The History of Mooresville Public Library

By
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On July 14, 1855, the 79 members of the Hovey Institute and Workmen's Library Association organized Mooresville's first library. Members agreed to donate two or more books to the collection (which garnered 150 books within a week), and each paid a 50 cent membership fee. The library acquired a $500 gift from the Estate of William McClure, late of New Harmony, Indiana, which provided similar grants to other Hoosier counties. The library's first officers were Jeremiah Hadley, president; Benjamin F. Edwards, vice-president; A. B. Conduitt, secretary; and M. H. Rusie, librarian and treasurer. The next year, Hadley returned as president; S. M. Rooker, vice-president; George A. Benton, secretary; and J. P. Wilson, librarian and treasurer.

The Hovey Institute and Workmen's Library reading room was first located in a tailor shop and subsequently moved into the Holman Johnson Building at 9 West Main Street. Initially it was open only on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, but hours were subsequently extended until 9 p.m. Within a few years many library books went missing, which prompted the trustee, Dr. A. W. Reagan, to place the remaining volumes in the local school to safeguard the collection. Eventually, the library was disbanded.

Mooresville had to wait until October, 1911 before citizens rallied to establish another public library, when the Friends Aid Society met at the home of Mrs. George Carter to campaign for a new facility. On December 12, 1911, a meeting was held at F. E. Carlisle's furniture store with representatives of local organizations, including the Likely Literary Club, Bay View Club, several churches, the Board of Education, and the school superintendent, A. C. Payne. Carrie E. Scott, librarian and a representative of the Public Library Commission, presided. Enthusiastic support prompted a public meeting on December 18, 1911 at the Methodist Episcopal (M.E.) Church, which is now the Mooresville Town Government Center. Jacob Dunn, president of the Public Library Commission, and library board members from Plainfield and Martinsville encouraged Mooresville's efforts to reestablish its library.

A special committee was established to present a library development plan to the Mooresville Board of Town Trustees. This committee included Dr. C. L. Hall am, H. C. Scarce, J. H. Mills, Mrs. W. H. Henderson, Mrs. W. H. Sage, Mrs. Ralph Jackson, and Miss Pearl Bradley. A public petition was issued, and once sufficient signatures were acquired, the petition was presented to the Board of Town Trustees in May, 1912. The Town Trustees established a Library Board and levied a tax to fund the library construction and development.

The first Library Board members were Dr. C. L. Hallam and Dr. W. L. Thompson (appointed by the Town Trustees), Mrs. W. H. Sage and D. B. Johnson (appointed by the School Board), and Mrs. W. F. Hadley, Pearl Bradley and H. C. Scearce (appointed by the Morgan County Circuit

Court judge). At the Library Board's first meeting on June 21, 1912, Johnson was elected president; Mrs. W. H. Sage, vice-president; and Dr. C. L. Hallam, secretary. The Library Board recommended that Brown Township join Mooresville to support the library. G. R. Scruggs, Brown Township trustee, was named ex officio to the Library Board, and Mrs. W. H. Henderson served as Brown Township's Library Board representative. In 1920 Madison Township joined Brown in supporting and using the library but withdrew in 1928 due to fiscal constraints.

Figure 1. Sarah Scott Edwards, first director of Mooresville Public Library (1913).

On July 3, 1912, the Library Board decided to request funding from the Carnegie Corporation, which provided $10,000 to construct the library. On April 18, 1913, the library leased space for a reading room in the Odd Fellows Building, which was where 8 East Main Street would be today. This was the temporary quarters for the library until the new building was completed.

Public subscription paid for the land on which the library was constructed, an 80-ft-by-153-ft. lot located at 30 West Main Street. Donations from Arthur Newby, Judge Smith McPherson, and $500 from the general library fund were also used to purchase the building site, thereby avoiding the use of tax revenues. Librarian Helen Hadley Ward oversaw planning and construction of the new facility. T. L. Bookie, an architect from Indianapolis, designed the structure, while construction contracts were awarded to Frank Marine & Charles Ferguson, local contractors, and Sam Wade, another Mooresville resident, who installed heating, plumbing, and electric. Local businesses, such as F. E. Carlisle and Wilson & White, provided furnishings. The library

included a first-floor reading room, with assembly hall and stage downstairs. The library was formally dedicated at public ceremony on January 27, 1916. The 4,000 square foot facility provided shelving for 6,000 books and an assembly room with over 200 seating capacity. The library's initial collection featured 1,143 books. This increased to 8,400 volumes (and 2,245 borrowers) in 1937. By 1969, the library housed 14,500 volumes. By 1988, the collection had grown to 32,000 volumes.

Figure 2. Mooresville Public Library (the Carnegie Building), 1916. Photo by J. P. Calvert.

Figure 3a (right): The 1916 MPL

Library Board, along with the Library

Director (Helen Hadley [Ward])

& Assistant Director (Marguerite Sage),

ushered in the Carnegie era of

Mooresville Public Library.

Library Board

DR. C. L. HALLAM, Pres.
REES COSTER, Vice-Pres.
D. B. JOHNSON, Sec.

J. W. YORK   MRS. W. H. SAGE
MRS. ALMIRA HADLEY
MRS. W. H. HENDERSON
DR. W. L. THOMPSON
CHAS. B. SWEARENGIN

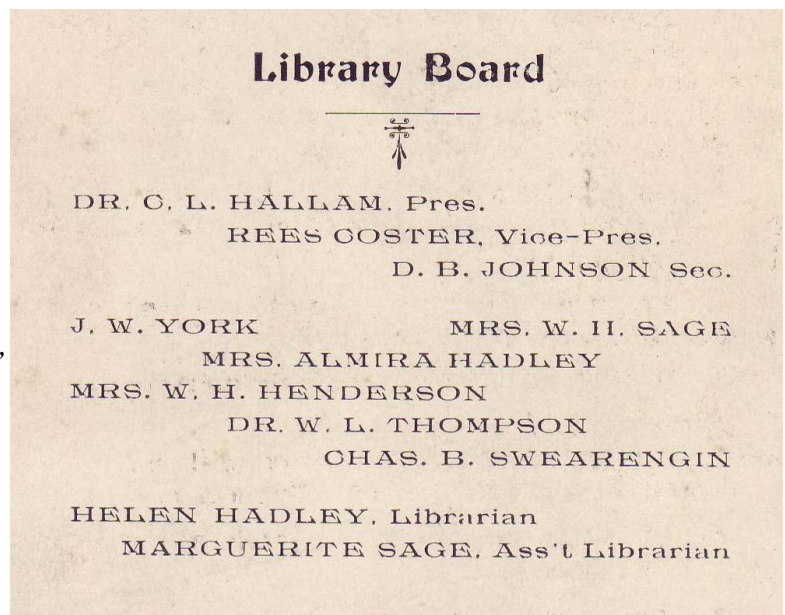HELEN HADLEY, Librarian
MARGUERITE SAGE, Ass't Librarian

Figure 3b (right): MPL's first library policies were distributed to patrons when they received their first library cards (1916 edition shown).

Figure 4 (below): Mrs. Bonita Marley, MPL Director (1961-1984), introduced many new public services and expanded the size and scope of the library's collections.

The Library's postal address was subsequently changed from 30 to 32 West Main Street, as the local post office reassigned delivery numbers throughout downtown Mooresville to accommodate changes in property uses.

During the 1960s the library enjoyed $7,000 in structural improvements, including a redesigned entrance ($3,800); concrete basement (replacing wooden flooring), with the stage being converted to storage, and a kitchenette was installed for staff use ($399); and a wide stairway to replace the original spiral staircase ($1,085). New heating and air conditioning systems were installed ($1,490). In the early 1960s, the auditorium was converted to house the children's collection, which was called the "Pioneer Room." This area was renovated in 1972.

Figure 5. Bonita Marley, Library Director (1961-1984), and Wanda Potts, Indiana Room Librarian (1966-2002), handle the Circulation Desk at the "new" MPL facility built in 1988 at 220 West Harrison Street. Mrs. Potts and Mrs. Marley were instrumental in assembling the extensive local and state history collections in the Indiana Room.

On January 27, 1988, exactly 72 years from the dedication of the "Carnegie" library, Mooresville Public Library moved to a new 12,000-square-foot facility at 220 West Harrison Street. The library's collection consisted of 32,000 volumes. The architect was Robert Porter and contractors were Jungclaus-Campbell. According to then-Library Trustee Harry Vogel, after looking at several sites, the library board was able to purchase its number one choice, on West Harrison

Street. Including the equipment, the new library cost about $800,000. The 1988 library building provided accessibility for disabled patrons and a community meeting room for special programs. Along with the usual areas for children and adults, the library also offers the Indiana History Room, furnished with refinished antique furniture from the Carnegie library, offering patrons extensive information on genealogy and the history of Mooresville, Morgan County, and Indiana. Mooresville Savings Bank purchased and renovated the Carnegie library building, which later became First Indiana Bank. Most recently, the structure, which stands as a reminder of the historical value and importance of the public library to its citizens, was used for tutoring services.

The Next Chapter: An Award-Winning Library

In 1998 the Mooresville Public Library Board of Trustees engaged in several public meetings to determine the needs of its community. The current space proved inadequate to accommodate future needs. Following a feasibility study conducted by the Dean of Indiana University's School of Library and Information Science, plus public hearings and surveys, it was determined that residents were seeking additional services such as a computer lab, community meeting spaces, self-checkout, and room to expand our collection and program activities. On January 27, 2006, commemorating the 90th anniversary of the dedication to the Carnegie Library building, Mooresville Public Library dedicated the new expansion and remodeled facility. The architect was K.R. Montgomery & Associates located in Anderson, Indiana. The project was managed by Sunco Construction Company, Inc., a local construction firm. Today, the library's expanded facility offers 24,500 square feet which allows for collection and archival growth and the opportunity to expand programming and services. The expanded and renovated library offers an 18-station computer lab as well as LAN wireless access points, a 6-station mini-lab for instructional training, a separate Young Adult room, three individual study rooms, a Friends of the Library store, a community room, and a café. As part of fulfilling our Mission Statement, Mooresville Public Library strives to offer valued traditional library material as well as programs and technology that help create and support lifelong learning.

Figure 6 (right): A 2005 aerial photograph of the addition (under construction) to the Mooresville Public Library (dedicated on January 27, 2006).
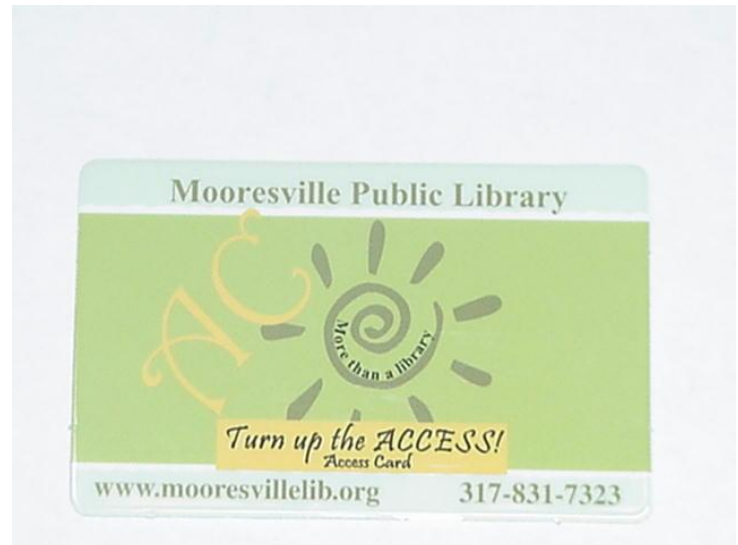
Figure 7. 2008 aerial photograph of Mooresville Public Library.

The Indiana Library Federation announced that Mooresville Public Library was named the 2004 Outstanding Indiana Public Library in the state. The prestigious award is given to public libraries who demonstrate outstanding services and collaborative partnerships within the community. In 2003 the library launched the MPL Got ACCESS Campaign. The objective was to raise the profile of the library within the business community by creating partnership opportunities beyond the usual "summer reading program" sponsorship model. Our goal was to remind local businesses that we share a common customer base and to pave the way for future partnership opportunities. This campaign proved so popular, we received letters from merchants thanking the library for the creative idea that increased their sales and brought the community closer. Of the 24 merchants who joined the inaugural program in 2003, all renewed in 2004 and more retailers

continue to join the program, with more than 30 now participating. Library patrons were also excited: circulation and floor traffic increased at the library and patrons remarked on the "great deals" they received when they showed their ACCESS card.

Figure 8. MPL Access library card

(2003-2008), which was replaced by

Evergreen Cards when MPL joined

the Evergreen Indiana Public

Library Consortium coordinated

through the Indiana State Library.

Today, the library serves as a valuable community resource. The mission of the library has remained the same but the method and delivery of the services have evolved. The library supports its mission by offering a diverse collection of materials, programming, and services.

Figure 9. Dusk at Mooresville Public Library (Jan. 2006 photograph).

Figure 10a (above): Claire Cook and Helen (York) Cook generously funded the $1.7 million MPL Cook Endowment, the interest from which is used to provide programming, services, and resources for the MPL Youth Services Department.

Figure 10b (left):

Claire Cook &

Helen York's

wedding (on

August 7, 1927).

Mr. & Mrs. Cook

are standing in

the center of the

wedding party.

Library Leadership

The Mooresville Public Library has had several head librarians (i.e., library directors), including:

- Sarah Scott Edwards (March, 1913 to August, 1913);
- Helen Hadley Ward (August, 1913 to February, 1918);
- Mrs. Norris Talley (February, 1918 to November, 1922);
- Helen Stone Keller (November, 1922 to 1939);
- Mrs. W. H. Sage (1939-1952);
- Marguerite Fields (1952-1956);
- Nora Carson (1956-1961);
- Bonita C. Marley (1961-1984);
- Sharon Beatrice (1984-1987);
- Patricia Vahey (1987-1997);
- Lynn Jurewicz (1997-2004);
- Diane Huerkamp (2005- present).