

An amazing and enthralling account of how a group of young women, in the heart of the Great Depression, managed to plan, finance, and open a public library for their hometown. This book documents their struggles to improve and enlarge their original tiny library into the impressive entity it has grown into at the present time. Along the way they would age and change their club name while always maintaining allegiance to their firstborn—the Scottsboro Public Library. Their crowning achievement was creating the first public library in the state of Alabama outside a metropolitan center. Their sacrifices resulted in a magnificent gift to their hometown. This is their story.



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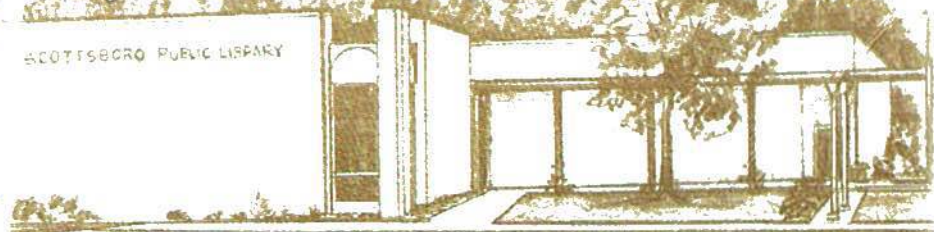
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# The **STORY** of the YOUNG WOMEN'S BOOK CLUB and the **BIRTH** of the SCOTTBORO PUBLIC LIBRARY



Marilyn K. Morris

The Story of the Young  
Women's Book Club and  
the Birth of the Scottboro  
Public Library

*Marilyn K. Morris*

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## AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

When the present chairman of the Scottsboro Public Library Board first approached me about writing a history of Scottsboro's library, we envisioned a compilation of newspaper articles documenting the growth of the library over the years. Then after several weeks of research, it became apparent that the bare facts of the library's history were only part of the story.

Thanks to the diligence of Miss Eliza Hackworth and Mrs. Sue Mae Powell, both excellent record keepers, a more complete story can finally be told. Special thanks are given to Mrs. Martha Foster, daughter of Sue Mae Powell, for sharing her mother's many scrapbooks, which contained a wealth of information on the group of young women whose dream it was to found a free public library for their town.

No history of the library can be told without also telling the story of the Young Women's Book Club. They were the catalyst in founding today's library. In Miss Sue Mae's words, the library was "their baby".

It is my wish that these humble pages will reawaken memories in our citizenry of times forgotten, of dedication to a purpose, of commitment to community, as well as a love of our fellow man.

## THE DREAMERS

On a rainy afternoon in late October 1927, a group of eight young women met in the basement of the Baptist Church with Miss Laura Haynes, county supervisor of education, as their leader. Present for this initial meeting were Misses Dorothy Gold, Eliza Hackworth, Ida Moody, Edith Money, Beatrice Jarnagin, Kate Chandler, Lucille Chandler and Stella Devers (Mrs. Hal) Word. This group organized under the name Young Women's Study Club. Officers elected were: Kate Chandler, president; Stella Word, vice-president; Ida Moody, secretary-treasurer; Laura Haynes, critic. Noticeably absent was Sue Mae Freeman. She was courting Ralph "Cricket" Powell at the time and missed the first gathering because she was on a date. She was also teased about this for years to come by other members.

The group was organized to study English literature and help new teachers meet people and become a part of the community. Their goals were to strive to improve themselves in cultural ways, as well as providing civic service. Members began their study by taking an extension course in current literature from Auburn. The object of the club was growth through study and comradeship. Within weeks a constitution and by-laws were adopted. Membership was limited to twenty, since meetings would be held in member's homes. The first social club of Scottsboro, the Twentieth Century Book Club, served as sponsor for the younger group.

The original small group was soon joined by more members. Among them were Misses Eunice Matthews, Alice Price, Margaret Stutz, and Cecil Box (who became Mrs. Cecil Word). That first year Mrs. W. H. Christian, Mrs. J. F. (Gertrude) Hodges, Mrs. Nellie Hackworth (mother of Eliza), and Mrs. Sue Mae Powell, along with Misses Mildred Hayes, Ethel McAnelly, Mary Carroll, Christine Gilbert, Mattie Lou Stockton, Elizabeth Morgan, and Dovie Bridges joined the ranks.

Near the end of the first year, the club decided to broaden its activities and affiliate with state and national clubs of this same order. At this point the name was changed to the Young Women's Book Club, receiving their charter from the Alabama State Federation of Women's Clubs and the National Federation of Women's Clubs in April 1928. They adopted as their motto "The Horizon Broadens As We Climb".

During the spring of the club's first year the idea of starting a public library was conceived. A week was designated as Library Week and the kick-off was a tea and book shower at the home of Miss Eliza Hackworth, whose mother was also a member of the Twentieth Century Book Club. The Twentieth Century members attended the tea and gave the majority of the first seventy-five books collected for the cause. By the time the library was opened, additional contributions brought the total number to ninety plus.

But books alone did not a library make. President Kate Chandler appointed a committee comprised of Gertrude Hodges, Mattie Lou Stockton and Mrs. Cecil Word to locate space to house their fledgling project. This same group also served as the first library board. Fortunately for the club, Miss Edith Money's father was Judge J. M. Money, who made available to the club a corner of the jury room in the courthouse. The club occupied the northwest corner, while sharing the southwest corner with Miss Mary Carroll of Montgomery, the county's first child welfare department head. With a small start-up collection and temporary operating space, the dream was approaching reality.

There was a great sense of pride in the membership because they had dared to dream big dreams and were making them come true. These women were frustrated that no lending library existed closer than Huntsville or Chattanooga. Too many children were growing up without the enjoyment and advantages of having many books to read. It is a salute to them that their project was solely for the benefit of

other people, not the members themselves. Such dedication set the bar higher and challenged others to give as selflessly.

Money was another hurdle, since the country's economy was in sad shape. Not to be deterred, these lovely and elegant ladies turned their hands to fund-raising.

During the earlier Library Week, Claude Bobo donated all receipts from one day's matinees and evening performances at the Bocanita Theater. Candy and sandwiches were sold by club members on the courthouse lawn. Mrs. R. L. Telford repeated an operetta for the benefit of the library. Now they were really on the way!

On February 28, 1929, the first library opened in the northwest corner of the jury room in the Jackson County Courthouse with a table-desk and a borrowed bookshelf. Punch, candy, and sandwiches were served, and membership cards were sold at \$1.00 per family per year. Members of the Young Women's Book Club served as hostesses, beaming with pride.

The library was open from 12:00 to 5:00 on Saturdays. Originally the plan was for the group to divide into pairs who would staff the library on Saturday. But too many cooks sometimes spoil the broth, and with summer coming up there was much canceling and switching of days. Finally in the fall of 1929, Miss Eliza Hackworth stepped up to the plate and announced she would take the sole responsibility for keeping it open. And so she did. For the next nine years Miss Eliza ran the library and never sent a bill to anyone. She read every book acquired, since she considered it her duty to be informed about any volume in which a patron might be interested.

Fund-raising efforts were doubled. Although they had accomplished the birth of a library, the labor pains would continue for some time! The club put on plays, including one directed by Prentiss Snodgrass, held concerts in the private homes of Mr. and Mrs. Claude Payne and Mr. and Mrs. John Benson, hosted dinners, bridge clubs and card parties, which had to be held in private homes due to an ordinance prohibiting card-playing on the courthouse square. Parker Campbell donated an issue of the *Progressive Age*, and the ladies sold the ads and reaped the profits. They sold Christmas cards and pecans and, to quote Miss Sue Mae, "everything the law would allow". Their eyes were always on the future. "Their baby" was growing and would soon need a larger crib.

In November of 1929, the club held a free banquet in the Hackworth Building and invited the businessmen of the town in order to create more interest in the project of a public library. Much support was offered from those present, but no money was accepted at that time.

At the same time construction was taking place on the southwest corner of the square for a new city hall. Members of the Young Women's Book Club were already envisioning a more permanent home for the library. Their hope was for a "modern brick home of its own with a club room and kitchen for the community's use". The unfinished upstairs of the soon to be opened city hall would fill the bill nicely.

As 1930 was ushered in their thoughts turned toward the future and the possibilities for a permanent home. One event that marred this period was the first death in the club. The circle was broken early in 1930 by the passing of beloved member, Miss Mildred Hayes, a teacher of the city school faculty. She was memorialized on Arbor Day by the planting of a tree, bearing a bronze marker, on the school campus.

Hopes were running high and somehow the members knew better times lay ahead for them and their library.

## THE MIRACLE WORKERS

With the completion of the new city hall, book club members felt they had found a place to call a permanent home. All they had to do was secure an agreement with city government for the space upstairs. To this purpose they now turned their efforts. From 1930 to early in 1932, the young women rotated in appearing before the city board, pleading their case. It certainly didn't happen overnight. And all along they continued raising money with varying fund-raising projects. It still might not have come about as soon as it did if not for Miss Sue Mae.

Sue Mae Freeman Powell was an extraordinary young woman, beautiful, accomplished, poised and persuasive. If Miss Eliza was the ramrod, then Miss Sue Mae was the straw that stirred the drink.

After many months of relentlessly pursuing the upstairs space over city hall, Miss Sue Mae met Mayor J. D. Snodgrass on the street in front of where the bakery now stands. She again renewed their request. This time, acquiescent and adamant, the mayor had an answer. He slapped her on the back and said, "Sue Mae, I like you, but I'm tired of you women coming down here and a-worrying me, so if you want that place up there, you will have to finish it".

Miss Sue Mae also gave credit to the city council for supporting the mayor. Sitting on the council at that time were W. J. Daniel, R. H. McAnelly, H. O. Bynum, H. G. Jacobs, and John B. Clopton. When Mayor Snodgrass said they would have to finish it, he was not exaggerating. There wasn't even a floor, much less ceilings or walls. It is

not clear whether the staircase was even there. But now with the mayor and council on board, the club negotiated a deal whereby they would come up with \$125.00 and the city agreed to match that amount.

Club members assisted by husbands, boyfriends, and Word Lumber Company, laid the flooring, sanded and finished it. They put in the ceiling, hung sheetrock and divided the space into one large room, with a smaller one for periodicals, a workspace and a restroom. (Note: Although written records indicate that sheetrock was hung, it most likely was beaverboard, a type of multi-layered pasteboard which was the precursor of sheetrock.)

To fill up the bare spaces, they gathered donated and cast-off furniture, which they refinished themselves when necessary. They hung framed prints and obtained a second, larger bookcase to house their growing collection, which reached almost seven hundred volumes. Other clubs and individuals provided gifts of books, cash, magazines and anything else to complete the suite of rooms. Since the library had no stipulated income, these gifts were of prime importance. In a united community the support and encouragement received from others was outstanding. The Tidence Lane Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution gave a magnificent walnut librarian's chair. The Needlecraft Club presented an oil painting. The Twentieth Century Club provided useful gifts of cash.

On Saturday, April 9, 1932, the temporary quarters in the jury room closed for a period of four weeks to accommodate the moving of the library from its first home to its first permanent home. They reopened on Saturday, May 7, 1932. Almost three weeks later, on Thursday, May 26, they held a formal opening for the public.

With the removal of the library from the courthouse into its new home, the Dewey Decimal Classification system was inaugurated, as this system was especially designed for small libraries and provides for expansion from time to time. The current library continues to use this system through the present time. At the time of the move, the circulation varied between one hundred two and one hundred ten, while the membership was sixty-three.

At this point I realized that the focus of this story has been the birth of our local library, but I would be remiss not to include other projects that the members were simultaneously supporting. The club

contributed a substantial sum toward a county circulating school library. Clothing and toys were collected and distributed through the Child Welfare Department. Layettees and garments sewn from Red Cross material were made for the Jackson County Health Department. Goods were sold made by the blind from the Talladega School for the Blind. Public art and pottery exhibits were held and the study course for 1932 was "Fine Arts". The club observed Music Week with an opera of local talent to which the public was invited. They were also instrumental in improving the public restrooms in the courthouse. With the aid of the ERA they helped get a janitress for the courthouse facilities that would also help keep the library clean. In short, they had their fingers in every pie in town.

With the coming of winter the club was forced to buy a circulating heater and some coal for the library.

In November of 1932 they scored a real coup in bringing noted children's author, Maud Lindsay to Scottsboro. At their invitation, Ms. Lindsay presented a program of story telling held at the city school auditorium on November 12, 1932, which was attended by a large and appreciative audience.

Perhaps inspired by the response to Ms. Lindsay's performance, the club members and librarian sponsored a story hour in the basement of the Baptist church. Miss Ida Moody chaired this program, with club members meeting the groups each time, and telling stories plus providing refreshments. Their involvement with the children led to their furnishing lunches and milk to students who otherwise would have had none. They instituted a scholarship for a worthy local high school girl. They sponsored a talk on tuberculosis by a county health officer in the schools. The members offered any assistance they could provide to the health department, and made a generous contribution toward building a cottage on the grounds of the new Tuberculosis Sanitarium. Early environmentalists, they also advocated conservation and helped make it a part of the county school curriculum. Since Miss Eliza was still serving gratis, a cash gift was presented to her by the club, usually at year's end near Christmas.

As the decade of the thirties rolled on, the membership of the club fluctuated. Some married and were temporarily inactive as they settled into homes and had children. Some moved away. New members were

added. The second death occurred in late 1932 when Mary (Mrs. Waco) Thomas died. The first Mrs. Boyd Turner (Epsie Erwin) passed away in 1934, after a long illness and absence from the club. Stella Word was the next to fall in the early autumn of 1935. New members joined, including Mrs. Howard Phillips, Mrs. C. P. Nelson (wife of city school principal), Misses Joel Wimberly, Nina Mary Butler, Virginia Bishop, Dorothy Durham and Mary Virginia Payne. Others married and changed their names, such as Christine Gilbert who became Mrs. Rudolph Jones and Elizabeth Morgan whose new name was Mrs. Harold Weeks. Later the roster also listed Mrs. Mary Lee Hall (wife of Jewell and daughter of library benefactor John Benson), Mrs. John Will (Maurine) Gay and the second Mrs. Boyd Turner, our own beloved "Miss Sarah Betty". Miss Beryl Stockton joined her sister Mattie Lou in the club, along with fellow schoolteacher Bernice Wallace. The decade ended on a sad note with the death of Mrs. Frank (Gertrude) Hodges on December 11, 1939. (Note: Miss Gertrude's daughter, Jane Ellis Hodges, was a long time board member and board chairman at the time of her death in 2002. An endowment was established in her name in 2003.)

In 1934 the library began opening two afternoons a week, Wednesday and Saturday, with help from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. More and more the members were realizing their dream.

Additionally, in 1934, the ladies were able to have a children's corner established. The area included tiny bookshelves, window seats, and Lilliputian tables and chairs. This was presented for public viewing at an open house held on a Saturday in May. Refreshments were served from one to four.

After the conclusion of the event, members retired to conduct their private fifth anniversary party in the library. A memorial service was held for the three deceased members (Thomas, Turner, and Hayes). At that time the club gave the picture Raphael's *Madonna della Seggiola (Sedia)* or *Madonna of the Chair*. The names of the fallen club members were engraved on a plaque beneath the painting. (Note: In 1940 the names of Stella Word and Gertrude Hodges were also added to the plaque.) Other gifts included the new standard encyclopedia by Gertrude Hodges, a globe map of the world by Miss Lelah Erwin,

a year's subscription to *Child's Life* from Misses Fannie Patrick and Bernice Wallace, and the complete works of Shakespeare from Miss Sue Park of Chattanooga. Miss Sue Mae was recognized as the most productive member during the last club year. The only other guests were families of the deceased and the city school faculty.

During the memorial service, poems and quotations in memory of the deceased were read. Some were old standards, such as Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar", which Marie Phillips recited to open the ceremony. Others were original compositions such as this treasure by Mrs. Cecil Word that I think deserves to be included in this work:

*This club of ours is a pretty big thing,  
In many ways its praises the people do sing.  
When our old town made its name  
As the "Scottsboro Case" in the halls of fame,  
The club did not just hang its head,  
And drift the way most folks were led.  
We went to work and soon did find  
That important people were so kind  
As to give us a word of hope and cheer,  
Some even said, "It's good to be here",  
With our library and project of helping along  
The ones who for little more than a song  
Try to lift the plane of both mind and soul  
Of the children of our county and give them a goal.  
I do not think our members are confined  
To the group that meets from time to time.  
We have old members in many states  
From coast to coast and near the Great Lakes.  
Also there are three whose names are on stone.  
And though they are not here, we know they have gone  
To regions above and there they still sing  
"This club of ours is a pretty big thing."*

- Mrs. Cecil Word, May 1934

These dedicated and progressive ladies were living out the old adage, "Work is love made visible". They represented the best of



what made our town what it was and is today --- someplace special to live. The threads they became will always feature prominently in the tapestry that is Scottsboro.

If they needed more validation than the collective gratitude of their community, consider this. Through their membership in the Alabama Federated Women's Clubs they earned tangible recognition for their efforts. They were awarded the prestigious Marie Bankhead Owens trophy for work in library extension. Mrs. Owens was head of the Archives and History Department in Montgomery and established it in memory of her husband, Thomas, who headed the department until his death. During the thirties the club won the trophy four more times until finally after fifteen years the award was retired to Scottsboro.

In 1937 the TVA program was launched in Madison, Marshall, and Jackson counties. The Authority wanted a big library and not one that would charge membership fees. The ladies, always knowing that the way to the heart was often through the stomach, entertained the city board and the TVA Library Director with a chicken dinner served in the library. A plan was developed whereby the library would become free to all city and county residents and be known as part of the regional program for the tri-county area. Those instrumental in accomplishing this among the city fathers were TVA's John Bamberg, Mayor J. W. Woodall, and the board, J. W. Gay, John Benson, Dayton Benham, and Ben Hunt.

On June 1, 1937, the library changed from a subscription to a free public library. Now it would also be open three afternoons a week, rather than two. With the cooperation of both TVA and the city of Scottsboro, Miss Eliza was now paid a salary of \$20.00. Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays she could be found from 1:30 until 4:30 on duty at the desk.

Regional Headquarters gave the Scottsboro Library a deposit of four hundred eighteen books, bringing the total to over thirteen hundred volumes. The book deposit was changed and increased often. The books were delivered in the bookmobile that caused quite a stampede on the days it arrived.

There was a need for new books to come in steadily. So by special concession (since it was against TVA policy), a rental shelf was set up where the best sellers were kept and a fee of ten cents for five days was

charged. The books were not renewable and overdues were two cents a day. The book club voted at this point to make a monthly gift of five dollars for new books.

The children who lived out of town and rode buses as well as the city children were interested in getting magazines for use in their schoolwork. With the club's help, magazines were collected from all over town and circulated through the library so that all the children who needed them might have them as their own, not having to return them.

In 1940 a major change occurred, with the library opening daily. Judge J. M. Money helped arrange for a WPA helper to be given to the library. Wilson Shepherd checked out books and performed other chores as assigned from 12:30 to 5:00 each afternoon. After the WPA help was removed the city did not extend the librarian's time, so the hours had to be cut back to 1:30 to 4:30. At this time the city began a regular stipend of ten dollars a month for new books.

Following the war years, the library board, made up of Miss Sarah Betty, Misses Mattie Lou Stockton and Ida Moody, Mrs. Rayford Hodges and Mr. J. W. Woodall located a big fan for the library in 1946, making it more comfortable for summer readers. This is the first record of anyone except for Young Women's Book Club members having anything to do with the library board.

That same year the library board, backed by the book club, set a goal of one thousand dollars for new books to be bought for the library. Mayor H. G. Jacobs started the list and the amount reached was one thousand five dollars. With this money, new bookcases were built and new books bought. A plan for the rearranging of the children's and adult's books under the able direction of the new TVA Regional Director, Mrs. Elizabeth Parks Beamguard. The new books included a 1947 edition of the *Americana*, *Author Biographies*, *World Almanacs*, *Yearbooks* and *Who's Who*, in addition to outstanding current and classic fiction.

Then the idea was conceived that these new books would be dedicated to a soldier of Jackson County who died serving his country. The librarian got this list and put a plaque in each of the books dedicating each one to a soldier. With the completion of this project an invitation was sent each mother or next of kin to attend the Open

House held November 17, 1946 in the library. Representatives came from all parts of the county and were introduced to the other guests. Punch and cookies were served by the high school home economics department under Miss Sarah Betty's direction.

Although recognition had never been a primary club goal, they nevertheless received their share and more. In 1936 the club gave a silver loving pitcher in honor of Mrs. Stella Word, first club president to represent the Young Women's Book Club at the Alabama Federated Women's Club and receive the first of several Marie Bankhead Owens trophies. The award honoring Mrs. Word was to be given each year to the club in the First District Federated Clubs who did the most for their library each year. Several times the club won both the Word and the Owens awards in the same year.

At the annual birthday party in 1935, the club was celebrating their first of several of the Owens awards. Miss Ida Moody offered the following toast. It, as well as other club compositions, is offered from the original handwritten form in which they were found with no alterations.

*Forgive me if I seem to boast,  
When offering this birthday toast  
To our library here.  
For months and years for it we've planned  
And earned the right to think it's grand  
And celebrate each year.  
At first our hopes for it seemed rash  
Because we had no ready cash  
But our club's not one to shirk  
Just look about you now and see  
What the reward of hope may be ---  
Hope coupled with hard work.  
We have rooms and tables, chairs, and books  
Curtains, vases and pictures of whose looks  
We all are justly proud.  
Besides we won the loving cup  
And that made us all feel so set up  
We want to cheer right out loud!*

- Miss Ida Moody, 1935

Perhaps the highest accolade was from the State Library Association that reported that "The first public library outside a metropolitan center in Alabama was established at Scottsboro by the Young Women's Book Club".

As the decade of the 1940s wound down, the membership saw many changes once again. In the years before his election to Congress, Bob Jones' wife, the former Christine Francis, was an active club member. (She was also the first organist at the First Methodist Church.) This could have caused confusion for the club, having two Christine Jones among the membership. But they deftly solved the problem by referring to them as Christine Bob and Christine Rudolph. Congressman Bob and Rudolph (Skinny) Jones were brothers, both married to lovely ladies named Christine. By 1950 new members added were Mrs. John Clinton (Edna Earl) Harris, Mrs. Bob (Jean Bradford) Howland, Mrs. Roy Ambrester, Mrs. H. P. (Idita) Blanks, Mrs. O. B. Sandsbury (wife of beloved First Methodist pastor, Dr. O. B. Sandsbury), Mrs. Charles (Winifred) Heath (librarian at the high school), and Mrs. Iris McGriff O'Brien, wife of famed Coach Mickey O'Brien. Nina Mary Butler returned as Mrs. Wayne Hall, as did fellow teacher Mrs. G. T. (Madge) Walker. The two Dawson wives, Mary (wife of lawyer Joe) and Lallie (wife of dentist Dr. Paul) came on board, along with their Old Larkinsville Road neighbor, Mrs. Julius (Elizabeth) Beard.

The post-war economy was improving and more and more help was available for community projects. The Young Women's Book Club would feature prominently in many of these. The club was over twenty years old now, but they felt they were just hitting their stride.

## THE HORIZON BROADENS

During the 1950-51 club year a most important change took place for the group. An article in the Chattanooga paper lists the change as occurring in 1952, but club yearbook dates confirm that the name change occurred during the years previously cited.

Members, in solemn assembly, decided that, "aging conditions imposed on a number of the club members by the passing years made the original name unsuitable". With no dissenting votes, they changed the name to the Fortnightly Book Club. While the name had changed, the purpose had never wavered. Still committed to making their town a better place, the club had survived deaths and the Depression, hard work and unending sales projects. When they walked the streets or around the courthouse square, most people would not have recognized them as genuine American heroines, who had undertaken the mental and spiritual care and feeding of a small town multitude. But that is what they were, the embodiment of the Christian principle of truly loving their neighbors better than themselves. They gave without limits, without prejudice, and with no expectation of receiving anything in return.

Edna Earl Harris was president during the 1950-51 year when the club decided that the project with the greatest potential for a real future began in the fall of 1951 with the decision of club members to enter the "Build Freedom with Youth" contest. When they won third place in the state competition it gave them a more realistic picture of

the program's value. The local reward to Scottsboro youth was the idea of Teen House (the forerunner of the first Recreation Hall on Parks Avenue). The Scottsboro chapter of Business and Professional Women was a willing partner in this venture, which would snowball into more community support.

The other club objective for that first year as the Fortnightly Book Club, was, of course, the library. Since the Jackson County Board of Education and the Jackson County Board of Revenue withdrew from the Regional Library Service in 1951, support now came from the city, the county board of revenue, private donations and the Fortnightly Book Club. That club year \$500.00 was raised for the library, which was matched by the county board of education, making possible the purchase of \$1,000.00 worth of books.

The two project committees were chaired by Elizabeth Beard and Mattie Lou Stockton, respectively, whose devotion to these projects ensured their success.

In 1952 the club prepared to celebrate their twenty-fifth anniversary. Just as they celebrated anniversaries and the club's birthday, they felt this to be a milestone event marking one of the most special occasions to date. So an event was planned, suitable to the important quarter century mark.

The twenty-four active members gathered on Saturday, October 25, 1952, from 2:00 until 4:00 p.m. at the home of Mrs. Paul Dawson for a silver tea. The public was cordially invited. Members were decked out in their finery, all wearing corsages for the occasion, and they had an enthusiastic response to their invitation. Photographs were taken for the club scrapbook as well as others sent to area newspapers for publication. Five of the original charter members were present: Miss Eliza Hackworth, Mrs. Julian Butler, Miss Ida Moody, Miss Kate Chandler and Miss Edith Money.

After the pause for celebration the troops once again began active duty. After the withdrawal of the library from the TVA Regional Library Service, the Fortnightly Book Club redoubled their works to improve and increase the collection and services.

The first changing of the guard took place in 1954 when Miss Eliza was forced to retire to care for her ailing mother. Substitute Idita Blanks was tapped to be head librarian, with Miss Eliza filling in when

possible as substitute. 1954 also marked the first morning opening, with the library services now available three mornings in addition to every afternoon each week.

A library progress chart shows that between the years 1956 and 1958, the number of volumes increased almost twenty-six percent, from 3,538 to 4,450, while the patron load increased thirty per cent, from 1948 to 2537. Cooperating support groups rose from two to six and gifts more than doubled.

I first climbed the long flight of stairs in 1957 at the age of four. I remember the length as well as the dustiness of the steps, but at the top I was greeted by a book lover's oasis. I remember the shining floors and the warm welcoming smiles of the ladies presiding over this paradise containing more books than I had ever seen. I still remember the first book I checked out. It was called *Wellington and the Witch*. A few years ago I found this book on the Internet and ordered it as a keepsake from my first library visit.

The Depression babies, the war babies and the baby boomers were the first recipients of this wonderful gift of a library. Who among us does not remember standing at the tall windows and looking down at the square below us, where all business was conducted in that era? The square *was* the center of all business, commercial and governmental. Even the doctors and dentists were located there or within a block or two of it. When you went to town, especially on Friday or Saturday, you saw everyone you knew, and in that time you knew everyone. In fact, you were probably related as kin, friend or in-law to almost everybody.

When you descended the stairs, you might stop to talk with Fire Chief E. V. (Shorty) Bishop or Porter Dawson, or in later years Milburn (Nip) or Floyd (Shank) Dawson. Our first fire department consisted of the chief and other paid personnel were added as funding became available. The rest of the department was made up of volunteers. The fire truck would circle the square to pick up the volunteer members when a call came in. The volunteers would leave their regular jobs and run out into the street, jumping on the back of the fire truck. But between calls they would generally be sitting on the sidewalk outside the fire department which was located then behind city hall facing Broad Street. They always sat tilted back against the building wall in

ladder-back chairs, usually accompanied by a Dalmatian. They could always spare a moment for a friendly chat with the youngest library patrons, or at least an affable greeting while you visited the fire dog.

The growth was contagious. As the book club had grown, so had their library, along with their town. With the coming of Burlington Mills came the first influx of population increase related to the labor force. Until that point locally owned textile mills represented the bulk of employment for the city and outlying areas. More industry and people translated into more demand for services while helping stimulate the economy.

The number of civic organizations also blossomed. In 1952 the Fortnightly Book Club sponsored the organization of the Three Arts Club, which in turn gave rise to the Scottsboro Woman's League.

Partnering among various groups produced a citywide cooperation that was instrumental in the advent of the recreation program. In reaching one of their goals set earlier in the decade, the Fortnightly Book Club was now joined in the cause of providing directed, supervised recreation by several other groups. The Business and Professional Women's Club, which had been on board since the idea's inception, was supplemented by local churches, the PTA, the county park board, the city board of education, the Girl Scouts, the Boy Scouts, the Civitans, the Lions, the Jaycees, the Quarterback Club, the Three Arts Club and the city council. The groups gathered to hear the former director of recreation for the state of Alabama outline the details of organizing a citywide program. At the meeting's close, Mayor John T. Reid appointed a central planning committee made up of representatives from the various groups, to be chaired by physical education teacher Virginia Sloan of the city high school faculty.

During the fall of 1956, much activity was seen around the recreation building on Parks Avenue, across from where Big C stands today. Twenty-five boys and girls painted the exterior, cleaned the windows, repaired doors, removed temporary partitions, and spruced up the grounds under the helpful guidance of members of the cooperating clubs.

The Fortnightly Book Club provided a piano, a record player, records, card tables and cleaning supplies; the Jaycees provided ping-pong tables; the Business and Professional Women's Club furnished

a window fan; the Coca Cola Company contributed profits from their vending machine; individuals of the community gave benches as well as cash donations. Mrs. Rose Kirby, owner of WROS (or Rose's station, as many called it), gave free advertising to secure paint for the building. By the spring of 1957 a growing program of recreation was well underway with the Fortnightly Book Club, the Three Arts Club and the Business and Professional Women's Club alternately furnishing leaders and chaperones. The new facility was referred to as the Recreation Hall.

In 1965 I attended my first boy-girl party at the Rec Hall, and, much the same as in the late fifties, the girls sat on one side of the room while the boys sat opposite against the far wall. It was a long walk across the wide dance floor to risk asking for a dance and possibly being rejected. Usually the chaperones wound up taking matters in hand in getting everyone up to dance. By the night's end the spacious floor was crowded even if the start-up was slow.

While the city recreation program was flourishing, the club ladies were also busy with their first "baby", the public library. Fines from overdue books were now increasing, along with the circulation, enough to become a dependable income source. Pecans and Christmas cards were still staples among fund-raising, but private donations were on the rise. It is interesting to note (according to Miss Eliza's records) that, rather oddly, "donations from middle class interested patrons who probably made sacrifices instead of from the so-called wealthy citizens" made up the bulk of these. Financial support was also provided from the Tidence Lane Chapter of the DAR, in addition to the Three Arts Club.

Circulation among shut-ins was yet another commendable activity developed in the late fifties. The librarian delivered and picked up these books regularly. The Hospital Auxiliary helped by distributing books among the hospital patients. The club also encouraged the giving of books in memory of a loved one.

Membership remained stable at twenty-four with only a few changes. Mrs. W. C. (Vivian) Edge, who was Dr. Bankston's nurse, became a new member, along with Mrs. W. R. Blount, wife of the new Methodist pastor, and Mrs. Mary Ambrester. With the by-laws limiting membership to twenty-four, there was a waiting list to join the club. It is interesting to note an amendment to the by-laws, made

in the 1956-57 club year, that "wives of resident ministers may become club members even though no vacancy occurs".

Some time after observing the thirtieth birthday of the library, the members noted that the long flight of stairs made it inaccessible to many patrons. Not to be deterred, they again looked to the future for a more accommodating and user-friendly location. With plans in the works in the early sixties for a new city hall to be built on South Broad Street, the ladies once again envisioned more modern and improved facilities. The fates would combine to grant their wish even sooner than they hoped.

## THE FINAL MOVE

In the early sixties the library board, chaired by Miss Sarah Betty, was searching for a suitable and accessible location for a new building. The new city hall was going in on South Broad Street, and a new library would be right at home near the center of local government. Still it might not have happened without the generosity of King Caldwell.

Children of my generation attended Caldwell Elementary School, our first modern elementary school constructed on land donated by the Caldwell family. Each year I attended, Mr. Caldwell paid a personal visit. The highlight was the distribution of newly minted money to every child in school. It began with two nickels, but by the time I finished sixth grade it was up to two quarters. In addition, a well-equipped playground in a fenced area above the school was also a family gift. Grades one through five alternated use of this area, with the sixth grade having to settle for the regular playground for softball and jump rope.

Now in 1963 the King Caldwell Foundation offered a plat of land to the city for the purpose of erecting a modern library. Two of the Caldwell sisters, Miss Daisy and Dorothy Caldwell Huffman were involved with the book club and the library.

Mayor John T. Reid immediately sought help from Jackson County's man in Washington, Congressman Bob Jones. He helped the city obtain grants, and with the help of the Fortnightly Book Club and

other cooperating clubs and agencies, as well as a pledge of support from the city, work began on the library in 1963.

If you were here in the sixties you know that Mayor John T. and Congressman Jones were unbeatable working in tandem. Two civic-minded hometown boys, together they were the architects of the Scottsboro we have today. They brought industries and jobs and masterminded the prosperity that followed. They were truly two irreplaceable and unforgettable men.

Staunchly supporting Mayor Reid were the Scottsboro city councilmen. At the time of the new library construction those serving were: Paul Conley, Harold Pierce, Autry Gardner, Paul Campbell, and Bradford Shelton. Also committed to the cause were the members of the Jackson County Board of Revenue: Hugh Stewart, Tate Pace, Jack Caperton, Kenneth Hodges, and Bill Woodall.

The library board at this time was Miss Sarah Betty (chairman), Miss Mattie Lou Stockton, Miss Ida Moody, Mr. Walter Hammer, Mr. Leroy Gist and Dr. Ingram Bankston. Miss Mattie Lou had been made an honorary board member for life for serving as the first board chairman and many terms after. After gathering enough funds for construction, club and board members selected a plan they could afford and met with contractors. Also involved in the planning and décor was Mrs. Winifred Heath.

Mrs. Heath was an accomplished artist. Her painting of Miss Will Maples' Girl Scout cabin hangs in the reading room today. In addition to being the librarian at the high school, she also sponsored the Library Club. Her artistry was so evident in the design of the club's homecoming float each year that the Library Club won first prize more times than the class floats did.

The most notable fund-raiser was held November 14, 1963 at Katie's newly opened Liberty Restaurant. Tickets were \$10.00 a plate and there was standing room only. This was an enormous amount and newspaper pictures show rows of tables with people packed in like sardines. An original program from the benefit showed that the event opened with organ selections by Grady Bennett. (Note: For the first few years after the Liberty opened, Grady played his own organ, brought from his home, in the back room during dining hours. An accomplished and extremely talented performer, for almost thirty years

he has served First Methodist with his splendid gift.) Introductions were made by Walter Hammer, library history was related by Miss Sarah Betty, and Mrs. Winifred Heath made presentations from the Friends of the Library. Dr. Bankston spoke on board policy of gifts and the guest speaker was Dr. Leroy Martin, president of the University of Chattanooga. Also on hand was an old friend, Mrs. Elizabeth Beamguard, formerly of the TVA Regional Library Service, who had helped with the arrangement of the collection in the old library. After a stint at Huntsville Public Library as head librarian, she returned to Scottsboro on this occasion as Alabama Director of Public Library Services to speak on the Alabama Library System. The benefit was a huge success and the enthusiastic response encouraged the ladies more.

The Friends were organized by young women whose purpose was to create an awareness of the many library services and raise funds to supplement the various library projects. Although predominantly female, many men such as Walter Hammer and Carlus Page (local genealogist) were also avid library fans.

During the year of construction, the Fortnightly Book Club was led by Miss Edith Money as president. Although they still sold pecans and items made by the blind, the passing years had slowed neither their momentum nor their resolve. In the late winter and spring of 1964, the Fortnightly Book Club prepared for the relocation of their baby to a home all its own. As usual they had funds reserved in preparation for this occasion.

New furniture was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Word in memory of their son, Harry. Not only tables and chairs, but also leather furniture for the reading room, and a variety of cabinets, stools and decorative lounge furniture were purchased with the Word's generous gift. Mrs. Heath and Miss Sarah Betty worked out the color scheme and layout with librarian Idita Blanks. The project was about to reach fruition.

In April of 1964 Mayor John T. Reid issued a proclamation setting aside the week of April 12-18 as National Library Week in Scottsboro, and urged "all citizens to reaffirm their interest in reading to help strengthen and preserve this training ground of democracy". The theme of the week was "Reading is the Key". Present for the ceremony

were Mrs. Charles Heath, high school librarian, Mrs. Morris Pepper, librarian at Central Junior High School, and Mrs. Idita Blanks.

As they planned for this last move, more was being added than just new furniture. Many, many new books lined the shelves in the new facility. The colors were attractive and the new surroundings were appealing to the eye. As they did when celebrating the city hall library, the formal opening would not be held for some time after the initial opening. They opened as soon as the furniture was delivered and installed.

On May 26, 1964, the new cream brick building opened its doors for the first time. I should know. I was standing and waiting with a throng of other children and adults outside, the late May sun already unseasonably warm on our faces. When the doors finally opened Mel Tate and I were the first two people across the threshold. (Note: Mel was the son of Becky and Mel Tate, Sr. who were here in the sixties with the J. P. Stevens Co.)

It was impressive to a ten year old. Instead of the librarian's desk, a new counter stretched completely across the front of the office area. Everything looked and smelled new and the children were as excited as they could be. In addition there were clearly two separate sides to this library; the children's section occupied the south half and the adult side was on the north. The two front rooms and the two rear additions on the south and north sides, respectively, were not built until later. Today's young people might not stand in line for a library opening, but it was big news in 1964, even usurping the opening of the city pool on South Houston Street.

Records show that the Summer Reading Program first took place in the summer of 1964 in the new library. It has been an annual event ever since.

During the time between the May 1964, opening and the official open house that took place on May 2, 1965, library business was being conducted as usual, while the finishing touches were taking place on the building and the grounds. King Caldwell contributed \$1,000.00 toward landscaping, which was supplemented by Alvin Butler (owner of Butler's Garden Center), who also performed the labor involved.

The May 2 formalities were planned to coincide with the city's second celebration of National Library Week, which was from April 25

through May 2 in 1965. The Scottsboro Library Board aided by the American Association of University Women and librarians representing Scottsboro and Jackson County schools all participated in preparation for the opening, with constant support from the Fortnightly Book Club.

The American Association of University Women arranged for an art show of approximately thirty paintings on loan from the Circuit Rider Exhibit of the Birmingham Museum of Art. Paintings of several types, all works of Alabama artists, were on display.

Also on exhibit were new books that the public could buy for their own libraries or as a gift to the public library.

School librarians and student assistants from city and county schools were there to assist on this most important day.

According to Mrs. Blanks, the library membership had increased by six hundred and one since the move eleven months previously. The membership stood at 4,580, the circulation was in excess of 36,000 and the number of volumes was almost 15,000 at the time of the open house. For several years Mrs. Autry Gardner also helped man the front desk. Later on Mrs. R.L. (Zelma) Hodges took her place, and retired at the same time as Idita Blanks. Miss Eliza returned part-time after a ten-year absence.

The club ladies still sold their pecans and made regular donations, but with this newest prize they could finally rest a little on their laurels. (Note: Miss Mattie Lou, however, continued to sell Christmas cards on her own, long after the club abandoned the sale, earning \$200.00 for the library in the 1972 club year alone.)

On their fortieth anniversary they were comfortably ensconced in the beautiful new library, as always ready to celebrate each milestone, when Miss Sue Mae read the following original poem. It tells their story remarkably well, and any work about the library would be incomplete without its inclusion.

*Our Horizons Broaden As We Climb*

*In retrospect I see most clearly,  
And these remember most dearly;  
Tired muscles, sweat, and tears,*

*As a part of the cost we knew those years.  
Hours of planning, hope and trust,  
Shared and savored by each of us.  
Children were parked, husbands appeased,  
As we opened cans of English peas.  
Made cakes, pies, salads, and rolls,  
Lots of hot foods usually served cold.  
Mayor and councilmen often cajoled,  
Business advertisers had to be sold.  
Floors to be sanded, paint on the chairs,  
Always the job to be done upstairs.  
O happy thought! We were young then,  
It didn't hurt backs and knees to bend.  
'Twas hard work, but lots of fun  
To keep going when once begun.  
Madison Avenue never taught us how  
But we sold everything the law would allow.  
In declining years it's been rather hard,  
So we limit our sales to nuts and cards.  
Forty years --- can you realize  
What a chunk out of our lives?  
One dream achieved --- another begins,  
Wouldn't you think, we're Library Friends.*

- Sue Mae Powell, 1969

I can't say it any better than that.



## THE TORCH PASSES

Their baby, like a young bird, had sprouted wings and could fly on its own now. Support for the library came from ever increasing sources. The book club ladies continued their meetings and always had a \$500.00 or \$1,000.00 donation for their pet project, but they had scaled their mountain and found their reward at the top.

The first growth in the new home occurred in 1970, again by the Caldwell family, in particular, Miss Daisy Caldwell. Her gift "in appreciation of books and reading in the life of the community" translated into two rooms added to the front of the current library. The first room originally housed the periodicals and the genealogy section and was known as the Alabama Room, while the second was used as a staff workroom and a place where the library board could also meet. Gifts from Miss Daisy's sister, Dorothy Caldwell Huffman also helped furnish the Alabama Room and the audio-visual room.

The book club members assisted the library in a used book sale held in the new rooms at the library. They were encouraged and aided by all of the Friends of the Library here and over the county. The Stevenson Club and many others gave or bought books generously. The books were duplicates of the library's stock. Many members of the Fortnightly Book Club as well as the Friends gave books from their own collections for the sale.

In May 1971, Miss Sarah Betty was able to obtain a government grant for \$5,000.00 to be used to furnish the two newest rooms in

the library. She was assisted by Mrs. Blanks and Miss Mattie Lou in selecting, ordering and arranging the new furniture.

In August of that same year, the Friends gave an appreciation tea in the library, assisted by the Fortnightly Book Club, honoring local authors. Babs (Hodges) Deal and her husband, Borden Deal, along with W. L. "Bill" Heath and Walter Hammer were present. Jerry Gist, author of *The Story of Scottsboro*, was unable to attend. The authors sold and autographed copies of their books and discussed plans for future publications.

Miss Eliza covered the event for the *Daily Sentinel*, as she had since returning to the library in 1964. Her weekly book reviews led eventually to more lengthy portraits of ordinary and noteworthy citizens whom she admired. She had quite a flair for writing. Several years after her column began, the *Jackson County Advertiser* picked up her weekly offering as well. In addition she assigned herself the task of keeping the display cases at each end of the circulation desk full of interesting and provocative exhibits.

Club members assisted the librarian in developing a story hour held each Saturday under the direction of Linda Richardson (Bonner) as Story Princess. Puppet shows by Brad Hall provided more entertainment for the youngest patrons, as well as games and stunts to give the hour extra flavor. Gina Sheppard replaced Linda when she graduated and left for college.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Blanks was promoting an aid to the blind and physically handicapped with "The Talking Books", a forerunner of today's books on cassettes and compact discs. This first effort came through a federal program. The library was also compiling a collection of large print books.

The Fortnightly Book Club ladies consistently found ways to benefit their prize project. Miss Edith Money gave a beautiful embroidered banquet-length tablecloth. It was decided that the best way to realize a sure profit would be to sell chances on it. Mrs. Alice Courtney opened her home to the Friends annual Holiday Pilgrimage. The other members still sold pecans, and of course, Miss Mattie Lou had her Christmas cards. The membership saw few changes in the sixties and seventies. Mrs. Claude Whitehead replaced Mrs. W. R. Blount when the Methodist church changed pastors in the early sixties.

Two other members who joined the ranks during that decade were Jane (Mrs. Paul) Conley and Virginia (Mrs. C. A.) Lindenmeyer. In 1973 they again received the District 1 award for outstanding library service, as well as the award for largest sale of blind-made goods (from the Talladega School for the Blind).

In the summer of 1974 an exciting new service became part of the library's program. Jackson County would soon have a bookmobile to serve those county patrons who were unable to make regular visits to the library. The Alabama Public Library Service appropriated as a line item \$160,000 from the general fund. This was supplemented by \$200,000 from revenue sharing that Gov. George Wallace allocated to counties for library development. Jackson County's share was almost \$4,100, and would be applied toward the purchase of a vehicle that could be converted into a serviceable bookmobile. One of its drivers was Marie Garrett, whose service to the library was only beginning.

A *Daily Sentinel* clipping from the late seventies revealed that the bookmobile, whose schedule was published in local newspapers, visited Skyline and Princeton on Mondays, Bridgeport and Stevenson on Tuesdays, and Woodville and Paint Rock on Wednesdays. Sand Mountain communities were served on Thursdays and Fridays.

About this time the Dekalb-Jackson Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) was getting underway with Mrs. Ruby Butler as its director. The first volunteers to benefit our library were Dr. Harley and Louise Tripp, both former instructors at Northeast State. They are pictured behind the circulation desk with Mrs. Blanks as they kept the library open for the first time on Thursday evenings past 5:00 p.m. Library hours were extended until 8:00 on Thursdays from then on. Later in the eighties Mr. and Mrs. Delbert Hicks performed the same service.

In a continuing effort to serve the people of the area, the library purchased twelve art reproductions available to patrons in the area. The reproductions were handsomely and appropriately framed. Works of art could be checked out for three months at a time, and included a varied selection that numbered paintings by Andrew Wythe, Grandma Moses, Auguste Renoir and Claude Monet, among others.

In early 1977 Mrs. Idita Blanks, head librarian, and Mrs. Zelma Hodges, assistant, retired from the library. Mrs. Blanks had served for

almost twenty-three years; Mrs. Hodges had been with her the last five years. They were still joined part-time by Miss Eliza and student helpers, but the ship needed a new captain and Peggy McCutchen was tapped for the job. Her eventual assistant was Donna Denson.

The library board held a formal dinner honoring Mrs. Blanks and Mrs. Hodges at Carlile's Restaurant on February 5, 1977. Invited guests were members of the Fortnightly Book Club and the Friends of the Library. Gifts of appreciation for their dedication over the years were given both ladies.

On Sunday, October 16, 1977, the Fortnightly Book Club held an anniversary tea in honor of the club's fiftieth birthday. The half-century celebration was held, naturally, at the library, the club's home away from home. The Three Arts Club furnished all flowers and floral decorations for the event. Miss Eliza befittingly registered the guests. The Fortnightly Book Club members, including Miss Eliza, Miss Edith Money and Miss Kate Chandler, charter members, were presented with corsages. Out of town guests returning for the occasion were Mrs. Vivian Edge of Kissimmee, Fla., Mrs. Hugh (Iris O'Brien) Reed from Centre, and Mrs. C. P. Nelson and Mrs. Mary (Carroll) Shrader, both of Montgomery.

Few changes occurred in the membership during the seventies and eighties. Miss Hazel Matthews returned in 1972 after a thirty-year absence while she was in Panama, teaching school in the Canal Zone. Congressman Bob Jones left Congress after thirty-two years and the club welcomed back into full-time membership Christine Bob. Bernice Wallace's sister Nina Lee Heacock moved back to town to live with her sister and brother Bryce, and became a member as did Miss Sue Mae's sister, Blanche Turner who joined the club while her husband Col. Henry Turner served a stint on the library board. The last record of a new member occurred early in the eighties when Miss Jessie Bynum was listed on the roll.

The next important club event was the retirement of Miss Eliza. After thirty-nine years (nine unpaid) of service to the library, Miss Eliza decided it was time to call it a day. The club held a luncheon at the Holiday Inn on March 8, 1980, almost two weeks after her resignation. Many guests including Mayor Roy Owens and *Sentinel* publisher Jim Harkness helped club members stage a "Portrait of

Your Life". Not long after this Miss Eliza moved to the nursing home, selling the old Hackworth family home on Laurel Street where the First National Branch Bank stands today. She would live there until her death on January 4, 2000. No doubt, with her stalwart resolve, she intended to see in the new millennium. I say that not to be flippant, but because in spite of her ladylike demeanor and friendly, unassuming manner, she had a will of iron. Remember that she was the ramrod in the club's early years.

Fourteen months later saw the club facing another sad occasion. In early March 1981, the Fortnightly Book Club decided to honor another long time member, Miss Mattie Lou Stockton, for her dedication and years of service to the board as well as serving as first board chairman. The five hundred dollar donation to the library was a tribute to her. Sadly, before there was even time for a thank you note to be written, Miss Mattie Lou died on March 11, 1981.

Later on in 1981, Miss Sarah Betty would lay down her gavel as board chairman after forty-seven years at the helm. Time was beginning to catch up to the ladies and although they had given us anchors, they had also given us wings. The library was flying on its own now.

In 1979 for the first time, the Scottsboro Public Library received state aid. Beginning in October of that year, Scottsboro received state funds on a per capita basis. This money was used to extend basic services offered by the library. It could not take the place of local government income. Certain rules and regulations had to be met to be eligible for the funds. Local government support could not be less than the previous year and ten per cent of the local budget had to be spent for library materials. None of the state aid money could be used for operating expenses. The intent was to supplement, not replace, local funding.

The Scottsboro Public Library was chartered by the City of Scottsboro and there existed a contract with the Jackson County Commission (formerly the Jackson County Board of Revenue) to provide library services to the citizens of the county. Until 1979 the operating budget came from these two sources, with, of course, all the help the book club could muster.

Another source of government funding employed by new librarian Peggy McCutchen was the federal Library Services and Construction

Act grants. The purpose of these grants was to assist states in the development, extension, and improvement of public library services in areas in which services were inadequate, in public library construction, and in promoting interlibrary cooperation and resource sharing.

When the first building was erected in 1964, the library contained 5,551 square feet. The Daisy Caldwell addition in 1970 added another 1,525 square feet. In the early eighties a federal LSCA grant to build an eight hundred square foot room on the northwest corner was matched by the King Caldwell Foundation. The Caldwell money had been given several years previously and put in a savings account for just such an occasion. This space today is occupied by the adult non-fiction section, as well as tables and study carrels. The addition was completed in 1984 and Walt Hammer, board chairman during the construction, was honored at the open house on December 9, 1984, on his retirement from the library board after twenty years of service.

After seven years on the bookmobile, the last years as bookmobile head librarian, Marie Garrett came to work at the library. For more than twenty-five years Marie was the face who welcomed patrons at the front desk. For over a quarter century, Marie dealt with every imaginable problem with grace and good humor. Counting her years of driving the bookmobile, Marie's tenure as a paid employee set the record for longevity. For over thirty-three years she served the library every day to the best of her ability. When she retired at the end of 2007, the new granite counter was dedicated to her with a bronze plate marking her years of devotion.

Another service was added in 1984 by the Benson family. Film and television star, Lucille Benson, sister of Mary Lee Benson Hall, passed away. In remembrance, her family gave the library a video cassette recorder and a selection of videotapes which was the start of the library's film collection. Miss Benson appeared most notably in the television series *Bosom Buddies* with a young Tom Hanks in the early eighties and the movie *Silver Streak* with Richard Pryor and Gene Wilder in 1976. Copies of these are available on videocassette or digital video disc at the library.

At the end of November in 1986, the decision was made to park the bookmobile due to a cut in funding from the Jackson County Commission. Funds were not available for necessary repairs, operating

expenses and the bookmobile librarian's salary. Service to some communities had already been cut the year before, but Bridgeport, Pisgah, Flat Rock, Skyline and Princeton were still being served. Almost 1,073 county residents were registered bookmobile patrons.

In 1987, in an effort to preserve the visual heritage of Jackson County, the library began making photographic copies of old photographs and documents of historical value. The project was made possible by the purchase of a camera, special lens, copy stand and lights through the joint cooperation of the Friends of the Library and the Jackson County Historical Association, which shared the cost of the equipment. This would be an invaluable resource for amateur genealogists and family historians.

The next year, 1988, Juanita Lee, artist and retired teacher, gave a magnificent gift to the children's section in the form of a six by twelve foot acrylic painting. It featured characters from the Beatrix Potter books such as Squirrel Nutkin, Jemima Puddleduck, Benjamin Bunny and Peter Rabbit. The painting was hung on the west (back) wall of the children's area and is still the first thing noticed by the youngest patrons.

Two years later, in 1989, the library received its second LSCA grant for the purpose of library automation. This was a tremendous undertaking, since every item available for checkout had to be assigned a bar code, which was scanned into a computer, after a patron's library card number was entered or scanned. The up side of this was that books could be checked out faster and the old, cumbersome card catalog could be retired. The new card catalog had a computer as its home. In addition, the card catalog was linked to all other libraries using our new checkout system, providing access to all libraries participating in the Library Management Network (LMN). For a three-dollar fee, books can be borrowed from any library in the LMN system.

The LSCA grant provided for the purchase of a computer and additional personnel, who had to be trained, as each book had to be entered in the database linking the library to LMN. Delores Shelton was hired to help with this as a part-time employee in 1989. Mrs. Shelton and Mrs. Nancy Gregory alternated entering the books that were removed one shelf at a time by cart. By Mrs. Shelton's estimate the effort would take over six years. Luckily Sheila Loudermilk volunteered

to come in for a few hours after closing time to supplement their work. Still, it was over five years before every item was entered into the database. By this time Mrs. Shelton was a full-time employee. There were around 35,000 items at this time. However, through participation in LMN, Scottsboro patrons now had access to over 400,000 books.

In 1989 the Scottsboro Library Endowment Fund was established to assure that there would always be money available for the purchase of books.

The fund was started by attorney Stephen Kennamer in memory of his aunt, charter member Edith Money. A generous donation was soon made by Mrs. Lana Tidwell's family and the library board had a drive to add donations. The principal remains in the fund and seventy-five percent of the interest is used each year to purchase books. Several years later, Congressman Bob Jones, as well as his brother Rudolph Jones in memory of their wives, the two Christines, added endowments. Miss Pauline Matthews' estate also contributed with a donation in memory of her family: Miss Pauline and Miss Ollie Ruth Matthews, Mae Matthews Harris and Claude Matthews. The Matthews endowment specified only children's and large print books be bought out of their gift.

Another LSCA grant of \$2000, matched by \$1,500 raised by the Friends of the Library and a private donation of \$500, allowed the library to establish a compact disc/books on tape collection, as well as adding to the collection of music books.

In 1992 the Friends presented the library with a computer terminal, keypads, printer, and stand for the Public Access Catalog.

In the early nineties the Bill Gates Foundation gave six computers for public use to the library. Scott Michaels (who still takes care of our technical needs and software) offered the library a two-for-one special on additional computers, bringing a total of eight for the library. The Friends also gave a computer for the genealogy section. This past summer (2008) the library replaced the old ones with newer and smaller flat screen models, also from Gates.

The Fortnightly Book Club members congregated at the library in November of 1994 to celebrate their sixty-fifth anniversary. The nine members present were: Jane Conley, Maurine Gay, Jean Howland, Edna Earl Harris, Elizabeth Beard, Sue Mae Powell, Lallie Dawson,

Josephine May, and Sarah Betty Ingram. Memorial gifts of books were presented to Peggy McCutchen, librarian.

At this point the library staff also included Marie Garrett, Nancy Gregory (current director), and Delores Shelton as full-time employees. Two people who assisted as volunteers were Susie Schacte and Ruth Guthrie. The library had 38,000 volumes in the LMN system of over 400,000 books; 630 in the video collection; 300 books on tape; 296 compact discs; and subscriptions to periodicals and magazine that numbered 96.

With the increase in city funding and growth of the endowment fund, the collection was expanding rapidly. Soon another part-time employee would be added.

Story hour still was offered regularly although not steadily, but summer reading programs were held every year. Programs for adults consisted of authors who came to speak and cultural programs for those interested in local history and other topics of interest.

Peggy McCutchen retired after twenty-two years early in 1999. She stayed long enough to be present as the Fortnightly Book Club celebrated seventy years of the club in late January 1998. Miss Sue Mae was the only charter member left, along with five other members. It would be their last celebration.

Gloria Balentine Goss was named as her replacement, and stayed for four years before succumbing to health problems that led to her premature death.

The last and largest addition was first proposed in 2001. The need for renovation was great, but a more pressing need existed for a room large enough for meetings. Early in 2002 the city council made available to the library \$500,000 to be used for this purpose. By summer the board had met with architects and bids were taken for construction of the addition. Since the renovation included a new roof, much planning was necessary to accomplish this.

Around Thanksgiving in 2002 the process of packing up thousands of books began. It was probably the hardest task to accomplish except for the automation process. Staff and board members, plus loyal patron volunteers began storing everything except the tallest shelves (which were covered in plastic) in the trailers from semi-transfer trucks furnished by Maples Industries. A temporary library was opened

next door in the old recreation building, but only current fiction was offered for checkout, along with the seven-day books. One employee manned it at a time while everyone else was helping empty the library in preparation for the removal of the roof.

Construction began, and as so often happens, there were several delays. In addition to the new roof, carpet and tile were laid and walls were painted in new coordinating colors. New ceilings and light fixtures were included in the renovation. The large meeting room of almost 1600 feet was added, complete with a huge storage closet, on the southwest corner. In the library work area, a new break area/workroom with limited kitchen facilities was installed along with a storage closet and a cleaning closet. New heating and cooling units were also included with a mechanical closet area to house parts of the components. In all this amounted to an increase of 2320 square feet, bringing the total area of the library to almost 10,200 square feet. It was the first complete renovation since the building went up in 1964.

With the new rooms came more space for rearranging. The staff area was moved to the new break area, freeing up the southeast room for genealogy. The Alabama Room is now also referred to as the reading room. It still houses all magazines and periodicals, as well as four computers. Genealogy now boasts three microfilm readers as well as its own two computers for genealogical use only. The library board meets in the new addition.

The Scottsboro Garden Club offered to donate landscaping and upkeep, as well as planting the garden near the front entrance. Walmart also gave some of the plants and shrubs. The garden in front is centered by a beautiful wrought iron armillary given by Kerry Lovvorn and Telko Enterprises. Clay Irrigation of Guntersville donated an outdoor irrigation system.

One of the most handsome gifts was the granite checkout counter that spans around twenty-five feet. Underneath it are sculpted cherry wood panels made by Philip Hill. A matching sink/counter cabinet in the new meeting room was donated by Mr. Hill.

The copy of the *Madonna of the Chair*, long misplaced in a closet, was found during the uproar of moving in and out, and the frame was restored by Leroy Gist. It hangs in the meeting room next to a history

of the painting researched by Ann Chambless, board member at that time.

In July 2003, the unveiling of the renovated library was held. Present for the open house were former club members Miss Sarah Betty, Jane Conley, Maurine Gay and Elizabeth Beard. In one of her last official acts as library director, Mrs. Gloria Goss welcomed the guests and recognized the Fortnightly Book Club members. The library looked wonderful, dressed in its new colors with more space than ever before. After allowing time for guests to inspect the new areas and décor, everyone gathered in the meeting room for the dedication.

The spacious new meeting room held all those present as the board and staff announced to all gathered their choice of a name for the room. With a final nod to the Fortnightly Book Club, a plaque was placed on the wall of our most recent prize, revealing its title.

It is called The Book Club Room.

## THE LIBRARY TODAY

After the departure of Gloria Goss, the library board secured the services of Rene Palmer. Ms. Palmer stayed for two years before returning to her home near Birmingham.

Marie Garrett served as acting librarian for over four months. At the end of that time the board hired from within, promoting twenty-one year veteran Nancy Gregory to library director. She still serves in that capacity today. As I mentioned earlier Marie Garrett retired on December 31, 2007, but Delores Shelton is entering her twentieth year. Pat Chandler took Marie's place at the front desk. We have three part-time employees, including me. After serving three terms on the board, I became a half-time library employee. I am proud to have been on the board that renovated our library as it has always occupied a special place in my heart since my first visit in 1957.

I am particularly honored to have been asked to write the history of the library by the current board. It has been a true labor of love, and my hope is that I have done the ladies justice.

You see, I am one of the people whose life was changed by the work of those wonderful women so long ago. I loved books and I was encouraged not only by my family, but also by Mrs. Blanks, Miss Eliza and other club members too numerous to mention. I can recall going up the stairs and being welcomed by them. Often there would be a new mystery that had just come in, and one of them would call me aside and say, "We knew you loved mysteries so we put this new one under

the counter for you when you came in". It gave me a special feeling, knowing that they were waiting for my visit and saving me a certain book. That's the kind of treatment patrons could expect then. They also looked out for the children's best interest. A local attorney recalls checking out *Myra Breckinridge* at the age of twelve; Mrs. Hodges let him have it, but she also called his mother to check with her about it. Today we try to hold to those traditions of personalizing our service for regular patrons, and making occasional patrons welcome in hope that they will become "regulars".

The love of reading led me to want to write a book of my own. I was encouraged by teachers who liked my short stories; this made me want to write even more. But I also became fascinated with becoming a teacher. I give credit to Nina Mary Hall, my former Sunday school teacher, and later my Alabama history teacher. She was so good at what she did that I began thinking how wonderful it would be to do for other children what had been done for me.

So I became a teacher of English, but like many other English teachers, I was also a frustrated writer. I spent the better part of twenty-eight years with Jackson County schoolchildren. I hope I was able to instill in some of them a love of written language as others did for me so many years ago. When I thought of retirement, I dreamed of working part-time at the library after leaving the classroom. And still in the back of my mind was the idea of writing something worthwhile.

So the ladies also helped steer the course of my life. Directly and indirectly they influenced my choices. Like so many of them, I chose the classroom over more lucrative professions. Through my twelve years on the library board I felt I finally was giving something important back to my community that had given so much to me. As I wished during the difficult teaching years, I am lucky enough to spend my last working years in the library I have loved all my life. And lastly, thanks to the ladies and the library board, I have finally written a book, my tribute to the ladies who unwittingly assisted me in making the choices that guided my journey along life's path.

I realized when rereading the earlier chapters that there are some gaps that need filling. I have written most of these pages referring to many of these ladies as Miss Eliza or Miss Sue Mae. Well, there is a reason for the familiarity and I will share it with you.

First, a large number of these women were Methodists. Long before I knew them as book club members, I knew them as Bible school and Sunday school teachers. Second, an equally large number of the entire group were public school teachers. Some of them taught my parents as well as me. They have been familiar figures in my life for as long as I can remember. Some of them, such as Bernice Wallace and Nina Lee Heacock were relatives of mine. Others were family friends. In short, they were part of the village that raised me. I give much credit to them for what their gifts meant to my generation.

My mother remembers walking to work each morning with Miss Eliza, during the war years. My mother was living on Larkin Street at that time, and every morning she walked up the sidewalk on East Laurel Street, stopping at the post office to check for v-mail before proceeding on to work. Miss Eliza was waiting many mornings on her porch, and when Mother approached her home, she gathered her purse or parcels and headed down her walk to join Mother as they companionably made their morning journey to town. It occurred to me while researching this book that although the library was only open in the afternoon during these years, Miss Eliza was putting in whole days on the job. She no doubt considered this part of her responsibility. Reflecting the attitude of the club as a whole, she always gave more than was expected.

When we went to school, we were influenced by many of the ladies. Miss Bernice taught first grade, as did Jane Ellis Hodges. In second grade everyone wanted to be in Miss Ida Moody's room. Miss Pauline Matthews (whose will set up a library endowment) and Miss Beryl Stockton were third grade teachers. Miss Edith Money was one of the fourth grade teachers. In junior high, Mrs. Lallie Dawson taught us science, as did Mrs. Madge Walker. Mrs. Morris Pepper was the junior high librarian. Mrs. Nina Mary Hall taught us most of what we know of Alabama history in the ninth grade. In the high school, Miss Sarah Betty presided over the home economics department, but Christine Rudolph had retired by the time my group reached high school. Mrs. Winifred Heath was the high school librarian. Mrs. Mary Ambrester was the high school counselor.

As a typical baby boomer, I assumed that after suffrage, the women's rights movement was stagnant until the turbulent sixties. Little did I

know that eighty years ago, a group of young women who had only been eligible to vote in one election, were asserting and improving themselves as well as their community. During the worst years of the Depression they stood firm in their devotion to their cause, managing to accumulate funds at a time when funds were most scarce. As Miss Ida said they never “shirked”, and no matter how hard times were they still found a way around every obstacle. They decided their town needed a library and a library they gave them. They faced down the city fathers (as Miss Sue Mae referred to them) and refused to take no for an answer. They were feminine feminists. In their own ladylike way they were bulldozers in disguise. They didn’t burn their bras or march on Washington, but they taught this entire town a lesson about commitment and devotion to a cause greater than themselves. And they did it graciously and gracefully. Actually, the city fathers never had a chance against them! They were formidable in pursuit of their dream, and we are the lucky beneficiaries. They *were* the city mothers. We will never see their like again.

But we can honor them by treasuring their gifts, not only the library, but also the city recreation program. The next time you check out a book or swim at the RecCom, take a moment and remember the women who made it all possible.

Today the library sits as the jewel in the crown of Caldwell Park, a beautiful setting. When you come to the library, you’ll find over fifty-two thousand items available for checkout. The patron load has increased to over fifteen thousand. Nancy Gregory’s capable leadership guides our course with the knowledge and experience of her twenty-three plus years, and the library continues to grow.

The chairman of the current library board is Joyce Money Kennamer, sister of charter member, Edith Money, daughter of Judge J. M. Money who provided the first library home in his courtroom, and mother of Stephen Kennamer who established the first endowment. Library service is a tradition her family carries on today. She is assisted by Sherry Gross as vice-chairman.

On February 28, 2009, the library will be eighty years old. No doubt, there will be celebrations and events during this year to mark the eight decades of library service. Join us for these and other programs we have planned. But always remember that these last eighty years began

with eight young women who had a dream and made it come true, not for themselves, but for all of us. They did it all --- the work, the sweat, and the tears --- for other people, and then they gave it all away. May we never forget them or their sacrifices. As it turned out, Mrs. Cecil was right when she wrote, “this club of ours is a pretty big thing”.



## CLUB COLLECT FOR WOMEN

Keep us, O God, from pettiness; let us be large in thought, in word, in deed.

Let us be done with fault finding, and leave off self-seeking.

May we put away all pretense and meet each other face to face, without self-pity and without prejudice.

May we never be hasty in judgment and always generous.

Let us take time for all things; make us grow calm, serene, gentle.

Teach us to put into action our better impulses, straight-forward and unafraid.

Grant that we may realize it is the little things that create differences; that in the big things of life we are as one.

And may we strive to touch and to know the great common human heart of us all, and, O God, let us forget not to be kind.

- Mary Stewart

This was recited by all members at the beginning of each meeting.

## TEN CLUB COMMANDMENTS

1. Thou shalt not be hasty in judgment.
2. Thou shalt always be generous.
3. Remember thy club engagements.
4. Honor thy club sister.
5. Thou shalt not murder the King's English.
6. Thou shalt return thy book at each meeting.
7. Thou shalt pay thy dues promptly.
8. Thou shalt not, at the eleventh hour, begin to hunt material for thy program.
9. Thou shalt not covet thy sister's talents, but use thine own.
10. Thou shalt diligently keep these commandments so that thy club days may be lengthened and thy fame spread to the utmost part of clubdom.

A substitute you must find, if you cannot do the work assigned.

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Written records of Eliza Hackworth, Kate Chandler, Edna Earl  
Harris, and Sarah Betty Ingram.

Original compositions of Cecil Word, Ida Moody and Sue Mae  
Powell.

Scottsboro Public Library records.

Birth and death records, Cedar Hill Cemetery.

## Front Cover

Seated: Left to Right:

Christine Jones

Maurine Gay

Standing: Left to Right:

Vera Couch

Bernice Wallace

Sarah Betty Turner

Beryl Stockton

Mary Dawson

Idita Blanks

Jean Howland

Lallie Dawson

Mattie Lou Stockton

Nina Mary Hall

Marie Phillips

Madge Walker

Mary Ambrester

Edith Money

Elizabeth Beard

Eliza Hackworth

Ida Moody

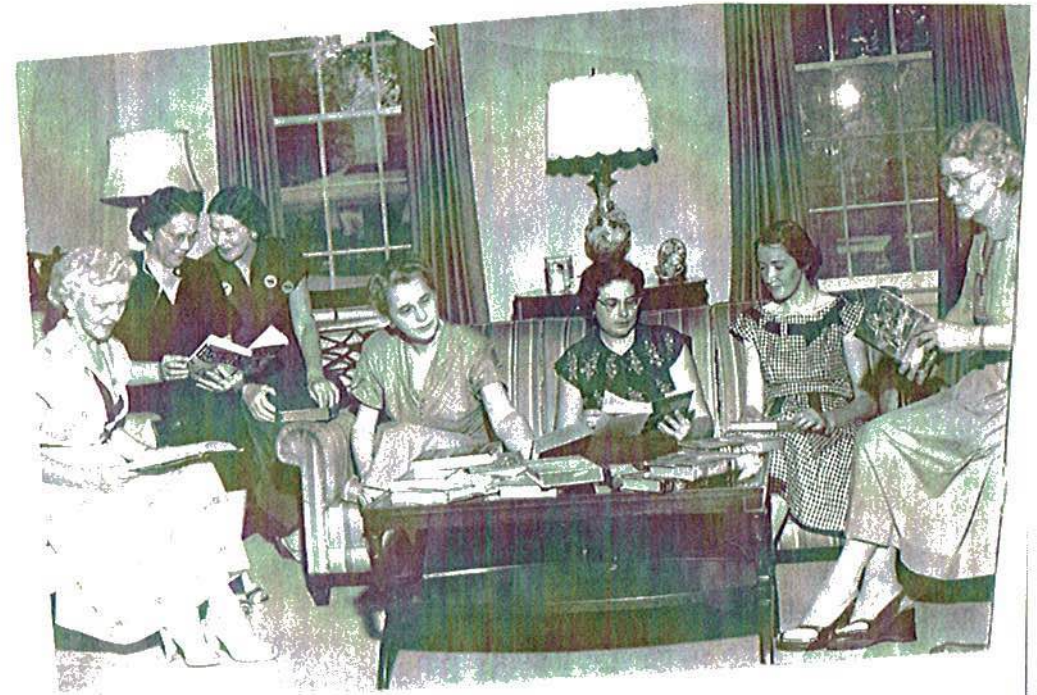
Kate Chandler

## Not Pictured

Sue Mae Powell

Cecil Word

Edna Earl Harris



## Reviewing Books

Left to Right:

Maurine Gay

Mary Dawson

Beryl Stockton

Sue Mae Powell

Lallie Dawson

Bernice Wallace

Kate Chandler



Maurine Gay  
Surviving Member



Jane Conley  
Surviving Member



Elizabeth Beard  
Surviving Member