

## Bell Library's History

### HISTORY

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

In April, 1916, a petition of 55 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 according to the law, the Mentone Council, the Mentone School board, and the judges of the Circuit Court appointed the following people to serve as a library Board of Trustees: Charles Dillingham, Mrs. Flavia Myers, Levi Jefferies, Mrs. Emma Yocum, LeRoy Smith, Mrs. Allen Jefferies, and George Ralston.

A room was found over the bank to serve as temporary headquarters. The Board of Education donated all books in the school library, except reference books, and 50 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.

On Nov. 1, 1918, the library was moved to a room in a building owned by Carlyn Myers on the north side of Main Street. 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. Mr. Bell had 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 Mentone Public Library to the Bell Memorial Public Library.

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 38,000 volumes for loan.

Above written by Ruth L. Klein May 2000

On April 28, 2003, Bell Memorial Public Library relocated to 101 W. Main Street, Mentone, Indiana, into a renovated building that was the former Frank Manufacturing Building. (The project was partially funded by a Community Focus Fund Grant from the IN Department of Commerce). The Bell Memorial Public Library, Mentone Senior Center and Mentone Daycare share this building.

Square Footage:

Library main floor 4,330 sq. ft.

loft 1,071 sq. ft.

Senior Center 1,441 sq. ft.

Daycare 2,320 sq. ft.

Bell X-1 Room (mtg. rm) 1,753 sq. ft.

Shared Space 1,909 sq. ft.

Total building square footage 12,524 sq. ft

Room #1 is now the media center for DVDs and audiobooks

Room #2 is our community room . The room will accommodate up to 40 people theater style or approximately 20 classroom style.

Room #3 (the smallest of the three rooms) will provide much needed room for storage in a temperature controlled area. (The current mezzanine storage room has floor loading limits as well as inadequate/inappropriate air handling equipment to handle Library documents intended for long term storage).

In 2014 considerable work was done on the outside back exterior of the building to create a very (almost elegant) outdoor space with nighttime lighting a pergola and space appropriate plantings. This area is directly accessible from room number two and would provide a beautiful space for a small wedding or other outdoor/indoor event.