

## HISTORY OF THE MENTONE PUBLIC LIBRARY

The first actual library service for the town of Mentone was the H. Parmelee Company of Chicago. By subscribing to a particular amount a town or neighborhood was entitled to the use of 2000 volumes for two years, sent by Parmelee in installments of fifty books. Parmelee also encouraged the establishment of book clubs, and would, for a fee, arrange for home delivery. The Parmelee Library is first mentioned in the Mentone Tri-County Gazette in late 1899.

In April, 1916, a petition of fifty-five citizens of the Mentone Community subscribed a total of \$158 as a guarantee of good faith for a proposed library in Mentone. A Carnegie library was first suggested but was voted down. After the Court found the list was according to law, the Mentone Council, the Mentone School Board, and the Judge of the Circuit Court appointed the following people to serve as a library Board of Trustees: Mr. Charles Dillingham, Mrs. Flavia Myers, Mr. Levi Jefferies, Mrs. Emma Yocum, Mr. LeRoy Smith, Mrs. Allen Jefferies, and Mr. George Ralston.

A room was found over the bank to serve as temporary headquarters and Mrs. Allen Jefferies was appointed as librarian for the first year.

The Board of Education donated all books in the school library, except reference books, and fifty books were borrowed from the State Library. In March, 1917, the librarian reported a total of 644 volumes in the library and stated that 53 books had been loaned. Miss Marie Heighway was appointed librarian for the following year.

On November 1, 1918, the library was moved to a room in a building owned by Mr. Carolyn Myers on the north side of Main Street and also that year Miss Frances Clark was appointed librarian. Miss Clark served until September, 1919 when Miss Madge Lyons was named to the position.

In October, 1920, Mrs. Cora VanGilder was appointed librarian and she served until her death on July 7, 1946. Mrs. Mabel Emmons served as acting librarian until 1947 when Mrs. Walter (Pearl) Lackey was appointed.

In 1936 the Library Board voted to purchase a building and lot on the south side of Main Street for \$2600 as permanent quarters for the library. The Library remained there until 1960 when the present library building was opened to the public.

The new building was built with a \$20,000 grant to the town of Mentone from the will of Lawrence D. Bell, a Mentone native and owner of Bell Aircraft Corporation of Buffalo, New York. Mr. Bell requested that the money be used for a suitable memorial to his parents, Isaac and Harriet (Sarber) Bell, and the Mentone Board made the decision to use the money, plus \$3000 from the sale of the old building, to build a new library. The decision was also made to change the name from the Mentone Public Library to the Bell Memorial Library.

A one-room addition costing \$4500 was added in 1971, paid for from the Library Improvement Reserve Fund.

Mrs. Lackey retired in 1973 and Mrs. Harold (Madeleine) Fisher was appointed to take her place.

The library remained a "town-library" taxing unit (with Harrison, Franklin and Seward Townships donating funds) until the summer of 1980 when Harrison Township agreed to merge with the town to form a new library taxing unit.

From the first 644 books in 1916, the library now has over 23,000 volumes for loan.

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Contributed by Eileen Bowser, Assistant Librarian, 1962-