grade Reader Round-Up is an annual event for all first grade students in the township. The Summer Reading Club regularly attracts over a hundred participants each summer. Services have increased to include the circulation of audio and video cassettes. A personal computer is available for public use. The Library provides a homey, welcoming atmosphere for its many users.



Maxine Huber

FRUITPORT BRANCH

Karla Brown

The Fruitport Branch of the Muskegon County Library is located in Fruitport Township, the southern most township in Muskegon County. It is largely an agricultural community, being one of the largest producers of blueberries in the state. A pioneering spirit of concern and cooperation has played a great role in the development of our present library, whose history goes back to the 1930's. Even before the inception of the county library in 1938, local residents Earl Comstock and Marshall Tuffs remember there was a library on Main Street in the home of Mrs. Rake. Mr. Comstock remembers going often to the Rake home after school to select books for both pleasure and knowledge.

This small in-house library served the needs of local residents until the county library came into being around 1937. School Commissioner James TenBrink felt the need to provide books to school children in outlying areas of the county. School boards were asked to donate \$10.00 each for the purchase of books, which were then put up in lots of 15 each for the schools. At three week intervals the books were exchanged for 15 others. Mr. TenBrink secured additional books through a traveling book program of the Michigan State Library. By simply paying postage local units could borrow collections of 500 to 600 books from the state, use them for a period of time, and then exchange for another collection.

In June 1938, Muskegon County Board of Supervisors approved the library as the Muskegon County Library. A board of 5 members was created to administer the operations of the library and benefits were held to raise funds. Donations of books and magazines were accepted and centers established in schools, stores, and homes. For the first four years WPA funds were used to provide librarians while the local communities provided the necessary quarters, furniture, heat, lights, and janitorial services. The seven established libraries were at Casnovia, Fruitport, Holton, Montague, Muskegon Heights, Ruddiman Terrace and Ravenna. These libraries were open not just to the school children but to the entire community.

The Fruitport Branch was open daily from 12:30 to 6:30 p.m. with Dorothy Braun as the first WPA appointed librarian. She began her duties November 21, 1938, in the white wood frame school house on Main Street. The building at that time housed 4th, 5th, and 6th grade classes, a laboratory and a lunchroom. Custodian Cal Comstock built cupboards and shelves for the books.

Dorothy Braun started the first Summer Reading Club for children at the Fruitport Branch. She describes her program in a letter written to Mr. TenBrink, May 3,

1939. Children were given membership cards, star stickers were used for attendance and a party was held for the club group with highest attendance. She writes, "Clean hands and proper handling for books, etc. will be stressed, a story told and then dramatized." One week children would draw pictures of the stories they heard, other times they would act them out. To encourage similar programs in area schools, Mrs. Braun's children performed their skits all over the county, at school board and PTA meetings. Mrs. Braun was also concerned about any child with reading problems. She kept an easy reader near her desk, read a portion aloud and encouraged a child to take it home.

After two and a half years the library facilities were moved to the corner of Park and Third to a tiny 12 x 12 building donated by Peter Hansen who formerly used it as an ice cream/hot dog stand. The remodeled building was stocked with 400 new books collected from a book drive. Through the cooperation of the Muskegon County Library Board, the village council and the township supervisor, the building was made ready for occupancy. This simple wood frame building, complete with its white picket fence and flower filled window boxes, proudly displayed the American flag for its opening in September 1941; the first and only county library to be housed in it's own building. Dedication ceremonies were held on September 8, 1941.

Mrs. Braun took books to the sick and elderly every two weeks. At times she loaded the books into a small red wagon along with her young son Bill and carted them to homes in the old "furnace town" district. Some of the homes had never had books in them other than text books.

After nine years Mrs. Braun turned over the library duties to Esther Grim in October 1947. Circulation increased from 3,623 books in 1947 to 5,551 in 1948, an increase of 53.2%; a remarkable accomplishment for a community of only 450 people. The small but efficient library housed 690 adult books, and 736 juvenile books for a total of 1,416.

In August 1961 the Fruitport Branch Library was closed. After repeated requests from the Muskegon County Library Board for the village of Fruitport to provide new and improved facilities to house the Library, the branch was closed and the collection of 2,895 books was withdrawn. For three years the community was to be without a library.

Prior to the official closing of the Fruitport Branch, the village council made every effort to locate and provide suitable library housing. Existing buildings in the area were viewed and considered including the township hall, the Third Avenue school building, the Dairy Bar and a 13 x 16 building owned by Braaks Bakery. Apparently, in desperation, the committee even looked at Mrs. Meddendorp's front porch and a 12 x 40 chicken coop

owned by Stan Frisbie. (From a hot dog stand to a chicken coop?)

After much investigation a new building seemed to be the best solution and with a unanimous vote the decision was made to build a small frame building in the park. Frank Werschem heard of the plans for a new library while attending a local Lion's Club meeting and was immediately inspired with the idea of a much larger, more efficient building to serve not just the village but the entire township of 9,000 people.

Being a dedicated library user from his youth, Mr. Werschem was determined that every child in the Fruitport area would have access to books. Finally through the faith and dedication of many, Mr. Werschem's dream of a "beautiful library" became a reality for the entire community of Fruitport. Official dedication ceremonies were held on November 30, 1964.

Rose Smith was the first employed librarian of the Fruitport Branch Library. When the library opened, it was the only branch besides Muskegon Heights to have a complete card file. Rose retired in August 1971 to be replaced by Ellen Longworth. Under Ellen's direction and leadership, the Friend's of the Library was organized. Regular Meetings were held and many worthwhile projects, including bake and book sales, were embarked upon to increase library use and improve the facilities and service.

Librarian Ellen Longworth was succeeded for a short time by Janet Allen who resigned after six months and was replaced by Karla Brown in November 1974. Mrs. Brown has, after nearly 13 years, served the longest term as a Fruitport librarian. Having received an Associate's degree from Muskegon Community College but with no experience in library work, her primary concern was to become acquainted with the collection, especially the reference books and to be available for patron assistance. She was soon called upon to use her creative and imaginative powers in developing and expanding the children's services and programs. Almost every year something new or different was added to spark the interest of the young readers. These programs included a special storyhour for 2 and 3 year olds; summer group activities with stories, games and crafts; and contests such as guessing the number of books in the library. Visits to the schools and other community events to tell stories and interest the children in books and libraries.

A very popular event for the children is the annual drawing for a gingerbread house. This began in 1979 when Mrs. Brown decorated and filled a gingerbread sleigh with candies and goodies for display at the library for a drawing held before Christmas. Each year since, a gingerbread house complete with Santa ready to slide down the chimney has been given away to some happy child.

During the summer of 1986, the Library offered special assistance to children who were reading below their grade level. Students were referred to the program by Bonnie Berry, reading specialist at Edgewood School. Half hour blocks of time were set aside every week for each child who was then given individual help in book selection and one-on-one assistance in reading. By the end of summer several children were saying, "Hey! Reading is fun and I can do it."

The Friend's of the Library have been a valuable asset and addition to the Fruitport Branch, in making the library a visible and essential part of the community. Fundraising activities, community bake/book sales, and open houses are initiated by these people and we are always looking for new 'Friends'.

The Fruitport Branch took its first step towards computerization with the installation of a terminal in in September 1983. By January 1985 the task of inputting the book collection records into the Lakeland Library Cooperative's computer database was completed and the branch went fully 'on-line' for circulation and inter-library loan purposes.

The CLSI terminal and the Lakeland Library Cooperative's delivery service make possible the rapid borrowing of books from other Lakeland member libraries. Fruitport also shares its book collection with the other Lakeland libraries.



Karla Brown

THE HOLTON BRANCH

Loretta Murphy

The first record of library service in Holton Township goes back to its formative days. The township was created in 1871 from an area detached from Blue Lake Township. On December 12, 1876, rules were drawn up governing the loan of books from the Township Library of Holton, and on January 7, 1915, new rules were adopted concerning the loan of books from the Holton Township Library.

The next record of a Holton library was a reference to the Library formed in 1938 under the direction of the Work Projects Administration. The librarian was Irene Snippe who remembers that the Library was quartered in the old bank building at 8776 Main Street. She also took books to the rural one-room schools in the townships of Holton, Cedar Creek, and Blue Lake once a month. In addition, she conducted weekly storyhours for children.

When the Federal W.P.A. agency was disbanded in 1942, the Library was moved to the Holton High School and managed by a group of teachers. Later in 1942, the Library was moved back downtown to the old township hall and Elizabeth Hanke was hired to operate it four hours a week. The Holton Library became a branch of the Muskegon County Library in December 1943, when a contract was signed between the Muskegon County Library and Holton Township.

In 1960 the Library was moved across Main Street to the former library and bank building and the old township hall was razed. This location, 8776 Main Street, served as the combined library and township hall until 1984.

In 1983 the goal of building a new combined township hall and library appeared possible with the approval of a request for Federal Library Services and Construction Act funds of \$54,000. A loan of \$120,000 Federal Housing Authority funds for the township hall part of the facility was requested. Township Supervisor Severt Swenson spearheaded the project.

After the grant requests received full approval, the Library was temporarily moved to a portable school building generously provided by the Holton Public Schools. The former bank building at 8776 Main Street could then be torn down and the new township hall and library building was constructed on the same site. The adjacent barbershop property was acquired and this addition made possible an enlarged building site.

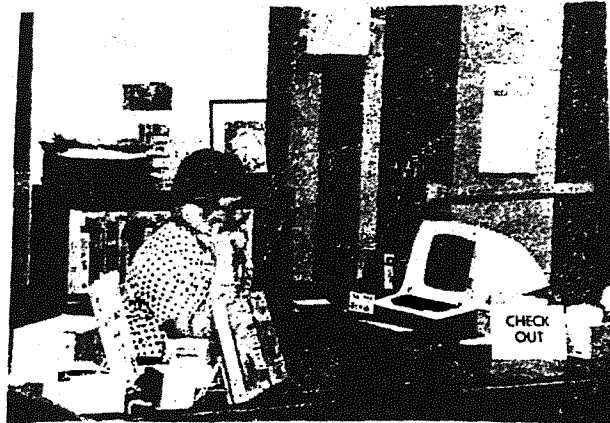
Township officers, Muskegon County Library staff, and a troop of Boy Scouts moved the book collection into the new quarters in July 1985. The Library's interior planning was done by County Library Director Warren McFerran. The shelving and furniture were manufactured by the Worden Company of Holland, Michigan.

At present the Library is open 20 hours a week and has 838 registered borrowers. There are 7,652 cataloged books and 1,848 paperback books in the collection plus 24 magazine subscriptions. A vertical file contains pamphlets on current topics. Patrons may borrow phonograph records and audio cassettes from collections which are changed frequently.

Installation of a CLSI computer terminal was postponed at Holton until the move to the new quarters. By July, 1986 the task of inputting the book collection records into the Lakeland Library Cooperative's computer database was completed and the branch went fully "on-line" for circulation and interlibrary loan purposes. The CLSI terminal and the Lakeland Library Cooperative's delivery service make possible the rapid borrowing of books from other Lakeland member libraries.

The Library contains handsome wood shelving, modern furniture and carpeted floors. The community room is available for programs and security is enhanced with a Muskegon County Library first; a burglar alarm system! This newest building in the Muskegon County Library system provides the Holton area residents with an attractive and popular library facility.

Two members of the family kept the Library going for 40 years. Marion Murphy ran the Library for 17 years, 1947-1964. Loretta Murphy, her daughter-in-law, succeeded Marion on her retirement in 1964. Loretta retired herself in 1987 having guided the Library through many changes. Marlene Noble has been the librarian since then.



Marlene Noble



Holton Branch, 1949
Located at the Corner of Main Street and Holton Whitehall Road.
Marion Murphy, Branch Librarian

Montague Library

Helen Panzel

Montague really should have a library.

That was the opinion of a good many Montague residents as early as 1939 when the Muskegon County Library was in its infancy.

At that time the County Library had devised a plan whereby books were supplied to "stations" throughout the County. These stations were usually set up in schools, churches or stores which had available space. Early records indicate that in June of 1939 such a station was set up in the Montague City Hall and in each of the rural schools in White River and Montague Townships.

These small stations were a source of joy to many people in the area and the days on which the small, appropriately lettered truck arrived were red letter days.

But still the dream of having a real library in Montague persisted. A group of the community's most active women were always talking on the subject and trying to create enough interest in the possibility of starting a library to get the project off the ground.

"Montague really should have a library," they insisted. It was with this thought in mind that the "Friends of the Library", was organized. On July 7, 1943, the group held its first board meeting with twelve members present. They had come well prepared having with them a proposed constitution and by-laws.

The meeting was called to order by Acting Chairman Ray Wright and the chairman of the nominating committee, Mrs. William Graeme, submitted a slate of officers which were unanimously elected. They were Mr. Taft Nesbit, president; Mrs. Clyde Price, vice-president; Mrs. Lennart Gustafson, secretary; and Mrs. William Graeme, treasurer. The constitution and by-laws were accepted - the Friends of the Library were in business.

On August 31 of that year the Friends of the Library board met again at the city hall. Present were six members of their organization and four members of the County Library Board. After a short business session, the meeting was turned over to Raymond Oehrli of the County Library Board. Mr. Oehrli was also superintendent of Montague schools at that time and very interested in the library project. His constant help and advice were invaluable in guiding the Friends of the Library through those early days. He explained the procedures, the aims of the County Library and gave a summary of qualifications needed to obtain state grants and aid. He also presented a proposed contract between the Friends of the Library and the County Library Board.

By the next meeting on September 16, 1943, a room in the Ripley building had been rented to house the new library. Ray Wright, chairman of a committee formed to decorate and furnish the Library, reported that plastering had been done and an archway sealed off. Furniture and fixtures donated by interested citizens, as well as a number of books, had been brought in. There had also been some cash donations. At this meeting Taft Nesbit resigned as president and Ruby Johnson was elected to take his place. Plans were made to have 500 membership cards printed for a membership drive.

The treasurer's report submitted at that meeting shows that a librarian had already been hired to sort out and record the books on hand. She was Marian Umstead, Montague's first librarian, who had also been active in the Friends of the Library organization.

Another meeting was held at the home of Ruby Johnson on October 14. Here again, the emphasis was on a drive for new members.

The final meeting of 1943 was again held at the Johnson home on November 17. It was a joyous occasion since the membership drive had been a success; resulting in 75 new members, each of whom had paid the \$5.00 membership fee. But as their goal had been 150 members it was voted to extend the drive until that figure was reached.

1943 had been a year of great accomplishment!

Excitement ran high when at the February 14 meeting it was decided that the official opening date of the Library should be March 3, 1944. The event was to be celebrated with a reception and open house during the afternoon and evening. Refreshments were to be served with Girl Scouts participation. By this time all books would be cataloged.

At the March 16 meeting a substantial gain in circulation was reported. New books had been purchased and interest throughout the community was growing. It was estimated that 1,706 books had been loaned during the month of February. Marian Umstead was scheduled to attend an annual workshop to be held in June.

But it seems this brave beginning was destined to be followed by a setback. Despite the fact that the grand opening had been a huge success, interest had begun to lag, causing this paragraph to appear in the minutes of the Friends of the Library, "Unless there is more interest shown at the annual meeting, we are afraid the Library will fold up."

Yet the Friends of the Library women were not a group of quitters. At the next meeting, one month later, they seem to have gotten their second wind and a new membership drive was planned with none other than Nellie B. Chisholm, former superintendent of county schools, as chairman. This drive was to be conducted through the mail instead of repeating the door-to-door

soliciting of the last year. Newspaper advertising was also considered. The Library, which was now open twenty-two hours a week, would remain open on Saturday evenings for a trial period. Removable book racks had been made by manual training classes at Montague School. These were installed in the library since Mr. Ripley, landlord and owner of the building, objected to nails being driven into his walls for the erection of permanent shelves.

Finances were still the main concern of the Friends of the Library, so much so that their new president, Father Moleski, who seems to have taken a very active interest in the Library, approached Mayor Wilke in regard to contacting the city council relative to placing the maintenance of the library on the tax rolls. However, Mayor Wilke felt that the time was not yet right for this procedure. Instead he advocated sending letters requesting donations to a number of businessmen in the area. Father Moleski, himself, wrote twenty-one letters to "summer people."

Still racking their brains for more ideas to create interest in the Library, it was decided to furnish entertainment at some of the Friends of the Library meetings. All through that winter, plans were devised and when spring came a diversified program was scheduled for the March 12 meeting. Featured were a talk on the "County Library" by Mary B. Kenan, County Librarian, a reading, a book review plus several musical numbers, after which refreshments were served.

Whether this sparked more interest or not isn't certain but by the July 1, 1945, meeting Montague Township had donated \$125; the City of Montague \$200; and White River Township \$125. Also The Chamber of Commerce had contributed \$25, the Board of Education \$150 and individual donations amounted to \$217.65. Perhaps the ending of the War that year loosened the strings of many a pocket book.

Although these donations were heartening, they were also necessary, because more expenses were forthcoming such as fuel bills and bills for supplies and equipment.

It is amusing to note that these funds were so protected from wasteful expenditures that when Mrs. Kenan, County Librarian, informed the library that a desk had been procured for its use, the only stipulation being that they pay the transportation charges, the offer was refused because of the fear that their money was dribbling away. Yet the August 6, 1945, meeting records that the desk was delivered anyway, the matter of a \$2.34 cartage fee having been paid in error by the treasurer.

Another drive for membership was made by the Girl Scouts in 1946. There was to be a prize for the girl having the highest number of sales and a party afterwards with refreshments. \$242 was collected on this drive.

From then on, there seems to have been a period of steady growth. By 1957, minutes of the Friends of the Library became shorter as if things were running smoother, and the balance of cash on hand larger. The treasurer's report of January 1, 1957, shows a balance of \$431. In 1958 the average circulation was 1,968 books per month.

The minutes were discontinued by 1959, but the Friends of the Library organization still exists. Today only two women are active participants, Fran Barnes and Mrs. June Barber who represent the City of Montague's interest in the Library.

To date the Montague Library has had four homes. Its first was in the Ripley building; when these quarters became too small, it moved to the then city hall above the fire barn. Here there was ample space and an opportunity to build new shelves for the ever-increasing number of books. Children enjoyed this new location. Climbing the steep stairs to the second floor gave them the opportunity to look down upon the fire engines which was always a treat. But this move was destined to be only temporary also. The 77-year old building was deteriorating rapidly. A large crack in the exterior brick wall ran erratically from top to bottom of the building causing one small boy to remark to his companions, "I don't want to go up there - that crack is going to bust wide open some day and then the whole building will fall down."

Perhaps the boy's fears were well-founded. The State fire marshall evidently agreed with him and in 1959 ordered the building vacated, citing structural weakness, only one exit on the second floor and the steep, dangerous stairway leading to and from the Library which the children had to use. Because the second floor had been deemed unfit to hold more than 40 people, the busloads of children that sometimes visited the Library were discontinued.

Montague was in a quandary. A new city hall had been proposed but was voted down although it represented only a millage increase of 5 mills on state equalized valuation for 10 years.

Meanwhile the Library had to be moved, this time to a well-lighted, cheerful room in the Ohrenberger Building on Dowling Street where it shared quarters with city hall officials.

Montague knew, however, that a new city hall was imminent. It was fortunate in that it had a nest egg, a sum of money left to it by the late Thure Anderson for the express purpose of helping to finance the building of a new city hall. With accumulate interest, this sum had grown to around \$50,000. Estimates showed that a new city hall would cost many times that amount, yet people realized that they must act soon and when the proposal

for the new building again came before them at the next election, it passed.

By 1970 an attractive building housing both the city hall and Library in separate quarters was ready for occupancy. The Library is especially cheery in a spacious carpeted room measuring 36 ft., 8 inches by 48 ft. A large bay window overlooks the lake and there are round tables and comfortable chairs for relaxed reading. Bookcases line the walls and there is a much-needed work room which allows for book repairs, preparation of displays and various other tasks. A night deposit is at the side of the building. The outside of the building is of brick, its colonial styling suggests a homey atmosphere.

There is perhaps another reason for the popularity enjoyed by the Montague library. It has been fortunate in that it was able to procure the services of six well-loved and efficient librarians throughout the years. First was Marian Umstead (1943-1947), who helped the Library struggle through those first hectic years. Then, in line of succession, Jessie Tracey (1947-1964), Helen Swenson (1964-1966), Marian Jorgensen (1966-1974), Gloria King (1974-1979), Karen Henderson (1979-1981), and Gloria King again from 1981 to date.

Marian Jorgensen was the first librarian to work in the new Library although the first four years of her stay were spent in the Ohrenberger building. Gloria King, who succeeded her, has been on the job ever since except for a brief period from 1979 to 1981 when she took a break and Karen Henderson filled in.

Friends of Gloria remember her accepting the position of librarian with some misgivings. "My predecessors all did such super jobs. It's something to live up to," she remarked.

But the Montague Library is not like a city library where absolute silence must be maintained for students and researchers. It is more like a comfortable meeting place where a little conversation fits into the scheme of things and the laughter of children does not sound amiss.

Today Gloria and her assistant, Velma Roesler, have created this homey atmosphere and children as well as adults love their trips to the Library.

There are various programs bent on acquainting children with the joy of reading. The Summer Reading Program, developed by the present director of Muskegon County libraries, Warren McFerran, was first introduced to the Montague Branch by Marian Jorgensen and has grown under Gloria King's guidance until now around 200 children participate each year. A party featuring balloons and refreshments as well as prizes and awards for those children who have read the most books, is an annual event at the close of the summer season. Movies are also shown every Friday.

Montague's library is the only one in the county that has a tutoring program which helps children with their reading problems. It also delivers books to shut-ins. Featured too is an arts and crafts display of the work of local artists, which is usually changed once a month.

The story truck which came every month and enacted little skits and plays for the children was also greatly enjoyed but state funds were cut back necessitating the discontinuance of this program for the present.

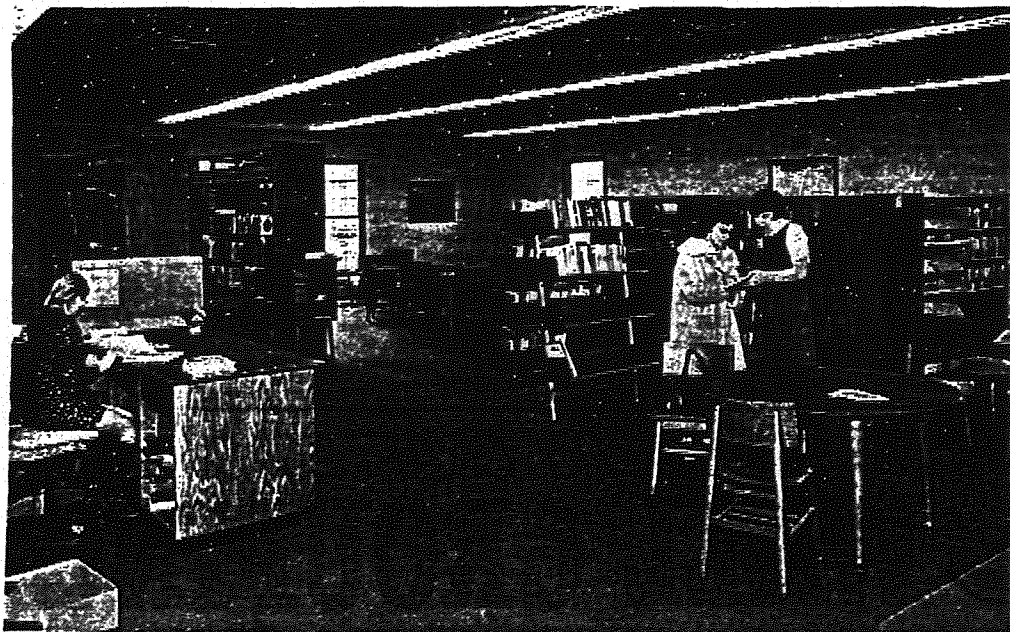
Book sales sponsored by the Library have been very successful. The books are mostly donated by the public and the profits are used to buy a number of items needed by the Library.

Montague, with its history of lumbering and later on farming, is changing as new industry and a greater shopping center have made it a more convenient place to live. Its residential section boasts many beautiful homes; there are golf courses, water sports and horse back riding which lure people from the cities. The type of books loaned now reflects a variety of interests. Biographies and history books are in great demand and recently there has been a preference for westerns and science fiction.

All of the Library's programs have been successful but they have often meant extra work for those in charge. It is a well-used library, growing every year, yet its hopes and dreams include more innovations for the future such as an adult book review club. A terminal linking the branch with the Lakeland Library Cooperative's computer in Grand Rapids was installed in April 1984 and inputting of the book collection began. The computer became operational for public service at Montague on September 3, 1986. With all these services it is not strange that the one hope of the library staff is for more help, giving them more time to do a good job.

In 1987, the Montague Branch Library had a circulation of 28,354 books and other items. It maintains a supply of 44 magazines plus some which are donated. It also loans records and tapes.

The list of those who belonged to the Friends of the Library through the years is too long to print here but they are remembered for their efforts to make their dream of a library in Montague come true. They had great plans for the future and a hope of better things to come, but it is doubtful if they could have envisioned the Library as it is today.



NEW LIBRARY . . . The Montague branch of the Muskegon County Library opened this week in the new municipal building. At right librarian Marian Jorgensen assists a patron, Mrs. Richard Cramer. At desk is Judy Wlodkowski. An open house will be

arranged soon. City Supt. Henry E. Roesler, Jr., will suggest at the council meeting Monday night that formal dedication of the building be set for June 3, on the 35th anniversary of Montague's becoming a city.

COUNTY OFFICIAL 'PLEASED'

Chronicle 2-14-70

Montague Library Draws Praise

By JOHN A. CHISHOLM

MONTAGUE — The Muskegon County Library branch in the new Montague municipal building opened this week, to words of praise from Warren McFarren, county librarian.

"I am most pleased with the quarters, as are other staff members and the board," he said. "The new facilities will enable us to give improved library service by any measure."

The library occupies the west side of the building. Furnishings

and carpeting carry out a brown color scheme, to give a quiet, "homey" atmosphere.

The library now has 8,000 volumes, recently increased from 7,000. There are facilities for 10,000, Mr. McFarren said. Gradual additions will build up to this number.

Since the library now has its own quarters, evening service will be possible, Mr. McFarren pointed out. When the library shared the old city hall with the council and city government facilities this was not possible.

Beginning Monday, the library will be open from 7 to 9 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays. Day-time hours will be from 12 to 5 p.m. Mondays; 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesdays, and 12 to 5 p.m. Fridays.

A new service to be given in the new library will be, player records. These will be on a fee basis of 10 cents a record per week. There will be three collections of 50 albums each, for a total of 150.

be increased, Mr. McFarren said. The records form a balanced collection of popular and classical music, and children's records. There is special shelving for records.

The library's story book hour for preschool children will be greatly enhanced by the new facilities. This hour is conducted by the librarian, Mrs. Ivan Jorgensen on Wednesdays from 10 to 10:45 a.m.

Children's chairs have been provided, and also a sloping shelf desk on which large children's books may be rested.

Preschool children ages 4 and 5 from the entire area are welcome at the story book hour, Mr. McFarren said. Mr. McFar-

ren had been working for several years toward the objective of better service for children.

The whole library provides considerably more seating space for reading and study, Mr. McFarren pointed out. The shelves are convenient for browsing.

The library will contain more than 100 books on career information, as a new service. These are available for borrowing.

It is planned to provide wall space for display of art works, Mr. McFarren said. It is hoped to attract works of local artists especially.

Another new feature will be an outdoor deposit box in the parking lot where returned books may be left at off hours.

"The City of Montague has done a great job," Mr. McFarren said. He praised the spirit of the many volunteers who assisted in moving from the old quarters.

MUSKEGON HEIGHTS BRANCH

Sheila Miller

The twentieth century began with all the hopes and dreams of the nineteenth renewed and expanded. Among these dreams was the continuing improvement of society through literacy. Among the champions of the literacy movement were Horace Mann, Andrew Carnegie and, of course, Muskegon's Charles Hackley.

Very early, the Hackley Library established several sub-delivery stations; One of these was located at Van Arkal's Drugstore in Muskegon Heights. It was there library service began in Muskegon Heights in 1903, one afternoon per week.

Before too many years passed, permanent branches were opened. No further reference to Muskegon Heights has been found until the early 1920's. By this time interest was growing for the establishment of a Muskegon Heights Branch.

The Muskegon Board of Education, at its meeting on August 18, 1925, made a proposal to the Muskegon Heights City Council, to initiate a three-year contract to fund a library branch. The City could provide \$5,000.00 per year. Of the total, \$4,200.00 was to be expended for rent (\$70.00 per month heat included), salary (\$1,500.00 per year, or if necessary, \$1,600.00), and direct expenses. The balance was for the rental of books. The Muskegon Heights Branch Library opened later that year in a new building at 63 East Broadway.

The Muskegon Heights Branch was very successful. The 4,418 registered patrons circulated 50,181 books in the second half of 1931, an increase of 4.9% over the same period in 1930. The permanent collection of 7,928 volumes was supplemented with monthly collections from the high school library.

By now, the effects of the Great Depression were causing financial trouble for the City. The City Council tried to arrange a deferred payment plan with the Muskegon Board of Education; but it had severe problems of its own and could not accept such an arrangement, so the City was forced to withdraw support for their Library. Its doors closed in February 1932.

The Library was not forgotten. The collection was distributed to the other branches. But more important, the Muskegon Chronicle ran a series of editorials lamenting its loss and urging support for reviving the library. However, activity and interest were no match for finances.

Meanwhile, a County Library was established in 1938. Interest remained high. As individuals and communities struggled to regain solvency, hope was added to interest.

Finally on January 10, 1942, a meeting was held to establish a Muskegon Heights Branch of Muskegon County Library. In attendance were J. TenBrink, County School Commissioner; Muskegon Heights Mayor F. Rockenbach; the City Council; and R. Oehrli, Superintendent of Montague Consolidated Schools who had recently opened.

It was agreed that the City of Muskegon Heights would provide space, heat, light, and some furniture while the County would be responsible for staff and materials. There would be a full-time librarian.

At this point, the pace of events increased and on February 10, 1942, the Muskegon Heights Branch was officially recognized. The number of books to be assigned to Muskegon Heights rose to 8,000 books, and the branch would be operated by Mrs. Letha Eklund who had been working for some time establishing county libraries in northern and western Michigan. The Heights collection would concentrate on the subjects of industry, aviation, defense, gardening, health, and nutrition.

Interest remained high, in spite of gloomy news from Europe and Asia. Finally, after months of planning and years of dreaming, the Muskegon Heights Branch reopened on May 1, 1942, as part of the Muskegon County Library. Muskegon County Library Headquarters was located in the building next door.

From time to time the Muskegon Heights Branch was relocated to increasingly large quarters. Then in the mid-1960's, negotiations commenced with the Grand Trunk Railroad to purchase the Terminal Building at 2808 Sanford Street.

A now retired Muskegon Heights City employee recalls that cool October day in 1967 when he helped move the Branch into its present building. He loaded and transported books in a Department of Public Works truck the whole day. An Open House was held October 29, 1967 to celebrate the move.

By the 1970's the community itself had changed. The City of Muskegon Heights was begun in the 1890's as a planned community. During the 1930's and 40's many southerners moved north to keep war production strong. Many moved into the Heights. During the decade of 1970, the transition continued. Frances Hodgkins was succeeded as librarian by Darlene DeHudy. Ms. DeHudy worked very hard to bring the collection into focus with community trends. Even so, circulation began to decline. Then the beautiful new Norton Shores Branch opened in 1974, barely a mile distant.

Today in 1986, the Muskegon Heights Branch continues to operate at the Sanford Street location. The branch was enlarged and remodeled in 1984. A young people's room and a community meeting room were added, greatly increasing the size of the branch. Sheila Miller began her tenure as librarian in time to preside over another dedication and open house on April 14, 1984.

The Muskegon Heights Branch became a part of the computer system of the Lakeland Library Cooperative when a terminal was installed at the branch in May 1984. After nearly two years' of inputting the book collection records the branch went on-line for public service in March 1, 1986.

Libraries have been a part of the Muskegon Heights community since 1903, and continuously since 1942. They have outlasted wars, depression, population shifts, racial tension, enthusiasm, and apathy. The Library branch continues to evolve to meet the changing needs of a changing community.



Chronicle 10-18-67

LIBRARY LOOKERS . . . Miss Francis Hodgkins, Muskegon Heights librarian, sitting at desk, shows visiting Girl Scouts the new community library in the Heights-owned Terminal Building, just opened to the public after a three-day move from the old library location at 2814 Sanford St. Complete with seven sections, new wall paneling and carpeting, the library has 40 per cent more space than the old site and room for 15,000 books.

NORTON SHORES LIBRARY

Susan Savellano

The rapid growth of the Muskegon suburbs and the incorporation of Norton Shores into a city in 1968 created a demand for a library facility within the new population center. Suburban residents using the Hackley Library, Muskegon Heights Branch and the county bookmobile needed their own branch. A Norton Shores Library Committee headed by Edmund Farhat was set up by Mayor Robert Price in August 1969, and a fund drive began. Four parcels of land were considered, each of which met the criterion of being near a shopping center passed weekly by most residents. Dr. Dale Williams, a member of the committee, offered a one acre site near Norton Medical Center. The Mona Shores Board of Education offered as a gift a site near the high school. The city purchased a twelve acre parcel on the southwest corner of Henry and Seminole Road. The Bultema brothers offered three acres at 705 Seminole Road if the city would buy just half the site. The latter parcel was chosen because of its convenience to residents and its beautiful, natural, wooded setting which suited a modern structure.

After several years of delays, while a controversial funding package was designed, construction began in May, 1973. A conglomeration of funding sources was tapped including a first-of-its-kind in Muskegon County federal LSCA Title II grant of \$86,185. Municipal bonds, which will be paid off in 1991, accounted for \$475,000, and individual gifts totalled \$49,997. William J. Baldrige, Norton Shores City Administrator, skillfully managed the many financial, administrative, and governmental responsibilities necessary for the project. Land purchase, construction and furnishing of the original 14,900 square foot building designed by Robert Landman, of Landman Andrews, AIA totalled \$609,000. A 3,100 square foot addition to be used as a community room was built in 1977 at a cost of \$200.00 which was obtained as an Economic Development Corporation grant to the city.

The grand opening of the new, light-filled building with interiors that seemed to invite the outdoors inside took place on May 11, 1974. The doors opened for book users the following Monday at 10 a.m. Staff and books were provided by the county library system while the city provided one third the cost of salaries and the maintenance costs. Warren McFerran, Muskegon County Librarian, planned the necessary mix of activity areas, furniture, shelving and equipment, gathered the books, magazines, and other library resources, found operating funds and selected a vigorous staff. The first staff consisted of Richard Vettese, who came from the Detroit Public Library and who continues as head librarian at

this writing; Patrick Ehlman, assistant librarian; Bernice Houseward, children's librarian; and Emily Barton, library assistant.

The Norton Shores Library marked its Tenth Anniversary on May 12, 1984, with a celebration including guest performances by the West Shore Symphony String Quartet, the Mona Shores Allegros, and dramatic reader, Bernice Houseward. The guest of honor was State Representative Edgar Geerlings. Also honored were many original library supporters including Edmund Farhat, Susan Clink, Eugene Fisher, Thomas Morris, Judge John Piercy, Dr. Dale Williams, Warren McFerran, Frank Buck, Adolph Ross, James TenBrink, and Mayor Merrill Bailey. A photograph of local children's author, Verna Aardema Vugteveen, was dedicated and placed in the children's library.

The library that began in 1974 with 20,000 volumes, many gathered from the shelves of other branches, and a handful of patrons, in 1983 reached its millionth mark in circulation. That small library has now grown to 40,000 volumes and 10,000 registered patrons.

The Friends of Norton Shores Library began their meetings in September, 1976, with the first newsletter; Ongoings, published a month later. Originally there were 109 members and a budget of less than \$500. By September 1986, membership had grown to 325 and the yearly budget was up to \$6,000. Today a \$10,000 fund has been set aside permanently to generate funds for book purchases. The Friends conduct a popular bake sale twice a year to raise funds and sponsor chamber concerts and children's activities to subsidize the purchase of books and periodicals.

The Norton Shores Library is a member of the Lakeland Library Cooperative and has become the busiest branch in Muskegon County, circulating upwards of 130,000 books a year. The Library still struggles with a lack of funding for books, but the staff, is more committed than ever to achieving better service for its patrons and to meeting the expanding needs of an information oriented future.

RAVENNA BRANCH LIBRARY

Ruth Balcom

Ravenna Township's first library was located in the front parlor of the home owned by Annir E. Reed, according to village tax records, as early as 1923. Known to her early patrons as "Auntie Reed", her collection came from donations of books by local citizens. When her home in the center of the business district on Stafford Street was purchased by Fritz G. Wunsch in 1926, "the mantle" fell on Mrs. Wunsch to keep track of the books. Her greatest concern, according to her granddaughter, Iris Wunsch Hambleton, was trying to get the books back from the borrowers. She recalls having to pay for a book of short stories which had been partly destroyed by the family dog. Of course, the dog ate the story she liked best.

The first branch library to be operated in conjunction with the Muskegon County Board was located in Clarence Lee's Radio Shop also on Stafford Street. The Wunsch home was later torn down to make way for a bank parking lot. The township collection was then placed under the direction of Lucille Young who began work in 1944 with a schedule of eighteen hours a week. The location was on the north side of Stafford Street in very small quarters, formerly a shoe repair shop. As reported in the Ravenna Times of May 4, 1958, Mrs. Young also ran the branch office of the State License Bureau, and an insurance business which she later sold to S. J. Linck, Jr.

Following the death of Mrs. Young, another active citizen and leader of the business community was hired as librarian. Dorothy Stadler, who had lived in Ravenna since 1948, also serving as village treasurer, Methodist Church organist, and member of many civic and social committees, headed the branch library from May, 1958, to January, 1967. She is remembered as an avid reader, eager to recommend her favorite books to students and adults needing assistance.

Service by the Muskegon County Library to the school children of the Ravenna area was begun with a "trailer" collection of books which was part of a W.P.A. project supervised by Letha Eklund. James TenBrink, former Ravenna School Superintendent, who became county School Commissioner in 1935, served on the first library board. Through his efforts, the schedule for delivery of books was made available to rural one-room schools. These districts were asked to contribute \$10 a year for the purchase of books. The cost of transporting them by a person on W.P.A. was appropriated by the County Board of Supervisors. Each school received fifteen books for a period of three weeks when they were exchanged for another fifteen.

Some of the teachers in surrounding schools made trips to the stations served by Glenna McDonald. The early schools, later part of the Ravenna School District, which participated in the service were: Slocum, Updyke, Sullivan, Wood, Franks, Bowen, Bixby, Johnston, Price, McGhan, Moorland and Swanson. At that time, schools which had libraries of their own were not included in the program. Thus the village school with only a high school library did not benefit until about 1942, when some elementary teachers borrowed books for their own classrooms.

When the high school was moved to its new building north of town in 1963, there was no central library for grades kindergarten through eight. It was believed by the township officers that a new location for the library within walking distance for the younger students should be found. Mrs. Stadler also felt that a larger downtown location would also serve the public more effectively. In 1976, regular service to the Ravenna elementary students was initiated by class visitation scheduled with teachers or aids accompanying the children. However, Catherine Wilson, County Director, was reluctant to expand the program in such cramped quarters.

The opportunity to move to a larger facility just two doors east in the former drug store building came in January, 1967. At this time four more tables and sixteen chairs were added to provide more seating for student and adult use. At the time of this move the book collection consisted of 6,700 volumes.

Janet Steinberg, a former substitute, was named Ravenna librarian at the time of Mrs. Stadler's death and the move to larger quarters was made under her direction. Hours were extended to twenty-two per week. Warren McFerran, new county Library Director, responded to the growing needs of children and juvenile readers as well by providing evening hours for the adult and high school clientele.

The Ravenna Times of February 4, 1970, reported a year of notable growth under Mrs. Steinberg, recording a total increase in circulation of 1,908 books. The addition of a record collection was made in May, 1970. In June of this same year, Ravenna lost another dedicated and capable librarian when the Steinbergs moved with their family to St. Petersburg, Florida.

Pam Austin, former assistant, was appointed new librarian in June 1970. She was responsible for a period of enthusiastic activity and lively programs for children. The Ravenna Times of January 21, 1970, stated that "the program would not be closed down here regardless of financial cuts that brought it to a close." A staff of volunteers agreed to do a storyhour each Tuesday. Five young girls registered to assist in an hour of fun and games for thirty-five youngsters aged four through seven. Eighty older children registered for

a Summer Reading for Kids program with "Restore the Earth" as the theme.

Regular library book reviews by Diane Kaufman and a column by Warren McFerran called Views and Reviews appeared in the Ravenna Times to lure young readers. He said in one article Children's Books for Adults, "Try a child's book this summer. It may give you a perspective much needed in these unsettling times."

That same summer a used book sale was held with proceeds of \$35 used to purchase a record player to supplement the children's programs. The assistance of Beverly Barnes, a neighborhood youth worker, also resulted in extending activities at a very busy time. In August 1972 the Title I Summer Reading Program at the Elementary School cooperated with the public library in providing an art display by Sherry Bailey's students, of hand created papier-mache monsters to delight visitors young and old. Julie Broton, also a teacher in the program, assisted with storyhours.

When the store building was sold for a variety store, another move was necessary. In October of 1972 the Odd Fellows fraternal lodge was disbanded and the township obtained their former hall on Stafford Steet to be renovated for Township Offices, a library, and historical museum. After the relocation, a week-long open house was held in November. This site remains as the present home of the Library. It continues to be a most suitable location because of its proximity to the elementary school and its public exposure at the time of elections and other civic gatherings.

Margaret Anderson first became involved in the library program while working as a teacher's aide at Ravenna Elementary School. She accompanied classes for weekly visits and was called in as a substitute for Mrs. Steinberg. She later substituted on a more permanent basis for Pam Austin while Pam was on maternity leave. Her participation in several workshops enabled her to perform the routine aspects of her job and trained her in the art of storytelling. She, too, was concerned for the return of overdue books noting especially the borrower; who after two or three months asked, "Do I owe anything on this?"

Some activities which Mrs. Anderson recalls in her nearly fourteen years of full-time service are the storyhours, summer movies and used book sales in conjunction with the local art fair held "Under the Maples". Proceeds from the latter were used to purchase cassette tape holders. She has also seen the improvement in research assistance she has been able to give her clients. In earlier days she made personal contact with the State Library for each request. With the advent of the Lakeland Library Cooperative, materials became available for loan from any library in the country.

In 1969 Marian Fagan began her work as a visiting storyteller. She planned to introduce the children to "the vast world of books by pleasurable experiences." However, as noted in the Ravenna Times of March 21, 1973, she issued a plea for boys to attend the story time which was enjoyed by only twenty girls. She apparently was successful as she continued to be the Story Lady until her retirement in 1985. Nancy Peters is presently telling stories to about fifteen children.

Mrs. Anderson cites the gift of a plain paper copier by the office of the local Sealed Power plant as a great boon to students using reference materials and to many adults who wish to have personal papers duplicated.

A new barrier-free entrance constructed in 1986 plus fresh paint have added much to the appearance of the former IOOF hall housing the Library, a museum and township offices.

Although the financial support of Ravenna Township and school participation in services are unquestioned, no Friends of the Library group has ever been organized. Mrs. Anderson states regretfully, "In a small town everyone is too involved to participate in another meeting." She would like to see better facilities for summer programs and storyhours.

The terminal linking the branch with the Lakeland Library Cooperative's computer in Grand Rapids was installed and inputting of the book collection records began on August 1, 1984. The computer became operational for public service on September 3, 1986

The common thread running through Ravenna's Library history has been the continuous improvement of services with emphasis on children's and students' reading. This has been accomplished by cooperation with the teaching staff and parents who have been delighted with the selection of high quality books provided by the Muskegon County Library.



Ann Macdonald & Tim Hazen in the new Ravenna branch, 1967.

WALKER MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Ardis Fitt
Ruth Mercer
Martha Ketcham

Although the Walker Memorial Library is relatively new, it has been the center of interest and action in North Muskegon for many years. A group of local residents instigated its opening in 1943 in a corner of the Poke-A-Bout Shop at the four corners of North Muskegon. The City encouraged the project by paying the rent and donating shelves for the county-donated books. Mrs. Fred Schmid was the part-time librarian. Unfortunately, the shop went out of business in 1947 and so did the Library.

Again; the community felt the need for a library, so the City and some concerned citizens started another one in 1961. This time the Library was located in an unheated room in the high school. This room held 3,770 books and reference materials again supplied by the County. Betty Quartermaine and Carolyn Anderson volunteered to work part-time. Even with its problems, the Library soon became a popular and useful place with summer reading programs, films and storyhours. However, the Library needed more space.

In 1967, Mayor William Andree appointed a committee to study the library needs. When a building site was made available by the L. C. Walker estate, a community fund drive was launched. In December 1968; James Hooper, chairman of the committee, and Mr. Andree participated in ground-breaking ceremonies for construction of a colonial style building designed by Harry Magnuson to stand on the southeast corner of Walker Park. The current handsome building was opened in October 1969. A community room with a stage and storage space was added in 1972.

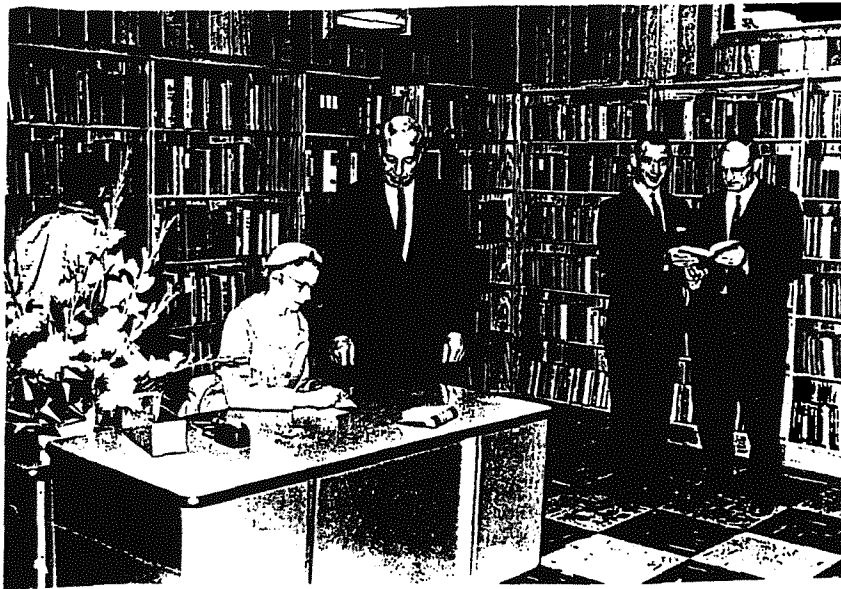
The Walker Library is a popular and active part of the North Muskegon community. Its book circulation has grown from 39,000 volumes in 1967 to 55,658 in 1986 and it is still growing. The record and cassette collection has the highest circulation in the County and magazines are used heavily. The children's storyhour, started many years ago and continued by the county, is enthusiastically attended. Because of its location next to the high school, the Library is used a great deal by young people.

North Muskegon has been fortunate in having some very interested and interesting librarians. The first was Ruth Mercer, a dedicated worker for the development of the Library. Her assistant, Jean Parker, became head librarian when Mrs. Mercer retired. Mrs. Mercer's tenure featured high school age helpers, the storyhour and a

jigsaw puzzle always waiting for helpful hands. Ardis Fitt continued the tradition of an assistant moving up to the position of head librarian. Mrs. Fitt, who was also very welcoming and supportive of high school students, started exhibiting original art in the Library; a tradition which continues. Carol Knowlton, the current librarian, has been overseer of the new computer system which took nearly two years to bring into full operation. Mrs. Knowlton has found the system helpful once the "glitches" were cleared up, and she would like to see computers and software available for use in the Library. For years Jan Dendrinis has been her friendly, competent, helpful assistant evenings and weekends. Together these women have made the Library a comfortable, hospitable, information place.

The Walker Library has a small but dedicated "Friends" group. During the community's bicentennial year, the group was active collecting newspaper pictures and articles pertaining to the history of North Muskegon. These were bound and preserved in the Library. The historical interest in the community grew and a new group called The North Muskegon Historical Committee was formed to pursue these studies. The "Friends" are still generous in their support of library projects such as contributing to the summer reading programs, donating shelving materials and fundraising.

A branch library is successful if it fills a need in the community and the Walker Library certainly does that. It has proved to be a wonderful source of entertainment, information, and center of community pride and spirit.



Walker Memorial Branch
Ruth Mercer (Branch Librarian), Charles Larnard II, Fred Schmid,
and John Halmond.

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