

*Editors' Note: This article is reprinted from the April, 1947 issue of the Wilson Library Bulletin. The author was librarian of the Hoop Library in Kingston at the time.*

**By FRANCES DORRANCE**

The month of October marked the successful completion of the first year in a unique regional library project in Pennsylvania. The development of the project will be of interest to many librarians as an example of local interest pushed by enthusiastic work.

Back of the western barrier mountains of the Wyoming Valley in Pennsylvania lies a wide agricultural area of high hills, winding valleys, and broad fields, with scattered wood lots. Living on this land is a typical rural American population, whose ancestors, some several generations back, settled in this promising country. The tide of mining stopped in the coal fields of the "valley" so that only a few recently arrived families and practically no industries as yet, have penetrated the region. This, perhaps, gives a more homogeneous point of view than is to be found in many American communities. It certainly accounts for the enthusiastic reception of the regional library idea when it was suggested.

The suggestion was made in September 1944 by the Dallas, Pennsylvania, Rotary Club, whose membership is representative of the entire Back Mountain region. To them it was strange that so populous an area had no library. Rotary, as a service club cooperating with existing agencies, can promote others. Accordingly, a committee was appointed to sound out regional interest and report on a suitable site. In November a meeting of representatives of all the local organizations was held, at which enthusiastic approval was expressed. Weekly meetings were held until plans had been perfected and the necessary funds collected. The name chosen for the library, "The Back Mountain Memorial Library," a perpetual living memorial to the Back Mountain men and women who have served in all wars to preserve the American idea, "coming in the midst of the war was a stimulus to response."

Fortunately it was possible to secure a large old residence, vacant for several years; the absentee heirs were willing to contribute \$600 of the price to be used for equipment in memory of the family.

The Dallas Woman's Club made a house-to-house survey in most of the eleven municipalities to be served. Through their help and cooperation of many Rotarians and other individuals, over \$13,000 was raised - enough to purchase the property,

remodel the building, partially equip it, and hire a librarian.

The Extension Division of the State Library, consulted as to the possibility, became much interested in this, the first "regional" library project in Pennsylvania. Prohibited by law from contributing money to other than a county organization, they decided to endorse the undertaking, by lending many books, especially for use in the school collections, since the plan as developed was on a school service basis.

The organization was incorporated in January 1945. After this the growth was rapid. Budget plans were made for a pro rata contribution from the ten townships and the Dallas Borough school boards. The property was purchased early in 1945, and in April the librarian, Miriam Lathrop from Rutgers University Library staff, was interviewed and engaged to begin work June first.

The remodeling of the building progressed apace, despite many war restrictions. The first floor was planned for the library use; the second a complete apartment for the librarian and for storage. Publicity through the Dallas Post and local organizations brought hundreds of books.

The organization meeting in June, six months after incorporation, was held in partially finished rooms. Officers were elected, a constitution adopted, and the librarian was off to her job. And such a job! Her preparation in her own rural library in Springville, Pennsylvania, before she went to State College and to Rutgers, stood her in good stead. Sorting books, locating volunteer help, planning temporary short cuts in cataloging, because of total lack of trained assistants, made hard work. But again the response was enthusiastic. Adults and school children were most helpful and plans were begun for opening the library in October, at the beginning of the school year.

The constant problem was funds. Some of the schools were slow in taking up their contracts, the cost of remodeling was heavy. To save time, furniture was purchased locally, the shelves put in by local carpenters, but the loan desk, catalog, and trunks, the memorial of the Ryan family, were ordered from Gaylord. Some of the furniture, the window shades, and the remodeling of the kitchen were furnished by the Woman's Club.

Just four months from the librarian's arrival, the library was opened to the public with 5,000 books on the shelves, of which 2,000 were state library loan. More than 300 individuals came for each of two successive Sunday Open House gatherings.

Since the opening, the use of library has

**Library was 'unique'**

grown steadily; the response from the teachers and schools has been gratifying, particularly in the many one-room rural schools. Books were taken to the schools by the librarian or called for by teachers. One school board doubted its contribution after receiving the first books. In one school 18 pupils read 40 books, 333 times in 4 weeks. For many children these books were the first reading books they had ever had. It is hoped in time to purchase an old school bus, to be remodeled for bookmobile use.

The library book club has 160 members. Each member's purchase and donation, through the library, of one book a year supplies the newer books. At the club meeting once a month, book reviews are discussed and hard work done for the library.

At present the library is serving five high schools including their consolidated grades and twenty grade schools, of which eighteen are one-room schools where the children never had access to any library. In May, the librarians of the N.E. District

of Pennsylvania met at the library, with a member of the extension division presiding over the program. Plans for a definite organization of the district were made. During the summer, the plan for a Friends of the library group was carried out. Over a thousand adults and children joined. An effective letter answering questions about the library was given each prospective member.

Now at the end of the first year the report shows 880 registered borrowers, 15,500 books lent to individuals, 15,700 to schools.

On the anniversary date of the opening, the directors and friends met for reports. The library now has more than 10,000 books, 8,000 of which have been cataloged and the others arranged for easy access. In ending his address to this anniversary meeting, the superintendent of a near-by large school district spoke of the satisfaction of seeing in full establishment a memorial to the men and women in the services when many communities are still considering plans for such a tribute.

**Plant, flower booth returns another year**

Making a return this year is the Plants and Flowers Booth, a great success at last year's auction.

Chairman Sally Stager said that there will be more of the perennials and shrubs which were so popular last year, along with cactus and flats of annuals.

"Although we won't have as many bird feeders as we did last year, the lightning bug houses made by Kim Stager had sold out twice last year. Kim will also make hummingbird feeders, new items for this year.

Plant lovers and home gardeners are sure to find something to pique their interests at the Plants and Flowers Booth.



POST PHOTOGRAPHER R. DOVE  
**PLANTS AND FLOWERS** - Organizing the many interesting items to be found in the Plants and Flowers booth are Lorella Jones and Sally Stager.

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**Library holds free loaner items**

"I need to borrow a wheelchair for my mother. Can you help?"

Usually, one would hear this request at a social service agency.

But who ever heard of borrowing a wheelchair from a library?

Thanks to a unique community outreach program operated in conjunction with the Rotary and Kiwanis clubs, the staff of the Back Mountain Memorial Library is able to help out when someone needs a wheelchair, crutches, a walker or other needs for disabled persons.

Originally instituted by the Dallas Rotary as a community outreach program, the loaner program operated from a member's home until it outgrew its quarters.

Since the library had extra room and its centrally located, it seemed only logical to move the loaner program there.

**Good Luck!!**

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