

HISTORY OF FREMONT PUBLIC LIBRARY AND BRANCHES

The Fremont Public Library is the main library in Fremont County. Branch libraries are to be found in Riverton, Dubois, Shoshoni, Pavillion, Jeffrey City, Ft. Washakie, and Lysite.

The County Library was built in Lander, Wyoming in 1908 and was opened to the public March 1, 1909 at its present site, 451 North 2nd. It was not far behind the State's first library built in Cheyenne in 1899.

E.A. Amoretti was known as "The father of Lander", and it was he who gave the 10 acres that the Courthouse, Library and the Methodist Church occupy. The Carnegie Foundation donated \$15,000 to erect the building. During the 1960's the land was deeded to the County by the City so that paving costs of the street would not be borne by the City.

When the Library opened 60 years ago there were only 427 books, 17 periodicals, 8 school journals, and 5 magazines. No books were circulated - visitors did all their reading at the library. 1671 visitors were recorded to have used the library that first year. An inventory of the collection was begun in 1969 and is believed to be the first major inventory attempted. Over 90,000 books are expected to be counted throughout the system.

The first board of Trustees included the Rev. John Roberts, Abraham Fosher and S. Conant Parks. The present board of trustees include five members who are Mrs. Gertrude McMillan, Mrs Barbara Gentrup, Mr. Roy Van Drew, Mrs Elizabeth Kail, and Mrs Dee Lamb.

In January, 1910, plans to lend books were made. Books were to be lent as soon as the catalogue was completed. This apparently happened in 1911 because \$20.00 was presented to Zida Harrison for her typing. The first Librarian was Allie Davis who was to receive \$25.00 per month for her services. Joe Truckey was to receive \$20.00 per month as a caretaker.

Four weeks was the limit for checking books out of the Library and fines were charged at the rate of 1 cent per day. The 1 cent fine remained until 1961 when it became 5 cents per day. Any person who violated those rules agreed to forfeit all right to use the Library.

In 1930, the Librarian, Miss Carrie Brown was authorized a salary of \$125.00 per month. This was \$25.00 per month more than was authorized in 1921.

The Lander Library contained a clubroom which was a popular basement meeting place for many organizations over the years. During the fall of 1960, the room was remodelled into the children's room.

Over the years many persons have contributed books, a painting, and money to the Library. One of these was Miss Margaret Church Gillis, a graduate of Smith College and teacher and Librarian at Ogdensburg, New York. In 1937 Miss Gillis died and left \$2,000 or \$3,000 to the Fremont Public Library. The money was used for venetian blinds, sections of shelving, a section of card catalog and oak flooring.

Riverton has the oldest branch Library in the State. About 1920, Riverton citizens established a Community Library which was under the direction of the Wind River Chapter of the Red Cross. The Library was at the Red Cross Community Center. 117 volumes had been donated to the Library. About a year later, The Fremont County Library Board was presented with a petition signed by 35 electors of School District #25. The petition prayed that the board establish a Branch Library at Riverton. The petition was accepted and the Community Library became a branch of the Fremont Public Library. 1951, the Riverton Library was in the basement of the Masonic Temple.

Mrs Belle Mote of Riverton gave her home at 301 East Adams to the Riverton Lions Club in 1959 with the understanding that the building be used to house the Riverton Branch Library. This was done and the Branch became known as Mote Memorial Library. The house is still the home of the Riverton Library. During 1963, the basement was remodelled and made into a children's room.

The Dubois Library was started in 1936 at the suggestion, and under the leadership of Mrs. Frank Mockler, who was a local rancher's wife, and it was first housed in a one-room cabin furnished by a local store. Its shelves were filled with books donated by the Upper Wind River people, and had 688 volumes when it opened. By the end of its first year the number of volumes had doubled and 213 Library cards had been issued, which was more than one card for every two people.

The growing Library demonstrated the need for new quarters. With the aid of Mrs. Mockler and a Library Board of 5 local citizens, the necessary funds for a new building were raised. The new Library opened in 1941 and everyone in the area had contributed something - either money, materials, or labor. Once established, it became part of the County Library System.

Other branch Libraries are remodelled buildings. Jeffrey City's is in an old washateria donated by Western Nuclear in 1960. During 1969, the second half of the building was remodelled for the Library to expand. This was accomplished with the cooperation of the local Lions Club. The Library at Lysite was originally the Community Hall, and with the cooperation of the local Woman's Club in 1954, a branch was opened. During 1969 the building was moved to a more convenient location on Main Street. Ft. Washakie's is an unused school building and is the newest branch having opened in 1963.

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It shares quarters with the local Head Start Class. Shoshoni and Pavillion both made room in conjunction with their City Halls. The Pavillion Library opened in 1959, and the Shoshoni Library opened in 1956. During 1968 the Shoshoni Library moved to larger and more convenient quarters.

A number of Stations had been placed around the County from time to time. North Portal, Crowheart, Hudson, Gas Hills, and Hidden Valley each had a Station that have since gone out of existence.

Through the years the Library system has sponsored Art Exhibits, Story hours, Radio programs, Lectures, Summer reading programs, Hobby shows, Library week activities and Contests, Exhibits at Fairs, and a cooperative program with schools to bring children to the Library.