

**A BRIEF HISTORY  
OF  
“PRIVATE” LIBRARY SERVICES  
IN  
WATERFORD TOWNSHIP  
AND  
THE ESTABLISHMENT  
OF  
PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES**

***COMPILED FROM INFORMATION ASSEMBLED BY THE WATERFORD  
TOWNSHIP LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD***

***1965***

NOTE: this history is concerned with the establishment of public library service in Waterford in the mid-1960's and includes an addendum bringing that history forward to the mid-1970's.

Rich in heritage is the Waterford Township Public Library. Young in years as a public library, it had almost reached the age of 19 years as a "private" library before public responsibility was assumed for its operation. Someday a definitive history with documentation recognizing all individuals and groups involved in the library movement should be made available to the public so that all may enjoy the inspiring details of this history. For the present, it is hoped that this synopsis covering only the highlights of this history will answer some questions and provide some background material, at the same time serving to point out the inadequacies of this history already being lost in time.

The recognition of the need for a public library, the early pursuit of establishing a public library facility and the sponsorship of the Waterford Community Library must be credited to the Waterford Village Mothers Club. Young mothers with young children were keenly aware of the need for a public library facility in the community for themselves and their children. On December 7, 1943, Mrs. O.L. Siegman, Chairman of the Library Committee of the Mothers Club, wrote to the State Library in Lansing asking what could be done to establish library facilities in Waterford Township. A meeting was arranged for January 13, 1944, with Constance Bement, State Library Consultant, for whom all interested members in the community were invited to attend and discuss "Library Facilities for our Community."

Out of this meeting grew several suggestions toward the establishment of library facilities. The first was the possibility of a small library facility to be supported out of the general fund. As a rural township Waterford could spread only what funds were allocated to them, the Mothers Club learned, and that there was little remaining in the current budget to meet pressing township expenditures. The State Library then suggested a second possibility - that of contracting for library service with the Pontiac City Library for three to five hundred dollars and at least providing some library service, but this suggestion did not materialize. It became clear that a millage vote might be necessary to establish a library and on February 9, 1945, the Mothers Club began to circulate petitions to place the request for a public library on the ballot. The request was to be for a ¼ mill tax to be voted on in the Spring Township election.

The Mothers Club found community interest high and informed the township clerk of their intent to place the library issue on the ballot. Shortly after they were advised by their legal consultant and the legal advisor to the Township Board that the library laws were not clear, but that it was legal opinion that "The Board of Education would have charge of the library... and that the petitions must be presented to the Board of Education and the balloting be at the school election in June by qualified school electors." Upon investigation, the School Board found that the Waterford Township consolidated school district over-lapped into West Bloomfield and that area was already taxed for library service: hence, the School Board asked for a decision from the Attorney General's office. No decision was forthcoming in time for the Mothers Club to place the library millage proposal on the ballot.

While the Mothers Club was pursuing the frustrating legal snarl of attempting to establish a public library, another group for dedicated civic minded women, the

Woman's Club, had in 1944 put one thousand dollars down on a building on Williams Lake Road, commonly known as the Old Horse Barn, for use as a community center. As the Mothers Club seemed to have reached an impasse in their efforts to achieve a tax supported public library; the idea of a "private library" came to the fore. Could a private library be established with the intent of continuing to work for a public library?

With this thought in mind the Mothers Club approached the Community Activities Board about establishing a community library in the Old Horse Barn, and, with no hesitation, with pride and declaration of full cooperation, a private library known as the Waterford Community Library was established in June, 1945. Community Activities, Inc., furnished rent-free space, heat and light. The main source of income for the operating budget of the Waterford Community Library was, at first, monies donated by the Mothers Club. Throughout the existence of the Community Library there were many individuals and organizations that contributed money toward the support of the library; however, as the steadfast financial support of the Mothers Club began to waver, sporadic contributions could not be counted on to supply a working budget. In June 1947, Mrs. Arthur J. Holstein formed the Waterford Book Review Club. Open to the public, this group met to discuss current and classical literature. With each of the monthly reviews a "silver" tea was held and all monies were donated to the Waterford Community Library. This group, then, gradually replaced the Mothers Club in financially supporting the Waterford Community Library.

A modest beginning was made in establishing the Community Library with a donation of 13 books and a loan collection of 200 books from the State Library. The Mothers Club had style shows, teas, bridge parties, luncheons, etc., to raise monies for their many school projects; at the same time donating money for library purchases, begging books, and giving books from personal collections. Many of the Mothers Club members also staffed the library, as eventually did other women of the community interested in the library.

The first librarian of the Waterford Community Library was Mrs. O.L. Siegman (Helen) and she remained librarian for 10 years, guiding, stimulating and tirelessly working to maintain library service in Waterford Township. Other dedicated librarians followed in her footsteps: Mrs. Arthur C. Arnold, Mrs. Kenneth Valentine, and Mrs. Gerald Lewis, and each in turn nourished the intent, the hope and the work toward the goal of establishing a public library with the community library viewed as an interim step toward that goal.

On January 7, 1947, the Old Horse Barn, the old C.A.I. Building, burned to the ground. The 2,845 volumes of books in the community library were completely destroyed by fire. Did the library effort go up with the flames? Quoting briefly from a newsletter Mrs. O.L. Siegman sent out shortly after the fire, "The library is burned, but the library lives on - not only in spirit, but actually in your fine determination to go on with what we have left and to begin over again." Clearly answered is our question.

In June 1948, the Waterford Community Library was housed in the new C.A.I. Building. From the time of the fire until the library was again housed in the C.A.I., books that had

not been destroyed remained in circulation and effort was bent in the direction of again building up a book collection. As soon as the new room was partially ready, makeshift shelves were made of orange-crates until volunteers could make others out of donated materials. There was no door on the library room for some time but never was there a case of theft or vandalism to any of the books. As soon as the new room was completed, many individuals gave luncheons, teas, etc., to raise money and gave generously of time, labor and materials and books in order that there might be a good library for all.

By January 1954, the number of volumes in the Waterford Community Library had grown to 4,000. On January 28, 1954, a large luncheon was held with civic leaders, the Township Board, The C.A.I. Board, the Board of Education, P.T.A. Officers, etc. Speakers were State Library Consultants who discussed pending library legislation which would broaden the support townships could give to libraries. Later in the year, Mrs. Siegman, Mrs. Valentine, and Mrs. Ralph Eaton approached the Township Board to urge them to avail themselves of recently passed library legislation, but no action resulted from this meeting. The community continued to have library service provided by volunteers, with funds and books donated, with rent, light and heat provided by the C.A.I. and the Waterford Community Library continued to grow.

On September 23, 1957, Frank Steere, retired industrialist, approached the Waterford Township Board asking them to consider a proposal he had to make. He wanted to donate 17 acres of land at Pontiac Lake Road and Highland Road (valued the at \$65,000) providing plans for a cultural center would be put into operation in 5 years. A committee of eleven, known as the Steere Committee, was appointed by the Township Board (Chairman Rev. Walter Teeuwissen, Mrs. Helen Vann, Mrs. Kenneth Valentine, Mrs. Avis Carey, Mrs. Walter Forbes, Mrs. O.L. Siegman, Mrs. William Shunck, Thomas Belton, Herbert Wettlaufer, Carroll Appel, and Don Adams.) This committee held its first meeting October 28, 1957. After a year of intensive study, the committee returned with their recommendations; that as a first step in the cultural center a library be viewed as the most essential. A carefully thought out plan for a library structure, grounds and an operating budget to provide adequate library services and maintain the facility were recommended to Mr. Steere and the Township Board. Meeting with their approval, the Steere Committee recommendations were placed on the ballot twice in 1959 and defeated both times.

Viewed in the perspective of the work that had already gone on toward establishing a library, it can unequivocally be stated that the Steere Proposal was viewed hopefully as a possible means of establishing a PUBLIC library. Its defeat did not mean to anyone connected with the library movement that the need for and work toward a public library would cease. The Steere Committee members in a post-mortem session on the defeat of the Steere Proposal carefully considered the many factors that may have worked to defeat the proposal but went on to recommend to the Township Board several broad suggestions that might keep alive the work for a public library; 1) the possibility of the formation of a Friends of the Library group, 2) the possibility of a Library Control Group, a more legal body that could plan some kind of financing; perhaps out of the general fund and without a millage increase, and 3) the possibility of the formation of a township planning board or a township council instigated perhaps by the Jr. Chamber

of Commerce. This might make for thoughtful study and recognition of community needs and effort directed to meet them through planning. Mr. Steere's offer held until 1961 at which time since no civic center had materialized the offer was withdrawn.

On February 15, 1961, fifty-one (51) people representing many organizations in Waterford Township met at Pierce Junior High School at a meeting called by Mrs. Edmund Windeler, then President of the Waterford-Clarkston Business and Professional Women's Club, the purpose of the meeting was to form a community council that all of the citizens might work together for the betterment of the community. As each individual was introduced and asked what things he or the organization he represented would like to see accomplished in the township, it became apparent that many projects seemed essential; a hospital, and a library were high on the list.

Once formed, the Greater Waterford Community Council through its Education Chairman, Mrs. H.D. McGinley (Mary), explored the library issue with the State Library. On October 3, 1961, the Greater Waterford Community Council held a public meeting to establish a Waterford Township Friends of the Library with one of the primary goals of the Friends being the establishment of a public library.

On September 12, 1961, Waterford Township residents voted strongly in favor of changing the township form of government from that of a rural township to that of a charter township. Under a charter township form of government there is a recognition of a greater complexity of problems as a governmental unit grows; therefore, a charter township can spread up to 5 mills without a vote of the people and is entitled to more administrative responsibility in the decisions of how to spread millage. The Waterford Township Friends of the Library recognized the greater flexibility afforded a charter township and a review of library laws indicated clearly that the Township Board could spread up to 1 mill for library support. For more than a year, the Waterford Township Friends of the Library, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Ralph Eaton, carried on a campaign to have the Waterford Community Library in the C.A.I. building declared a public library. On July 30, 1962, the Waterford Township Supervisor appointed a study committee composed of three township board members and the Friends of the Library to evaluate the possibility of declaring the Waterford Community Library a public library.

In November of 1962, the Township Planning Department under the director, Robert Dieball, was asked to assist the Township Library Study Committee in preparing a report on the steps necessary to organize a public library. The Planning Department assumed the active role in 1) reviewing the state library laws relative to the establishment of a library and defining eligibility requirements for state aid, penal fines, etc., 2) exploring housing, evaluating the costs and benefits to be derived from expanding the C.A.I., renting a store front, or building a facility on the Township Civic Center site, 3) examining and factually presenting the costs and levels of library services that could be achieved through the maintenance of an independent library or affiliation with a library system, and 4) outlining a realistic budget on which a public library service could be initiated.. This careful study was embodied in a report and

recommended by the Planning Commission to the Township Board for their consideration.

With the wealth of material assembled by the Planning Department, the Township Board was able to direct the Township Attorney on April 22, 1963, to prepare the necessary documents for having the Waterford Community Library declared the Waterford Township Public Library. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of July, 1963, the C.A.I. dedicated to the Charter Township of Waterford some 6,500 volumes of books and other library materials and equipment; through this action was the intent of the Mothers Club and that of all individuals connected with the Waterford Community Library fulfilled...that the community library was an interim step toward establishing a public library. On July 22, 1963, the Waterford Township board by resolution declared the Waterford Community Library housed in the C.A.I. Building a public library known as the Waterford Township Public Library.

Mrs. Gerald Lewis, a volunteer librarian during this time, continued with the Faculty Wive's Club to operate the library until January 1, 1964, when tax monies were made available to operate the library. On January 13, 1964, the Waterford Township Public Library officially opened its doors.

Public Act 269, 1955, under which the Waterford Township Public Library was established, specifies that the Township Board shall have charge of the township library. Thus ended the chapter in the history of the newly created Public Library.

This document has been prepared from information assembled by Mrs. John F. Naz, of the Waterford Township Library Advisory Board.

Any materials, such as newspaper clippings, letters, books, suggestions and information relative to the development of a definite library history would be appreciated. These may be sent or delivered to the Waterford Township Public Library in care of Mrs. Naz.

In July 1963, the Waterford Township Board applied for a matching Federal grant, under a special accelerated Federal Works Program, with which to erect a public library building.

On January 30, 1964, the Waterford Township Board accepted a grant from the Federal government in the amount of \$31,000 to build a public library facility at an estimated cost of \$62,000 with the Township share being \$31,000.

Actual Cost	\$70,735	Federal Funds	\$31,000
Cost per sq. ft.	18.92	Appropriation	19,000
Equipment	9,881.75	(Township Funds)	

The new "Main" Library located at Tubbs and Crescent Lake Road in the Township Civic Center, was opened to the public on March 15, 1965.

The Waterford Township Public Library is, as of February 1, 1967, a member of the Wayne County Federation Library System. Seventy libraries belong to the system, twenty-seven of them in Oakland County. Membership cost in the system is .057 cents per unit of circulation, and for this nominal fee number benefits are received. Some examples:

1. Interlibrary loan privileges among the 70 member libraries including the State Library and Wayne State University.
2. Reciprocal borrowers privileges.
3. Processing and cataloging of books purchased through the System headquarters.
4. Consultation and guidance from specialized staff members.
5. Loans of films and filmstrips plus supplementary backup from the Henry Ford Centennial Library.
6. Loans of specialized "circuit" books.
7. Central reference collection and assistance with reference questions.

Through membership in the system, the Waterford Library is able to offer its residents a more comprehensive library service.

Since 1967, many goals have been accomplished by the Waterford Township Public Library.

1. The library has become eligible for a 30 cents per capita state aid. This required the hiring of a professional librarian and the certification of the staff through workshops and community college programs and local support equal to .3 mill on the state equalized valuation of the Township.
2. A children's librarian was also hired to direct the Children's program.
3. The hours at both the Main and Branch libraries have been extended.
4. The staffs at both facilities have been increased.
5. The Branch Library has been redecorated and revamped.

6. Policies regarding registration, circulation and job descriptions have been written to provide a basis for efficient organization of the library.
7. Library services were provided to the residents of Orchard Lake, White Lake and Sylvan Lake by contract with their respective governing boards. In 1975-76, White Lake Township is continuing these services under a three year contract.
8. The holdings of book and audiovisual materials have been increased. In 1966, the Main and branch libraries housed a collection of 28,757 volumes compared to 35,899 volumes plus 11,007 pamphlets, 128 periodicals including microfilm, 6 newspapers, 844 phonorecords and cassette tapes and 327 8mm films, filmstrips and slides. Organization and control of these increased holdings have been improved by establishing a shelf list for inventory and a revamped card catalog for better access to the materials by staff and patrons.
9. In 1975, the construction of the new addition to the Main Library was started and finished. Initially the building fund was started through the sale of the Kimball Property. Costs for the new addition including the area occupied by the Planning and Engineering Department were as follows:

Revenue sharing	\$111,878.64
Library Development Fund	32,353.37
Improvement Revolving Fund	52,000.00
Total	
	\$196,232.01

Additional furnishing needed for the library were purchased from funds from the Library State Aid Grant. Temporarily, the Planning and Engineering Department of the Township is occupying part of the new addition. This area will allow the expansion of the Library in the near future.

10. A mini-park for children is planned in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Department and the Jaycees of Waterford. It will be located to the north of the Main Library. The central theme will be a story time shelter house which can be used for children's story hours.
11. Beginning in February 1976, the Waterford Township Library will receive a \$10,000 grant under Title I for an Outreach program. This will provide library services to shut-ins, senior citizens, nursing homes and day-care centers by mail or personal visits from a part-time librarian.
12. The Library also has access to the Oakland County Reference Hotline since 1972. This is located at Oakland University and is funded by the Oakland County Library Board.

This is only a partial view of the intense activity centered in and around the Waterford Township Public Library. Other special reference services and acquisitions of special materials are also available.

The dedication of the new addition on February 1, 1976 is the continuation of more and better library services for the citizens of Waterford Township.

Come and visit your library. Get to know it. The library can serve you well.

*This addition to the history of the Waterford Township Public Library was compiled in January 1976, at the direction of the Library Advisory Board.*