

Bell Memorial Public Library seeks to expand in Mentone

A sign on Main Street in Mentone directs attention from the heart of town to Bell Memorial Library. Located at 306 N. Broadway, the town's library lies nestled in a residential neighborhood, but plans are under way to relocate it on Main Street in the future. The library board is eyeing an empty building on Main Street, across the street from the post office. Moving the library into such a space would allow for continued expansion.

Library service began in Mentone in the late 1890s through a subscription service from Chicago. In 1916 a public library was established by means of a petition and by the next spring boasted a collection of 644 volumes.

The library was located in various Main Street buildings until 1960, when Mentone native Lawrence Bell donated \$20,000 to the town for a memorial to his parents. The money was spent on the present building and the name was changed from Mentone Public to Bell Memorial. Two rooms were subsequently added, one in 1971 and one in 1985, in an effort to keep up with a growing collection and increased services.

Eileen Bowers, library board treasurer, has been associated with Mentone's library for 36 years. During that time she has seen

a lot of changes as efforts are made to stay abreast of the times. "The first thing we did was to get videotapes several years ago," she explained about staying current with library trends. That brought people into the library who never would have come in. There is also a large selection of compact discs. "We're so cramped for space!" Bowers exclaimed.

We have a great many kids — the kids are in all the time and the teen-agers, they're in for videotapes. I'm seeing grandchildren of the kids who were here when I started here."

She credited librarian Madeleine Fisher, who has been at Bell Memorial for 26 years, for being very knowledgeable about all aspects of library science. Bell Memorial carries 34,000 books, periodicals and newspapers, about 3,000 videotapes plus compact discs. "We surprise people when they come in here," Bower stated. "We try to have a little bit of everything: agriculture, Indiana section, genealogy, cooking, crafts, medical, history ... and lots of kids' books."

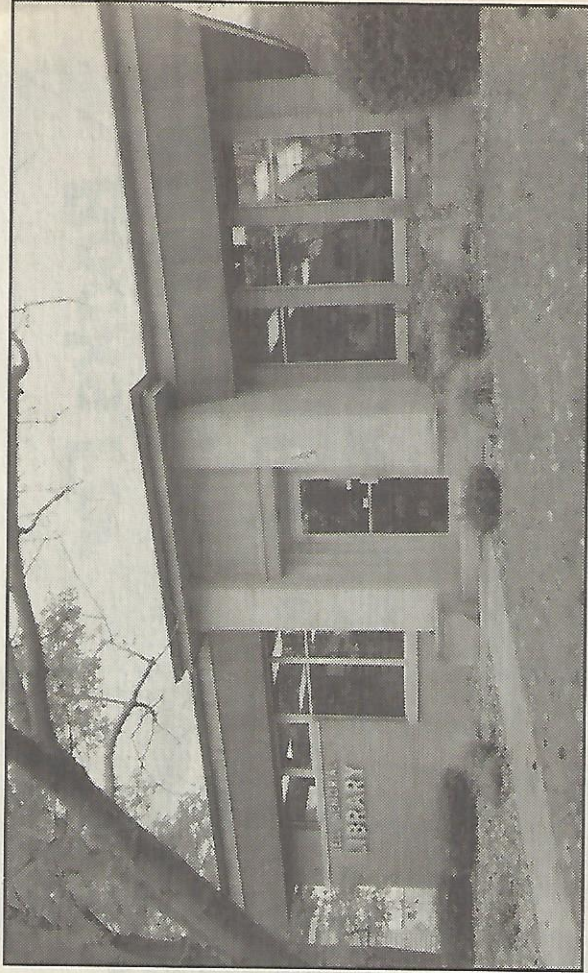
Two Wednesday story hours are held for children ages 3-5. School classes come in two days a week and Fisher reads them a story. In the summer there are reading

programs which have proven to be very popular. The library has a book delivery service to those who are housebound.

There are four computers directly connected to circulation. Two are primarily used for searching for books. One is mainly for younger children with games and homework helps. One has magazine article summaries and is on the Internet. Because the library couldn't afford technical support alone, it participates with 14 area libraries in a program offered by Xcel Computer Systems of Osceola. Robert

Lehman of Xcel visits every other Wednesday to help with hardware, software and computer problems. The company is also helping the Mentone library apply for FY1999 Technology Grants and funding.

Serving on the library board with Bowers are William E. Lamar, president; Diane Warren, vice president; Linda Cochran, secretary; and board members Marjorie Sanders, Fred Anderson, Linda Yeiter and Calvin Jackson. Bell Memorial Library is supported by the town of Mentone and Harrison Township.



BELL MEMORIAL LIBRARY — Mentone's library has been housed at 306 N. Broadway since 1960. The building is the result of a gift from Mentone native Lawrence Bell, as a memorial to his parents.

On the cover

The three photos on the cover of this special salute to the libraries of Kosciusko County were taken at the Warsaw, Piercetcon and Syracuse libraries.

In the top photo Syracuse resident and library patron Teresa Dick as she looked over a book at the Syracuse-Turkey Creek Township Public Library.

Ashley Higdon, 8, of Warsaw, sails away with a good book and boat in the middle photo. She is in the children's section of the new Warsaw library.

Deanna and Kory Mettler, in the bottom photo, are two of the many young adults utilizing the Piercetcon and Washington Township Public Library.

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**COMMITTED TO
BELL MEMORIAL —**
Elaine Bowers is treasurer on the board of Bell Memorial Library in Mentone. She began going to the library as a child and has been connected with it for 36 years as an adult. Computerization is one aspect of change with which Bowers has kept in step.



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Recent Renovations."*