

## Brief History of the Moultonborough Public Library

Numerous private libraries were formed in New Hampshire in the early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, including a “Social Library” incorporated in 1820 for the towns of Moultonborough and Sandwich. Each incorporated their own library in 1830. In the 1800s, both the Methodist and Free Will Baptist churches also maintained libraries in Moultonborough. Prior to 1820, up to 156 social or proprietary libraries existed around the state, and the first free public library in the nation was formed in Peterborough in 1833. Thus, New Hampshire has a long tradition of library services.

As early as 1849 the legislature empowered towns to levy taxes to support town libraries, the first state to do so. In 1895, they made it mandatory for towns to make an appropriation for the town library, and many libraries were begun within the next few years, including Moultonborough in 1897. The first trustees were James E. French, Leander Bryant, H.F. Mansfield, Rolland D. Green, and Augustus P. Jaclard (who was the great-grandfather of long-time librarian Adele Taylor, and who lived on the spot where the library is now located). Jim French was also town treasurer, and owned the Country Store, where the library was first housed in a 12' X 12' upstairs room. The first librarian was S. Elizabeth Morse, listed as a boarder in the French household in the 1900 census. Both the room and the services of the librarian were donated to begin with; in 1898 the librarian's salary and the room rent were each \$24.00 (salary raised to \$40 in 1913). All books were numbered in order as received, and the librarian kept a ledger showing what book numbers each patron had borrowed, crossing out the numbers as they were returned. The first title listed in the accession book was “Little Men,” by Louisa May Alcott.

The library received \$100 from the town in 1896 and 1897, and by the end of the year had 362 volumes, including some donated by the state and by patrons. Books, freight, shelf brackets, a table, labels, postage, stationery, and repairs, came to exactly \$200. Circulation for the first eight months was 1, 312 fiction, and 201 other.

Before the days of computerized catalogs, and even before the card catalog, a printed booklet listing the titles in the collection was issued, in 1900, and we have a copy in the files.

In 1917, the library moved to the Knight of Pythias Hall, in a ground-floor room on the left, heated with wood. This large building stood where the Foss Agency is currently located, and was torn down in 1971. By 1929, the collection was up to 2,957 volumes, and rent was 52.00, while the librarian's salary was \$40 per year, as it had been since 1917.

Jim French remained a trustee from 1897 to 1917, and when he died in 1919, he left the sum of \$5000 to the town “for the purpose of erecting a library building at Moultonborough Corner.” The boarding house known as “The Homestead” on the site of the library burned February 18, 1924, and in October Martha French, widow of Jim French, sold the house across from the present Murphy's convenience store (later the home of Adele Taylor) to the Blanchards, in return

for the Homestead property at the corner of Rts. 25 and 109 North, which she then conveyed to the town, on the condition that the library building be built within seven years. Mrs. French also endowed a trust fund for books.

With interest earned on the French bequest, the sum of \$8096.58 was available. Plans were drawn by Kendall, Taylor & Co. and accepted at the town meeting of 1929, with the town adding another \$5000 to the building fund (artist's sketch of building is framed in the New Hampshire Room). Arthur L. Pollard of Bean Road was the builder. The town selectmen and tax collector also were housed in the library building, and originally there was a brick and steel vault between the NH Room and the old lobby, with a side entrance into the building on that end. The "stacks" were located in what is now the periodical room, the children's area in front of the fireplace, and the office and bathroom in the tutorial room. The library was reorganized and a card catalog system put into place at this time. The building was heated with coal. Miss Elizabeth Burbeck gave a clock and andirons which are still in use. In 1954 an artesian well was drilled, which also served the fire station, parsonage, and church, until polluted by salt from the parking lot. The old septic tank was located between the edge of the parking lot and the old handicapped ramp.

As early as 1946 the library was loaning books to the elementary school, and in 1959, Isabelle Behr, Hazel Dale and Peg Lamprey made it an official branch of the town library, continuing until 1973, (when we entered the Governor Wentworth district), with circulation equal to that of the rest of the patrons.

The selectmen and tax collector moved out in 1968, into the new town office building, where the recreation department is now located. In 1969 an addition, the room currently housing the biographies, mysteries, and large print was added at a cost of \$50,194.42, with plans drawn by Guy K.G. Wilson. Hours now were 13.5 per week, Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday, 2-4:30 and 7-8 p.m., and went up to 15 per week in 1976. Also in 1969, LP records were added to the collection for the first time.

Improvements in the 1980s included insulation blown into the attic spaces in 1982 and the walls in 1983, ceiling fans in 1983, vinyl siding in 1986, handicapped ramp and photocopier in 1987, and a fire alarm wired to the station in 1989 (previously there was a bell on the outside of the building). Shelves were built next to the fireplace to hold the first video collection in 1987, and a television and videorecorder added in 1989.

Space was again at a premium, with books in cardboard boxes atop the shelves and lined up on the large glass-topped table, and in 1991 the current stacks, media room, and two bathrooms were added, at a cost of \$150,000. The former bathroom was incorporated into the office space, and the former children's room became the office of the library director. The building committee was Dick Wakefield, Bob Wallace, and Josh Bartlett, and architects were Sheerr and McCrystal, while the builders were Pro-Con of Manchester. Since the original part of the building sat

diagonally on the corner of the two streets, it was not possible to build the addition straight back without interfering with the old Fire Station, which explains the “kink” in the floor plan at that end.

Our first computers also arrived in 1991, the gift of Harold Mohr, the Lioness Club, and Meredith Village Savings Bank. Additional technology included window air conditioning units and cable TV. The library catalog and circulation system was computerized beginning in May, 1996. The system remained in-house until it went live on the internet in 2011, so that patrons can search and reserve books remotely.

The 1991 addition housing at that time the children’s room and adult stacks, was soon outgrown, and in 2006 the size of the library was tripled by an addition of 7,000-plus square feet, costing 1.2 million dollars. Architect was Tom Samyn, building contractor was Conneston Construction, building committee chairman was George Pohle, clerk of the works, Jordan Prouty, and trustee chairman was Jeremiah Donovan. Public service hours rose from 35 to 51 per week, and a full-time children’s librarian was added, as well as two part-time staff members, for a total of five full-time and two part-time. The collection has grown to 38, 219 items as of March 1, 2013. The new addition includes a large children’s area, additional computer stations, and a public meeting room.

The longest-serving librarian to date has been Adele Taylor, 1947-1992; the longest-serving trustee, Nina Moulton, 1936-1967, followed by Clyde B. Foss, 1939-1969. In 1897 there were five trustees; the board consisted of six members until 1989, when the state required that all library boards have an odd number of members.

Many additional details are available in the history compiled by Jane Rice in 1997, available in the library’s history files.

Jane Rice

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