

HISTORY OF THE ALLENDALE PUBLIC LIBRARY, ALLENDALE, N.J. 1900-1970.

Rough draft outline.

I. The Library under the Village Improvement Association.

A. The Library is established.

1. At the turn of the century, the Village Improvement, Assoc., a civic organization formed in 1887, when Allendale was merely a part of Orvil Township and not yet incorporated as the Borough of Allendale, formed a Library Committee. The committee was comprised of Mrs. Walter Spring, chairman, Mrs. Stephen Van Houten, Mrs. Wallace Carver, Mrs. Frank Merrill and Mrs. Frank Drummond.

a. The purpose of the committee was to organize a library for Allendale.

^{Dec. 1900}
2. In 1901 the Allendale Library was established with about 600 volumes.

a. The first home of the library was the Public School, now Allendale's Borough Hall.

b. The library was established primarily for use by summer residents and was open only during June, July and August.

Quotation from Ramsay Journal.

No NOT TRUE! LIB. BEGAN IN DECEMBER!

c. It was staffed and run entirely by volunteers.

d. The Library was supported by private funds; it was not municipally operated. Operating costs were provided by annual membership dues, borrowing fees and private donations.

3. At some time circa 1910, the need for a cloak room in the school led to the library's first move--to a store rented from John Ackerman. The library was housed in this store for two years.

^{Oct. 1915}
4. In 1913 or shortly afterwards, the library moved again--this time to the second floor of Allendale's recently completed fire house.

5. The fourth move occurred prior to 1919, with the entire operation being moved to the Braun Building, in the center of town. This building is sometimes referred to as "the Flatiron Building" because of its shape. The "Allendale Library V.I.A." sign dates from this period.

II. Formation of the Allendale Library Association.

A. In February of 1919, the Allendale Library Committee of the Village Improvement Association met to discuss ways and means of bettering the library.

1. This meeting led directly to the formation of the Allendale Library Association on April 7, 1919. The document of organization was signed by Fannie M. Carver, Mary K. Lee, Mary F. Dewsnap (per Kate L. Harris), Edna L. Doty, Henrietta L. Talman, Josephine Asten, Harriet L. Zabriskie, Amy B. Hurd, Eliza M. Borger and Kate L. Harris.
 - a. The stated purpose of the Allendale Library Association was "the perpetuation of the Allendale Public Library and the extension of its work in the community."
 - b. Its unstated goals at this time were twofold:
 1. To establish a building fund and to solicit funds for the purchase of a suitable site and the construction of a permanent home for the library. Funds of \$104.40 in the treasury of the Village Improvement Association Library Committee; earmarked for a building fund, were transferred to the new Association, to be reserved for the same purpose.
 2. To persuade the Borough government to take over the operation of the library; to municipalize the library and establish it as a free public library.
 2. The first officers of the Allendale Library Association were elected on April 22, 1919, as follows: President, Mr. A. Tomalin; Vice-President, Mr. G. M. Potter; Secretary, Mrs. H. L. Talman; Treasurer, Mrs. F. Fritchett; Librarian, Mrs. F. Carver.
- B. In 1922, various sites were discussed as possibilities for the proposed library building.
1. By January 11, 1923 an option for the purchase of a building site at the corner of Franklin Turnpike and Allendale Avenue had been signed with William H. and John A. Mallinson.
 - a. In view of the fact that in order to legally purchase a building site, the Library Association needed to be incorporated, an application for incorporation was signed by the officers and trustees on January 11, 1923.
 2. In August of 1923, Dr. Percy C. Fisher was appointed chairman of the Building Fund Drive, which was to take place in September.
 - a. It was proposed that the proposed library should be built and dedicated as a War Memorial. On March 2, 1925, however, a resolution was passed dismissing this plan in view of legal entangle-

ments and the fact that the park on Park Avenue had recently been dedicated as a Memorial Park.

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3. In November of 1923 the Allendale Library Association was incorporated.
 4. On March 10, 1924, Architect William Dewsnap was instructed to draw up plans for the proposed library building.
 5. By April 5, 1926 a contract had been signed for construction of the library building, and by June 7, the foundation had been completed. A Public Reception was held in the newly completed Library Building on December 18, 1926. At last the library had a permanent home.
 6. On March 21, 1931 Mr. H. E. Sylvester Buechner presented to the Board of Trustees a framed panel on which the names of all who had contributed to the Building Fund were inscribed. The panel was beautifully hand-lettered by his daughter, Miss Eugenia Buechner, and the panel is displayed in the library to this day.
- C. On June 16, 1941, Mr. and Mrs. William C. Lee presented to the Board of Trustees their generous offer to donate the addition of a wing to the library building. This offer was gratefully accepted.
1. By November 1941 the new wing was completed, with the exception of gas heaters, which were still to be installed.

III. The Allendale Free Public Library is established.

- A. On November 4, 1952, the Library Trustees saw their dream of half-a-century come true: the citizens of Allendale voted to have the borough government take over the Library building and grounds and to operate the library municipally on a Free Public Library basis.
1. On December 8, 1952 the Library Board voted unanimously to change the name of the library to "the Lee Memorial Library" in memory of William C. Lee.
 2. On January 6, 1953 a resolution was passed by the Trustees appointing Mary K. Lee honorary advisor to the Board of Trustees for life.
 3. In February 1953, Mrs. Austin Sprague became Allendale's first paid librarian.
March 13, 1953 - open House; Schuyler C. Lee unveiled bronze letters over doorway.
 - a. In 1954 Story Hours for pre-school children were begun in the library by Mrs. Sprague. In subsequent years, the Story Hours were operated in the library by the P.T.A., the "Friends of the Library" and, currently, by the Junior

Woman's Club of Allendale.

- b. Extensive cataloging of the existing books, as well as new acquisitions, was begun in 1954. The cataloging continued for several years.
4. In recent years, the library has sponsored essay contests on "What the Library Means To Me", "Reading Is the Key" and other related themes for the sixth graders of Allendale's public school system. The contests have usually been held in conjunction with National Library Week.
5. A recent major acquisition at the library is the Eileen Decker Memorial Desk, which was dedicated in 1966. The desk was purchased with monies donated to a special fund which was established following the death of Mrs. Decker, who had been a Library volunteer.

IV. The Library today.

A. Present staff.

1. Mrs. Grace Husselman, Librarian. Assistants: Mrs. Robert Cross, Mrs. Carl Huebner, Mrs. Frank Buscheck, Mrs. Elizabeth Neufeld, Mrs. Mitchell Saul and Mrs. George Schwack.
2. Additional volunteer help is provided by "the Friends of the Library".

B. Present Board of Trustees

B. Future Plans.

1. Almost as soon as the library's first permanent home was completed in 1926, it was inadequate to the needs of its community. For twenty-seven years, the library was staffed by truly dedicated and patient volunteers who constantly reiterated the value of a community-operated free public Library, and the pressing need for extension of existing facilities. When finally an addition was built in 1941 it was built by private contribution, and not by a public drive. 1952 brought the ultimatum: municipalize or die. Finally, jolted into action, the community responded and supported the proposal for borough ownership and operation.
 - a. When the borough took over the building and grounds of the library, as well as its operation, they found 27 year's worth of repairs and maintenance to be done; for 27 years, since the completion of the building in 1926, the

Allendale Library Association had barely enough funds to run the library and buy a few books now and then, let alone to maintain and add to its building. Until the installation of two lavatories in 1955, the library building lacked even bathroom facilities.

- b. The time has come for the citizens of Allendale to be jolted into action again. The present library is totally inadequate to meet the needs and demands of a town the size of Allendale. The present building is greatly lacking in terms of space, the present building being about 1/5 the size recommended by the state for our borough.
 1. Yearly circulation in 1927, the first full year the library operated in its permanent home, was 5,910 volumes. In 1969 the total circulation for the year was_____.
 2. The Board of Trustees is working at present to decide upon and purchase a suitable site for a proposed new building. The present library site is too small to permit expansion of the current building.

V. Supporters of the Library.

- A. Over the years, especially in the years prior to the library's municipalization in 1953, many of Allendale's clubs and service organizations supported the library with donations of money, needed items and books, as well as countless hours of volunteer service.
 1. Donations of money have been made by such groups as the Community Club (the forerunner of the Woman's Club), the Board of Trade, the League of Women Voters, the Borough Council, the Allendale Players, the Woman's Club, the Girl's Friendly Society, the Garden Club, the Woman's Alpha Republican Club, the Junior Woman's Club, the Catholic Men's Club and the Evening Woman's Club.
 2. Many hours of service have been given to the library, its operation and its upkeep.
 - a. In the spring and summer of 1928, the Garden Club landscaped and planted the library grounds, and in subsequent years the club planted and trimmed shrubbery and helped to keep the library grounds in order.
 - b. In March of 1939 the Woman's Club conducted a Membership Drive for the Library.
 - c. In 1950 the Chamber of Commerce, along with

the Garden Club worked on putting the library grounds in order.

d. In 1951 the Lions Club painted the trim on the library building.

e. In 1954, members of the Women's Club made draperies for the Library.

B. Organizations established specifically for the support and improvement of the Library.

1. On November 1, 1937, a group of 12 young ladies formed the "Junior Library League" to canvass the town for the Library Membership Drive.
2. In 1961 the "Friends of the Library" was formed. The members of this organization have devoted many hours of service to the Library. They have conducted Story Hours for children, assisted the Librarian, repaired and rebound books, cleaned and painted the basement stack rooms, and, in short, have made themselves useful in whatever capacity was needed at the moment. This organization is currently under the leadership of Mrs. Samuel Raber.

a. Current Members.

C. Individuals who have greatly supported the Library.

1. It is impossible to list every individual who has supported the library--the list seems to go on and on interminably, and every individual's efforts have been and continue to be terribly important to the operation of the library. However, there are several whose individual efforts are so outstanding that special acknowledgement must be made of their help.

a. Mrs. Walter Spring, chairman of the Library Committee of the Village Improvement Association, founder of Allendale's first public library.

b. Mrs. Wallace Carver (Fannie M.) who served as one of the first, if not the first, of Allen-

dale's Librarians.

- c. Mr. and Mrs. William C. Lee. William C. Lee served the Library for over 31 years, first as a Trustee, later as Vice-President and Treasurer, and finally as President. Mary K. Lee, his wife, served as Librarian for over 33 years. The Lees donated the funds for the addition to the Library built in 1941. As an indication of their total involvement with the Library, after Mr. Lee's death in July, 1952, a crisis occurred in the management of the Library and the public was offered the choice of voting to have the library run by the borough government, or of having it close down. On December 8, 1952 the Trustees voted unanimously to rename the Library "The Lee Memorial Library" in memory of Mr. Lee, and on January 6, 1953, Mrs. Lee was named honorary advisor to the Board of Trustees for life. Mrs. Lee passed away on November 24, 1955.
- d. Mrs. Austin Sprague, who served as a member of the Board of Trustees and as a volunteer assistant to the Librarian for many years before becoming Allendale's first paid Librarian in February of 1953. Mrs. Sprague served as Allendale's Librarian for nearly 15 years, resigning in 1967 to take up residence in Pennsylvania with her husband, upon his retirement.
- e. Martin E. Musing, who served as President of the Board of Trustees from 1953 until his death in 1967. An energetic, civic-minded man, Mr. Musing worked untiringly for many borough organizations, and his guiding hand is indeed missed. A plaque, dedicated to his memory, hangs above the fireplace in the library.