



THE MONROE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

written by

Mrs. C. Carl Scholla

Chairman of the Board of Trustees

1965

Miss Blanche Carmer deserves all the credit for the early establishment of a library in Stroudsburg. Her interest remained constant, and at her death she left the library a legacy. Miss Carmer spent many winters in Miami, Florida, and through the use of the library in that city, the idea was born.

The plan was presented to the Stroudsburg Civic Club on October 25, 1915, Miss Carmer explained that the New Century Club of Philadelphia offered a circulating library of 100 books (two-thirds fiction and one-third travel) expressly to be paid for by the club, and any books lost were to be replaced. The club voted to send for the books and accept the responsibility.

On January 17, 1916, the club decided on a public library. Accordingly, a small room was secured in the Reformed Church on Eighth Street. The library was officially opened on February 1, 1916. In May of that year, Miss Carmer reported 99 books loaned by the New Century Club. Sixty library cards were in circulation. The Library Committee decided to have a shelf of new books and charge ten cents a week per book.

Through rummage sales, bread and cake sales, card parties, musicals and shows of local talent, the library continued to operate and grow in size. It had outgrown its quarters by November, 1917, and moved to a room in Mrs. Pugh's house on Main Street, next to the Stroudsburg Methodist Church. The library continued to grow and soon found these quarters inadequate. In September, 1920, the Civic Club purchased the old Stroud Mansion and prepared a new home for its library. This was occupied in approximately December, 1920.

In May, 1928, the committee reported 5,000 - 6,000 books on the shelves. The Stroudsburg Council had appropriated \$100 to the library, but more money was needed. Miss Carmer's report of January, 1929, stated that the Stroudsburg Council had donated \$300.

On February 25, 1929, Mrs. Helen Godcharles spoke on "County Libraries as Sponsored by the Pennsylvania Federation of Women's Clubs." Mrs. Godcharles stated that of 57 counties in Pennsylvania, only two, Dauphin and Susquehanna, had adopted the County Library idea. She also mentioned that a demonstration of a book truck would be held in Palmerton, Pennsylvania, on March 21. The club went on record to look into the County Library movement and give it serious consideration.

The library report of May 6, 1929, expressed an old dilemma: insufficient money and lack of space. The board had contemplated moving across the hall but did not have enough money to pay the rent. Receipts from November, 1928, to May 1,

1929, amounted to \$519.86.

\$448.17	donated
35.00	dues (each member of the Library Committee paid
	\$10 per year dues
36.69	pay shelf
<u>\$519.86</u>	Total

One Friday afternoon and evening during that period, 81 cards were used with 105 books loaned.

In reading the minutes of the Civic Club covering the years through 1915 - 1930, some credit should be given to Mrs. Reuben Ryle, Mrs. W. A. Gilbert, Miss Emma Shay and Mrs. D. W. Cox for substituting in the library during Miss Carmer's absence. Mrs. Rosalie Hill is also to be commended for the time she spent repairing the books.

During the years 1933-1936, when I served as President of the club, now known as The Stroudsburg Woman's Club, it was impossible to find a permanent chairman for the Library Board. This condition, no doubt, was due to the fact that the quarters were too small and sufficient monies were not available to remedy the situation. The appointed Chairman did not remain long enough to realize what it was all about, nor did she attempt to appeal to the club membership for assistance. Realizing that Miss Carmer could not continue her work without additional aid, I volunteered to take the chairmanship at the end of my term of office.

Before the first board meeting, scheduled for November 6, 1936, Miss Carmer died very suddenly. The board met with everything at loose ends. Previous to this meeting, the board had advertised for a librarian and were fortunate to have quite a few applicants. Mrs. Elizabeth Kane was chosen for the position. This was a very happy choice, for Mrs. Kane has proven to be most capable and loyal. The treasury balance at this time was \$239.04, with a few small bills outstanding and a rent bill of \$400. A larger committee was planned with a door-to-door canvas in mind. Nickels, dimes and quarters were accepted, and the drive totalled about \$400.

The Junior Woman's Club sponsored a play realizing over \$150. The Library Committee held a card party, and the Mansion House Board very graciously cancelled the rent debt. Dr. T. T. Allen, President of East Stroudsburg State Teachers College, volunteered workers from The National Youth Association. The Library Board appealed to the Monroe County Commissioners and the Stroudsburg Council and received \$300 from each.

As the library expanded, this money did not prove sufficient, and the members of the board decided to discuss the situation with Dr. Joseph Rafter, Director of the State Library. Dr. Rafter suggested the formation of a County Library. A meeting was arranged with the Monroe County Commissioners. They promised to cooperate, providing the Stroudsburg Woman's Club would accept the responsibility of appointing the Chairman of the Library Board. The agreement was signed by the following Commissioners: Willard L. Quick, George E. Shick and Lawrence M. Ramsey. In September, 1937, a Monroe County Library became a reality. Being a seventh class county, the state contributed 75% of the amount given by the Commissioners. This amount, however, at that time, was limited to \$2,500. From 1944 until 1952, the library received the maximum amount of state aid. Under a new ruling in 1952, the state aid was increased from \$2,500 to \$4,000 with permission to use some of the increase for the purchase of magazines and new binding for books. Previously, the state money had to be used solely for the purchase of new books. Through a new library code adopted on June 14, 1961, regulating public libraries, the state aid

was increased to \$8,000 plus a percentage based on population. This percentage is increased each year providing the county increases its allotment to the library. In 1964, the amount allocated through state aid was \$8,607. The use of this money has been broadened to include increase in salaries, the hiring of new employees and new equipment.

In agreeing to the formation of a County Library, the Commissioners had to allocate additional money to the library. This additional money in 1938 was used to hire an assistant librarian.

To Mr. John Cartwright goes the credit for the purchase of the first bookmobile in 1941. He interested the Kiwanis Club in the project, and with the County Commissioners a plan was evolved whereby the Kiwanis paid half and the Commissioners the other half. Mr. Henry Tucker sold the truck at his cost. During the flood of 1955, this bookmobile was ruined. The Kiwanis Club again manifested their interest in the community welfare by presenting the library with a new bookmobile on February 16, 1956. From that day of the flood until the time of delivery of the new truck, the library was enabled to continue its county service through the use of a Red Cross truck and the kindness of other individuals donating the use of their cars.

In December, 1943, a Children's Department was opened in one of the apartments in the rear of the Stroud Mansion House building. This was done partly to ease the crowded condition in the main library and to provide the children with a suitable place to browse and select their own books. Until 1946, a part-time worker was employed in this department. Since that time this position has been on a full-time basis. During 1964, 32,503 children's books were loaned.

On June 28, 1954, the trustees of the library met with Mr. Howard L. Keiper, County Commissioners, Mr. Granville Shiffer, Mr. Amzi Altemose and Mr. W. Adolf Rake. At this meeting, Mr. Keiper presented the idea of the library occupying the first floor of the house at 913 Main Street and taking an apartment on the second floor for his own occupancy during his lifetime. The deed to this property had been presented to the library on June 2, 1948, by Mr. Keiper as a memorial to his wife, Johanna Neubeck Keiper.

After extensive alterations, the new home of the library was dedicated on Wednesday, December 15, 1954. The dedication speaker was Mr. Detleff A. Hansen, the library's attorney.

At a board meeting on May 9, 1955, the employees requested that they would like to be eligible for social security. The request was granted.

It was at a special meeting on June 5, 1957, that the trustees were informed of the bequest of Mrs. Agnes Shafer Ransbury totaling \$41,923.38 plus a lot on Route 611. Two trust funds of \$19,000 each have been established, one in the Monroe Security Trust Company and the other in the Stroudsburg National Bank. The remaining \$3,923.38 was used for special work in the library.

Two bronze memorial plaques in honor of Mrs. Agnes Shafer Ransbury and Mrs. Johanna Neubeck Keiper have been placed in the entrance hall of the library.

The Stroudsburg Woman's Club at their regular meeting in May, 1961, very graciously honored me with a special citation for my twenty-five years of service as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Monroe County Public Library.

On December 11, 1961, the Board of Trustees honored Mrs. Elizabeth N. Kane on her twenty-fifth year of service with a banquet at the East Stroudsburg State College. All the librarians of the county and the President of The Woman's Club joined in the celebration. Mrs. Kane was presented with a floral bouquet and 25 silver dollars. Mrs. Lulu Shafer Conway was also honored with a bouquet as a tribute to her faithful service as treasurer. Mrs. Conway served as treasurer of the library for 25 years without any compensation. She resigned on May 5, 1962, because of ill health.

During the year 1964, the work in the library was done by five people: a librarian, an assistant librarian, a children's librarian, a part-time worker (13 hours per week) and a volunteer worker. The children's librarian and part-time worker made trips with the bookmobile, loading and unloading the truck, and servicing all the stations throughout the county. A total of 96 trips were made in 1964. Every elementary school was visited. A book collection was maintained in two Stroud Union schools, the Arlington and Clearview buildings. One hundred thirty-six classrooms in the county also had a collection of books. Trips were made to Kunkletown, Mt. Pocono, Tobyhanna and some of the summer camps. The bookmobile, combined with the classification of new books, issuing books and restoring books loaned to the shelves, made it necessary for the staff to serve in the library beyond the scheduled number of working hours.

Credit must be given to Mrs. Elizabeth Kane for her efficiency and interest. Until the last two years, she drove the bookmobile in addition to supervising the library. Mrs. Kane is alert to the type of books needed and was always most gracious and helpful in securing books that the reader requested.

At the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees on December 21, 1964, Mr. Detleff A. Hansen submitted his resignation. Mr. Hansen served as Attorney and member of the board for 13 years. His resignation was accepted with regret.

The following comparison figures show the growth of the library during the last 48 years:

Weekly hours	1916 : 4 hours (open Wed. 3-5, 7-9 PM)	1964 : 43 hours (open daily 12-8 PM, except Sat. 9-12 noon)
Volumes in library	1916 : 400	1964 : 37,200
Borrowers registered	1916 : 60	1964 : 16,560
Pay shelf	1921 : \$24.94	1964 : \$1,239.84
Amount contributed by county	1936 : \$300	1964 : \$11,000
Total books loaned	1936 - 1964 : 3,004,486	

*earlier figures not available.

The budget for 1965 was \$24,136.78, a little over three times the 1936 budget of \$707.61. Monies from the County Commissioners, Pennsylvania state aid, the trust funds of Mrs. Ransbury and Miss Carmer, plus the yearly contributions from the Kiwanis Club, the East Stroudsburg School District and summer camps will balance this 1965 budget.

The library was gradually growing beyond its capacity. In 1962, stacks were installed in the cellar. Here, too, every available space was used. By 1966, the library had served the public for 50 years. It definitely had become an integral part of the community, listing nearly half of its citizens as borrowers of books. During the years since its inception, many organizations and individuals have contributed to the growth of the library. With the interest exhibited in the past, the future should show even greater progress. Mr. G. W. Curtis has wisely said, "Books are the ever-burning lamps of accumulated wisdom."

Members of the Board of Trustees as of January 1, 1965

Mrs. C.C. Scholla, Chr.

Mrs. A. G. Gearhart

Mrs. Elwood Hintze

Mrs. Bernard A. Conway

Mrs. Samuel Wells III

Mrs. Arthur M. Slee

Mrs. Elizabeth N. Kane

Dr. LeRoy J. Koehler

Rev. Thomas Shoesmith

Mr. Samuel W. Newman,

attorney for the library

Addendum: As a woman's club, we recognize the tremendous importance of a library in a community. We realize, too, that with its continued growth during these years, our library faces a crucial need for expansion. Our club hopes that the Library Board will meet with much success in finding the best possible solution. - 1982