

and Growth of
History/Salida Public Library

The steel rails of The Rio Grande Railroad reached Salida in 1880, and in July of that year of 1880 Salida was incorporated as a Town.

Fourteen years afterward (in September 1894) eleven (11) of the foremost pioneer ladies of the growing community, imbued with fine principles of mind and a deep interest in the future welfare and growth of the little town of Salida in which their lot had been cast, organized The Tuesday Evening Club of Salida, having among its cultural objectives the founding of a Public Library for the use of all who cared to avail themselves of good constructive reading and self improvement.

The 11 charter members of our Tuesday Evening Club were,

- Mrs. Mary C. Ridgeway
- Mrs. Georgia Morrison
- Mrs. Innes Frame
- Mrs. Sarah Disman
- Mrs. Hattie Cornwell
- Mrs. Ora Rech
- Miss Amelia Evans
- Mrs. Katherine Rudolph
- Mrs. Lily D. Mosgrove
- Mrs. Martha Deen and
- Mrs. Mary I. Sisson

The ideals injected into the activities of The Tuesday Evening Club by the 11 charter members appealed to other ladies of the community to the extent that within a few years the membership of the club numbered between 70 and 80 active working members. All through the following years the membership has continued to grow and increase until the club at the present time has 118 working members, among whom is Mrs. Lily D. Mosgrove of Salida, whose distinction as the only surviving Charter Member and as Past President of the Club for three terms is proudly honored.

This preface to whatever may be said concerning the history of the founding and building -and the growth - of our Salida Public Library, accords deserved and true recognition to the 11 pioneer ladies as the nucleus which in those early days created and rallied the support and continued public sentiment most responsible for our Public Library of today.

The few books purchased the first year from club dues were kept in a small room in the Central School Building (now McGray School) on some shelves donated for that purpose.

In 1896, a small room on West Second Street (near Opera House) was secured to accomodate the growing needs. To meet expenses a charge of \$2.00 a year was made to subscribing readers; also funds for carrying on the work were additionally obtained from donations and from dinners and entertainments for which a charge was made.

In 1898, the accumulating library was moved into the small one-story brick building on the corner of "F" and Third Streets (where the Y. & R. garage building is now located) and from there to the large second story room of the City Hall Building - in which the Town Council held its sessions and the Police Judge also held his Court - where it remained until a permanent Public Library home was completed in 1909, with a paid librarian in attendance.

While the first few books were housed in the Central School Building, they were kept in order by club members and were loaned out to readers through the office of the School Principal until the increasing number of books made that system of distribution no longer possible, and they were then housed elsewhere.

Thereafter, for nearly fourteen years, every active member of the club was obligated in alphabetical order to take her turn in the cycle of keeping the library open two or three afternoons each week for the benefit of readers. At every monthly meeting the President of the Club handed out slips to those members whose alphabetical turn had come for keeping the library open during the ensuing month. The slip bore the respective lady's name and the date on which she was to serve as active librarian, who by the same token was the active janitress for the day in building her own fires, emptying the ashes, sweeping and dusting, and generally putting the room in order before the regular library hours; all of which they were obligated to do or procure a substitute from among other members of the club.

HARBOTTLE IMPETUS

Colonel William Penn Harbottle, a civil war veteran, was a much respected public spirited citizen, who in the late 80's and early 90's served 7 years as a member of the Salida School Board, and from 1893 through 1897 was Post Master in Salida for 4 years. Also for some years he was the President of the Board of Commissioners of the Colorado Soldier's and Sailor's Home, Monte Vista. No other Salida citizen was ever a more staunch supporter of the Public Library movement than he, and that deep interest was climaxed and consummated when at his death in early 1906, it was learned that he had bequeathed his personal library and his home at 546 "G" Street to The Salida Library Association for the establishment of a Reference Library to be forever known as "The Juliana Reference Library" as a memorial to his mother; his will specifically providing that the "Juliana Library" should every be a Reference Library as contradistinguished from a circulating library, and its identity maintained as such in a room used

only for study and general reference in a non-circulating manner wherever housed. The generous gift of his home and library by Mr. Harbottle for Public Library purposes provided the necessary impetus for the campaign soon thereafter instituted by the ladies of the Tuesday Evening Club with the help of civic minded residents.

Mrs. Mary C. Ridgeway, first president of the club, and her husband Carl Ridgeway of Rio Grande and Rock Island Railroad fame, further added to the impetus when they volunteered their subscription for \$1200.00 with which to purchase the present library site.

Previous unsuccessful negotiations with Mr. Andrew Carnegie were then renewed~~renewed~~ and pushed to a conclusion as rapidly as conditions imposed by him could be complied with, and he had agreed to furnish \$9000.00 toward the the building of a Public Library in Salida. From that day on until local subscriptions aggregating approximately \$6000.00 had either been paid or guaranteed in compliance with requirements there was no rest for non-subscribers, and it was a great day for the ladies of the Tuesday Evening Club in Salida when their triumphant announcement could be made that all monies for building a Public Library were subscribed and available.

Almost immediately then a reputable architect was employed to draft plans for a library building and to act as supervising consultant during its construction, which must include a separate room for the housing of the "Juliana Reference Library" in accordance with with Mr. Harbottle's Will; and also what is known as the "Assembly Hall" in the basement of the building, to be leased to The Tuesday Evening Club as a source^{of} continuous supplemental income to be used only in conjunction with the monies received over the pay-fiction counter for the purchase of new books from year to year to replace worn out volumes and also to add as many as possible to the total number on the shelves.

The Corner Stone of the Library was laid in May, 1908, and the building

(F.W.G. Talk at Salida Rotary Club 1-22-51

was practically completed in the latter part of that year, at a cost in round figures of about \$15,000.00, after which book stacks and all other shelving was installed and library furniture and fixtures purchased at a total aggregate cost on which there seems no accurate record available.

At a meeting of the City Council on Sept. 21, 1908, an Ordinance was adopted establishing and providing for the maintenance of a Free Public Library within the City of Salida under the Colorado Act of 1899, and authorizing levy of a tax not exceeding one mill on the dollar annually upon all property in the city, to be placed in a special fund known as the "Library Fund": This Ordinance also authorized the mayor to appoint six suitable persons (to be approved by the City Council) who, together with the Mayor (who shall be President) would constitute and be known as "The Board of Directors of The Public Library of Salida, Colorado," & etc. Other records also show that the Mayor's appointees as the six Charter Members of The Salida Library Board were; J. J. McKenna, Mrs. D. P. Cook, A. R. Miller, Mrs. Charles Shively, J. U. Mock and Mrs. S. J. Spray; and that the first meeting of that Board was held in the City Clerk's office on February 5th, 1909, at which meeting Mrs. J. A. Gravett, who had acquired previous library experience at The State Agricultural College in Ft. Collins, was unanimously elected as the first paid Librarian of The Salida Public Library, ^{at a fixed salary} of \$40.00 per month. (She now at the advanced age of 90 years on February 21st, of this year 1951, resides in Palo Alto, California, in good health)

Dedication of the Library took place in about February 1909, at which time Mrs. Florence Lippard, then President of The Tuesday Evening Club, formally and in behalf of the Club, presented to the City of Salida the reading room library of books previously accumulated by the Club numbering 1967 volumes, and also the "Juliana Reference Library" bequeathed by Mr. Harbottle under his Will.

The charter members of the Library Board accepted their obligations seriously, as did all successive Trustees appointed or elected to fill vacancies - and as did also all Librarians employed. Available funds for proper conduct of the Library were always meager and strictest economy possible was a constant practice. However, with the loyal support of The Tuesday Evening Club members and many other interested friends, the Library has continued to expand its service in the community all through the years of its existence.

Only Four Librarians have been in charge since the Public Library was dedicated to the city in 1909:

Mrs. Nettie K. Gravett assumed her duties as the first paid librarian on March 1st, 1909, and served about two years to December 31st/ 1910:

On January 1st, 1911, she was succeeded by Mrs. Helen M. Cook who served as librarian twelve years to December 31st, 1922:

January 1st, 1923, Mrs. Montie M. Fesenbeck was appointed librarian and served one year only.

Then as of January 1st, 1924 (27 years ago this month), Miss Ida Frisch (now Mrs. Neddermann) who was a full course graduate from an accredited Library School, resigned her work with The New Mexico State Agricultural College to become librarian in our Salida Public Library, where she yet remains in active charge.

Growth of Library

Concerning the growth of our Public Library, the following condensed summarization will about as clearly present the situation ~~about as clearly~~ as can be done without presenting a mass of figures which would only tend to confuse a previously uninformed listener:

books

Of the 1967/presented to the Public Library by The Tuesday Evening Club in 1909 and placed on the Library shelves, the number catalogued for immediate location and reference was 1,001
 12/31/1911; Catalogued books on shelves were..3,665
 12/31/1913, Do # 4,398
 12/31/1915, Do " 4,967
 12/31/1920, Do " 6,237
 12/31/1923. Do " 7,219
 12/31/1950 Do " 14,138

For a general summary of what the Salida Public Library houses today for the ^{free} use ~~of the~~ of all Salida citizens it should be noted that in addition to the 14,138 catalogued volumes on the shelves, there approximately 2,000 to 2,500 non-catalogued books, many of which have been presented to the Library by interested friends and are in some instances duplicates of catalogued books already on shelves, which brings the total number of books to well over 16,000 volumes: Also there are about 11,000 bound and catalogued volumes ^{of the best magazines} for reference purposes; among which is a complete file of the Saturday Evening Post for more than 30 years.

~~ANNEX~~ A music section was installed some years ago ~~and~~ which now numbers about 1700 pieces of excellent sheet music, and is much used.

Also there is a Picture Section of indexed and filed pictures, ~~many of which~~ numbering about 7000, many of which are copies of Masterpieces, and this department is also much appreciated by patrons of the Library

About 110 Magazines are also regularly received at the Library for public reading, among which is your Rotarian Magazine, of which the library has a complete indexed file for reference purposes from and after July 1936.

The above gives you the information that from the fine nucleus of 1967 volumes so laboriously gotten together and donated to The Library ~~Salida Public~~ ~~Public in~~ 1909, By The Tuesday Evening Club, there has been a continued growth until today the Public Library houses more than 30,000 ^{good} pieces of/interesting reading matter and other interesting articles for the use of its patrons.

The Total number of persons using our Public Library in 1950 was 12,297 persons, which is between 2-1/2 and 2-3/4 times the population of thre City according to the last census.