

Sweet Home Library
1942 to 1994

In the fall of 1941, the president of the Long Street Grade school PTA, Mrs. Ivan Hoy, appointed a committee to look into the possibilities of that group sponsoring a city library. It was decided that it would be more advisable for a group of interested persons to form a Library Association, and the PTA and other organizations could help financially. Long Street School PTA gave the first sum of money.

It was wartime and the committee believed that the need for a library would be felt more keenly than ever because of curtailment of vacation trips and rationing of gasoline.

Mrs. Clyde Scott, Mrs. Jack Wise, and Mrs. Jes Jones of the original committee, along with Mrs. Ivan Martin and Mrs. John Russell comprised the board of this association which met for the first time on March 16, 1942 at the New Era office.

After electing Mrs. Scott as chairman and Mrs. Jones as Secretary-treasurer, they made an inspection trip to the city hall to see the two rooms which the city had donated for their use, a kitchen and storage room in city hall, which was a former dwelling.

It was decided to keep the library open for 2 1/2 hours on three afternoons a week, with the board members and other interested persons acting as librarians.

They planned to start a Library Association, and had membership cards printed for patrons wishing to join at \$1.00 per member. By August of 1942 there were 66 memberships. The community was asked for donations of books and the library in Albany sent up old books which they had discarded.

These tireless women on the board worked to obtain volunteer help and materials to create a presentable library. Local business firms deducted 10% from purchases of materials for the library, and carpenters donated their time. A partition between the kitchen and storeroom was torn out. Windows were furnished and frames were made. The walls were covered with plywood and they applied joint filler and paint, sanded and varnished the shelves and cupboards. Mrs. Wise took lessons in bookmending, and prepared to give two afternoons a week and some mornings too, as one of the volunteer librarians.

New books were purchased with monetary gifts and they were also able to take advantage of traveling libraries from the Oregon State Library. The annual meetings for the association were held in June of each year. The board met once a month to decide on library policy, expenditures, etc.

September 3, 1942 the library room was ready. Furnishings included a magazine rack and tables, a stove and wood.

A set of books from the State Library was waiting on the shelves; other books were donated by the Lebanon and Albany libraries and by local residents. The board made a public request for donations of chairs suitable for library use, for an additional table and for "a lot of people to buy library cards at \$.25 per person."

The formal opening was September 19 with a silver tea and everyone invited.

Library hours were Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday afternoons. There was a book rental shelf stocked with the newest books. Borrowers could rent these for \$.05 a week until a book was paid for; then it was placed on the regular shelf, and the money was used to buy another book.

The first library card was bought by Mrs. B. J. Cornelius of Cornelius Building Supply. The state librarian came and gave suggestions. Dr. and Mrs. Booth of Lebanon donated new books and magazines. Board members took turns as librarian.

In the first four months of operation the board was able to spend \$12 for new books, local organizations gave magazine subscriptions.

By 1943 the original shelves were completely filled and new shelves were built. On June 8, 1944, 236 persons had library cards. In March 1968 the library had 765 card holders and approximately 11,000 books.

In 1945, after struggling for three years to keep this small city library going, the board decided to launch a Library Expansion Fund. In February the city was divided into ten districts, with teams comprised of two women each canvassing door-to-door. The first check in this drive was received from the V.F.W. Auxiliary, and by the next month there was \$424.42 in this fund. After preparing a budget for a year's expenditures, the board asked that the library be included in the city budget. The city granted this request and allowed \$175.00. With the money from the Library Expansion Fund and other gifts, a librarian, Mrs. Alice Storey, was hired. She was paid a salary of \$5.00 a week to keep the library open three hours on three days a week.

In the spring of 1946, Mrs. Ethel Tower replaced Mrs. Storey as librarian, and the city voted to allow \$225.00 in their budget for the library.

In 1947, the library received \$260.00 from the city and gifts of \$100.00 from the PTA.

Because the board felt they should raise the librarians salary to \$10.00 per week, \$520.00 was requested and received from the city in 1948. The death of Mrs. Storey in May of that year created a vacancy on the board, and at the time she was replaced, it was decided to add two more members, making a total of seven on the board. In the fall

of the year, a silver tea was held to raise funds, and the Expansion Fund Account, a savings account intended to be held towards a building program, was opened. Another big step in the progress of the library was the filing of incorporation papers. The Sweet Home Public Library Inc. was formed on January 17, 1949.

In February of 1949, Mrs. Tower resigned as librarian and Mrs. Alta Hermes replaced her. As for funds, the library received \$25.00 from Willamette National Lumber Co. and \$400.00 from the Community Chest, and they asked for received \$1000.00 from the city. Because of the increase in funds, it was felt that the board could now spend a set amount on books each month. They decided on \$30.00 per month, and at the same meeting decided to purchase a set of Encyclopædia Britannic. By 1949 the monthly circulation averaged around 350, and the librarian determined that there were 2257 volumes in the library - 1544 adult and 713 juvenile. Many of these books, however, were never in circulation as they were older books which had been donated when the library was first started.

In 1950, the newly formed Sweet Home Woman's Club voted to help sponsor the library and they did so by securing an outdoor sign denoting the library location, by purchasing a Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, and by conducting children's story hours each Saturday afternoon. The books in memoriam plan was established and lists of books suitable for memorials were secured from various sources. The Community Chest presented a check for \$317.54, and further gifts were also received from the Women's Club.

By 1951, because of improved financial help, \$60.00 was spent monthly on the purchase of new books. The number of volumes on the shelves had increased by this time to 2898, and the library again received \$1000.00 from the City. With the help of the State Librarian, 596 old, outdated volumes were withdrawn and discarded from the shelves.

In the spring of 1952, Mrs. Hermes resigned as librarian and was replaced by Mrs. William Kneale. The city budget allowed the library \$1000.00, the Community Chest presented them with \$214.00, and gifts totaling \$139.50 were received from the Woman's Club.

Mrs. Kneale resigned as librarian in March of 1953. Mrs. Jay Gould, was appointed to fill the position. Because the board decided to put the library on the same fiscal year as the city - July 1 to June 30 - they only requested half a years budget allowance of \$750.00 from the city. A check in the amount of \$200.00 was received from the Woman's Club and was used to purchase new books. Library space was being included in the plans for the new city hall and the Jaycee sponsored Frontier Days presented a check for \$3012.98 to the library. This covered the cost of buying new furniture in the amount of \$1906.43. The remainder paid for the very essential cost of cataloging the entire library. Mrs. Genevieve Beaman, the high school librarian at the time, with the help of two high school girls, did this at a cost of \$1097.12.

The city budgeted \$1500.00 to the library in 1954, and the Woman's Club presented a check for \$75.00. In May the City of Sweet Home took over the operation of the library and according to the state laws concerning public libraries, Mayor Eugene Ellis appointed a new library board consisting of Mrs. E. B. Redmond, Mrs. Rex Pemberton, Mrs. Milton Weddle, Mrs. William Heseman, and Mrs. Oscar Steele.

When the present city hall was built in 1954, part of the basement was established as a library. The move into the new quarters was made in September. These quarters served as the library until 1969.

Gifts of \$500.00 each from Willamette National Lumber Co. and Santiam Lumber Co. paid for the cost of shelving in the new library quarters. Mr. William Swindells presented a personal check to be used in keeping the library open one night a week for two hours, and Hill Timber Service presented a gift of \$1000.00 which was used for the purchase of books, mainly non-fiction and reference.

In 1955 the city budgeted \$1500.00 for the librarians salary and \$1500.00 for the purchase of books. Another gift of \$250.00 was received from Willamette National Lumber Co.

In 1956 the Hill Timber Service presented the library with a check for \$500.00 and the Woman's Club gave \$30.00. The number of volumes in the library then totaled 5258.

The annual state library report for the fiscal year ending June, 1957 showed that the number of volumes had been increased by 812 new books. However, there have been 286 withdrawn or lost, leaving a total of 5809.

The total circulation for the year, including non-fiction for home use and unbound magazines was 16,480. Serving an area whose population was estimated at about 12,000 there were only 233 adult and 241 juvenile registered borrowers, making a total number of 474. Only 3.9% of the population was taking advantage of the library facilities. Borrowers were not required to live inside the city limits and many cards were held by people from Cascadia, Foster, Holley, Crawfordsville, and Brownsville.

The library was open on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday from 2:30 - 5:30 and on Thursday evenings from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. A library card cost \$.50 per year and entitled the holder to borrow two books for a period of two weeks. Some of the reference books were not allowed to leave the library, but anyone could use them in the library without holding a card. The city paid the librarians salary of \$1500.00 and allowed \$1500.00 for the purchase of books. With additional gifts it was possible the past year to order \$200.00 worth of books a month.

The entire library stock was catalogued and kept up to date by Mrs. Gould, and she instructed people on the use of the card file. The furnishings of the library were valued at approximately \$2100.00 with an additional \$1500.00 for shelving. Two leather chairs were ordered for the reading room and other furniture of this type was acquired as needed.

In 1965-66 the librarian's salary was \$2500.00 per year. She had formerly been on an hourly basis. This change was made as a matter of convenience in bookkeeping. Library assistants received a raise from \$1.00 per hour to \$1.25 per hour.

The bookkeeping procedures of the Library were transferred to the city office at the beginning of 1963 - 1964 to comply with State law.

In 1964 there were five Library Board members appointed by the mayor and council for three year terms .

The Library Board selected new books each month. The Librarian added to the list such volumes as she desired, books which were requested by the public and replacement books. There was been a marked increase in requests for How-to-do books. Average cost of books was \$4.00 with 40% discount.

Library cards were available on a six month or yearly basis for \$.50. Two books were loaned at a time, for two weeks and could be renewed once. New fiction books were placed on the "rental shelves" at \$.05 a week. There was no charge for new non-fiction books to encourage the reading of non-fiction.

Overdue books were charged for at the rate of \$.02 a library day.

A book drop was added in 1966 for those books returned after regular hours.

An extension telephone was added for the Librarians convenience they need not leave the desk to answer calls during rush hours. Much time had previously been lost in locking the cash drawer and returning to the office to answer calls.

More book space was urgently needed. The Librarians work space was crowded and inconvenient, slowing down the processing of books. Space was needed for expansion into new areas of tapes, records, films and pictures which were fast becoming basic rental items for a modern library.

A ground floor street entrance was needed for easier use by individuals and better publicity for the library.

In September 1967 the fee for out of city library cards was increased from \$1.00 to \$3.00. At that time it was noted that one fourth of the people in Oregon had no access to library services. Sweet Home was a more fortunate community in that it had a locally supported library.

Plans for the new Library building were discussed in 1966. They were put on hold because of concern for an additional water reservoir facilities and its was felt this should be put to the voters first. The library and police department had been crowding each other in their basement quarters.

The decision to build at 13th and Kalmia had been made. During World War II, this property had a Civil Air Patrol lookout tower on it to search for enemy aircraft. The ground for building at this site had to be raised two feet so that it would be above the 100 year flood plain of Ames Creek.

In December, 1967 the library board started petitions to ask the city council to submit a library bond issue of \$92,411.00 to the voters in early spring. 200 signatures were needed. If the bond issue was passed during the fiscal year, the city could receive 45% of the cost of the new library under a federal assistance program. The board at this time consisted of Janet Wise, Betty Hinthorn, Vangie Davidson, Frances Edwards, Lee Dudley.

March 1, 1968 some 430 voters, a record turnout for a bond election, approved the bonds. This was approximately 25% of the registered voters in the city. The projected cost of the new library was \$166,000.00. The bonds would be retired on a ten year basis with cost to individual properties of about \$.45 per \$1000 true cash value each year. The new building was planned to serve the community for 20 years.

A grant for \$88,392.00 was approved in May 1968, giving the city a total of \$180,392.00 with which to construct and equip the new library.

A bid of \$120,377.00 by James and Stritzke Construction Co. of Roseburg to build the library was accepted by the city council in early November, 1968. The bid was under estimated costs. It was thought this was due to a slow down in the construction industry at the time. The architect for the building was Loyal C. Lang of Portland. Construction could start in about two weeks with completion in 150 days. Construction was held up by a winter snowstorm.

On July 31 it was reported that the building had been ready since July 18 but the furniture had not arrived. The furniture was found in Oshkosh, Wis., sitting in a railroad car at the factory. The furniture had been ordered in March through Western School Supply, Inc. August 7, it was reported that the furniture still was sitting in the boxcar in Oshkosh. It finally arrived in mid August.

Plans to move the books to the new site were made for September 6, with community help. Dedication ceremonies were scheduled for Sunday, November 23, at 2:00 p.m. with Gov. Tom McCall participating. He stated "There is no better center than an intellectual center and there is no finer investment than a good library." State librarian, Eloise Ebert, said "...Purpose of our libraries today is to help solve our many unsolved social questions. You are blest to have such a fine library."

The City Council voted to match a \$2500.00 federal grant for non-fiction books available in 1969. About \$1700.00 in reference books and \$1500.00 in new non-fiction volumes were ordered.

When the library was opened, the state gave \$5000.00 worth of nonfiction and reference books and matched the city's increase in book budget the second year. There were now 12,000 books on the shelves.

In the 1970's it was discovered that some past city council had neglected the library board by never passing an ordinance establishing it. To remedy the problem of never having been officially established, the board had to submit to the council suggested terms of appointment, policy functions and other duties.

By the Fall of 1984 there was a full time professional librarian and three part time library aides.

Citizens voted down the city budget in the fall of 1984. The City Council elected to close the library as a cost saving measure. People in the community did not want to see their library closed and they rallied to support the library. Friends of the Sweet Home Library was established. They approached the City Council.

After being closed for approximately one month the library was re-opened with only the professional librarian, Nicole Hines, and enough money for the barest essentials, such as lights, heat and water. There was no budget for supplies or books.

Volunteers helped to keep the doors open. Patrons, the community and Friends of the Library raised funds to keep the magazines subscriptions current, and best sellers on the shelves.

Nikki left the library in May 1986 and the three former library aides, Velma Cook, Leona McCann, and Pat Stratman were hired part time to replace her. Eventually Leona became Library Director.

In June 1986 the voters approved a two year serial levy to operate the library. Once again there was a book budget.

Also in 1986, Mayor Ruth Ganta requested that the State Library do an evaluation of our library to determine how it could better serve the community's needs. Mary Ginnane, Rural/Small Library Development Consultant from the Oregon State Library, made an initial onsite consultation September 11, meeting with the Library Board, representatives of the city, and the library staff. The Consulting Project Steering Committee included Betty Thayer, Library Board Chairman, Dr. Robert Hyland, Erik Kvarsten, City Manager, Barbara Rice and Gretchen Schaleger met with Mary, December 2. The final report was completed between March, 1987. Several recommendations were made as to how the library could be improved. Some of these were implemented. Others were not due to lack of funds.

In November, 1988 the library was concerned about the literacy problems in the United States. Anne Beckum, of the Oregon Library Literacy Initiative, was invited to speak to a group of local citizens. Anne was working the Oregon State Library under a three year grant to help establish literacy programs in Oregon. The result of this was the formation of the Sweet Home Literacy Council under the sponsorship of the library. Members were Shirley Eddy, chairman, Mary Brendle, Velma Cook, Errilla McCarthy, Carey Moran, and Gretchen Schaleger.

After several years of concerns, water damage, and delays the roof was finally repaired in May 1991.

The library's 50th Anniversary was celebrated with a silver tea on September 19, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Donations were used to pay for materials for a metal sculpture of the city's logo, made by the Ironmens Club at the Sweet Home High School. The main speaker was Jim Scheppke, head of the Oregon State Library. Work of local Sweet Home area artists was on display for the occasion.

The Friends of the Library, a non-profit organization, while small continues to be very active in helping the library and raising funds for items not in the library budget, with its annual used book sale in February, and the craft table at the library.

The reading room is available for use by community groups for meetings and is frequently in use. Work of local artists can be found on display on the walls and in display cases.

The new video section of the library was recently begun when the library was remembered in the will of Mr. Meidinger, a former Sweet Home School administrator.

Voters have supported the library three times by passing serial levies, most recently in 1991. The library's budget is over \$83,000. There are approximately 4000 active library cards today, many of which are family cards and are free to city residents. Out of city residents pay \$25 for a family card as they do not pay taxes that support the library. City residents have not paid for a library cards for many years. There are approximately 30,000 volumes on the shelves not including paperbacks, magazines, videos and encyclopedias.

The library is staffed by a part time Library Director, Leona McCann and three part time aides, Dyan Brown, Velma Cook and Dallis Morris.

The library is opened 39 hours per week. Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The summer reading programs for children have been very successful, some days reaching over 150 children.

Current Library Board members are Lee Cole, Paul Dickerson, Errilla McCarthy, Gretchen Schaleger, and Murph Westing.

Sweet Home Public Library A Brief History

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It was wartime and the committee believed that the need for a library would be felt more keenly than ever because of curtailment of vacation trips and rationing of gasoline.

The board of this association met for the first time on March 16, 1942 at the New Era office. They made an inspection trip to the city hall to see the two rooms the city donated for the Library's use, a kitchen and storage room in city hall, which was a former dwelling.

It was decided to keep the library open for 2 1/2 hours on three afternoons a week, with the board members and other interested persons acting as librarians.

A Library Association was planned and had membership cards printed for patrons wishing to join at \$1.00 per member. By August of 1942 there were 66 memberships. The community and donated money, books, materials and time to create a presentable library.

The formal opening was September 19 with a silver tea and everyone invited. Board members took turns as volunteer librarians.

In 1945 the board asked that the library be included in the city budget. The city granted this request. With the money from the Library Expansion Fund and other gifts, a librarian was hired.

Another big step in the progress of the library was the filing of incorporation papers. The Sweet Home Public Library Inc. was formed on January 17, 1949.

In May 1954, the City of Sweet Home took over the operation of the library.

When the present city hall was built that year, the library shared the basement with the Sweet Home Police Department. These quarters served as the library until 1969.

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Since June 1986 voters have approved serial levies to keep the library operating.

The Sweet Home Literacy Council was established November, 1988 under the sponsorship of the library.

The library's 50th Anniversary was celebrated September 19, 1992, with a silver tea, duplicating its original opening.