

HISTORY OF THE SALIDA PUBLIC LIBRARY

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In recognition of those who lived, founded and went before, it seems fitting to recall briefly something of the history of The Salida Public Library and a few facts concerning it which stand out conspicuously in the history of Salida as the years have rolled by.

In September 1894, the organization known as The Tuesday Evening Club of Salida was formed, having among its objectives the founding of a City Library. Eleven charter members of the Club were, Mrs. Mary C. Ridgeway, Mrs. Georgia Morrison, Mrs. S. Innes Frame, Mrs. Sarah A. Disman, Mrs. Hattie W. Cornwell, Mrs. Ora Rech, Miss Amelia Evans, Mrs. Katherine D. Rudolph, Mrs. Lily D. Mosgrove, Mrs. Martha Deen and Mrs. Mary Imlay Sisson.

The few books purchased the first year from club dues were kept in the small room of the Central School Building on some shelves donated for the purpose. In 1896 a small store room on West Second Street was secured to accomodate the growing needs. To meet expenses a charge of \$2.00 a year was made to all subscribers except club members. Funds for carrying on the work were obtained in this way and also by contributions and entertainments. In 1898 the library was moved into the small brick building on the corner of "F" and Third Streets (where the large brick building occupied by The Y. & R. Garage now stands) 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 Magistrate also held his Courts - where it remained until a permanent Public Library

home was provided in 1909, with a paid librarian in attendance.

The intensive campaign for procuring a site and funds for building the Public Library was undertaken in the Summer of 1905. Upon being approached, Mr. Andrew Carnegie under certain conditions imposed agreed to provide a substantial sum for a library building. Mrs. Mary C. Ridgeway, first president of the Club, and her husband A. C. Ridgeway made the first large subscription by giving \$1200.00 for purchase of the library site. Then the campaign was on in earnest and its appeal was rewarded through substantial subscriptions by public spirited citizens.

In early 1906 the public library movement was given added encouragement and impetus by Mr. William P. Harbottle through his bequest of his home and personal library to The Trustees of The Salida Library Association in establishment of a strictly non-circulating reference library as a memorial to his mother, to be forever known as "The Juliana Reference Library" and housed in the home he bequeathed, or exclusively maintained by the income from that home if housed elsewhere.

When funds were reasonably assured the architectural plans to provide a substantial Public Library building, including a separate and exclusive room for the "Juliana Reference Library", were a subject of much earnest thought and planning as is now mutely evidenced after forty years by our sound Public Library Building with its fine present-day architectural dignity of invitation to all those to enter who crave the society and wisdom of good books. Some time after a general enthusiastic acceptance of the plans for the library building the awakening came: Salida was to have a large, dignified Public Library Building for a town of its size, with a small income on a

one mill levy or less to maintain it with a paid librarian and janitor - and no money other than a contemplated meager income from pay-fiction readers with which to buy books. The fine pioneer ladies who had by then accumulated an excellent reading room library of books in their City Hall quarters were obligated that it should be the nucleus for a public library: When that was done they had no home -- and what to do? All plans were halted and a general discussion of weeks took place before a final solution was evolved; that of adding to the building plans an Assembly Hall to be leased by the Salida Public Board to The Tuesday Evening Club for its own meetings at a nominal rental, the hall to be furnished and maintained by the club at its own expense and by it, as the constituted agent of the Public Library Board, sub-rented on a basis providing for the paying over to the Library Board of all such rentals received, less actual expenses, for the purchase of books. Additional funds were then again subscribed by public spirited citizens. In due course contracts were let and the Library Building completed under most watchful supervision at a cost of \$15,000 in round figures, of which \$9,000 was provided by Mr. Carnegie and \$6,000 by gifts and subscriptions of local Salida people.

In May 1908 the donated corner stone of the Library Building was laid with appropriate ceremonies. In the following year, about February 1909, a memorable and brilliant ceremonial of dedication was held and the formal opening of The Salida Public Library took place. The reading room library of The Tuesday Evening Club, then numbering 1967 volumes, had been moved to its permanent home from the City Hall and placed on shelves awaiting, as had also the Harbottle reference library into the "Juliana Reference Room" prepared for it, and all

were turned over to the City. Mrs. Florence Lippard, then president of The Tuesday Evening Club, made the presentation speech in behalf of the Club and Mayor Buchanan accepted for the City.

The first Board of Trustees of The Salida Public Library were, W. G. Sisson, Mayor and ex-officio chairman by virtue of his office, J. J. McKenna, Mrs. D. P. Cook, A. R. Miller, Mrs. C. L. Shively, J. U. Moch and Mrs. S. J. Spray. The first meeting of the Board was held in the office of the City Clerk of Salida on February 5th, 1909. After nearly 39 years of notable continuous service, Mrs. D. P. Cook is the one and only member of the present Library Board who was a member of the original Library Board appointed in early 1909, and who in 1948 yet survives.

On May 10, 1909, The Board of Trustees executed the pre-arranged lease for a term of five years with The Tuesday Evening Club for the Assembly Hall and kitchen in the basement of the Library Building. This original lease has been officially extended from time to time at the expiration of each leased period. It is now a historic document in full force and effect, and the co-operative relationship which has existed under this lease for many years between the Board of Trustees of The Salida Public Library and The Tuesday Evening Club is regarded in other localities as unique, however, there seems a well united opinion that the arrangement may continue indefinitely as a most amicable and satisfactory way of best promoting the cultural interests of our community.

Mrs. Nettie K. Gravett became the first paid librarian on March 1, 1909, and served about two years until December 31, 1910, when she was succeeded by Mrs. Helen M. Cook who served twelve years, to be succeeded January 1, 1923 by Mrs. Fesenbeck who served one year. Then on

January 1, 1924, Ida Frisch, who is now Mrs. Ida Neddermann became librarian and under her trained and efficient management and guidance, now rounding out a quarter of a century, commendable growth and progress of the Library has been experienced. During the years since the Library became City property it has grown from the 1967 volumes installed at dedication to one of over 16,000 volumes of books and 10,000 volumes of magazines. Among other items of growth and expanded service is an accumulated file of the Saturday Evening Post for 29 years; a music section containing about 1,600 pieces of sheet music; an indexed and filed collection of 7,000 artistic pictures, many of them copies of masterpieces; various special collections of information such as maps, a pamphlet file, Government documents and other valuable instructive data; and also, through paid and free subscriptions, 110 magazines are regularly received at the Library for public reading. In perpetuating the ideals of those who founded and made possible to our community its excellent public Library, now favorably regarded as among the good libraries in Colorado, it has been the constant aim to increase its efficient usefulness in the community, and in this there can be a certain pride of accomplishment when it is known that in recent years our Salida Public Library supplies 98 per cent. or more of the requests made upon it.

None of the money derived from the tax levied and paid for library purposes is used to buy books; that money is used only for operating and maintenance of the Library. Books for continued increase of volumes in the endowed "Juliana Reference Library" are bought with money derived through rental income from the Harbottle property as dedicated under Mr. Harbottle's Will should be done. Books for the circulating library proper, and bought with money

paid over the library desk by pay-fiction readers and other patrons of the Library and with money received from rentals of the Assembly Hall and kitchen, or with other monies given by friends of the Library for that purpose. Many books are also given outright to the Library.

Under a new law, enacted by the General Assembly of Colorado and entitled the "1947 Library Act", all previous laws governing the conduct of public libraries in this State were repealed. Under the new law many innovations in the conduct of public libraries in Colorado were made effective, among which was vesting in its Board of Trustees the title to all property given to or for the use or benefit of a public library, to be held and used according to the terms of the gift. Reorganization of the Board of Trustees of The Salida Public Library was completed in December 1947 in accordance with terms of the "1947 Library Act" and the obligations it imposed.