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“With the Help of God and Right Thinking People”: Establishing Library Services in Allen County
by Jonathan Jeffrey

The genesis of library services in Allen County, Kentucky, began as the outgrowth of the Allen County Civic League, a women’s group dedicated to “the civic improvements in and for Scottsville and Allen County.” One of its first projects was the establishment of a library, which was accomplished by borrowing a crate of fifty books from the Kentucky Library Extension Service in 1921(1) and placing them under the custody of Sallie Edmonds(2), who operated the service out of her small two-story frame house on East Maple Street.(“The Old Building”) Miss Sallie, as she was known to most, received a small stipend for the position. A determined individual and an enthusiastic reader herself, Miss Sallie accepted the challenge with gusto. “Her library” of less than one hundred books never seemed adequate to meet the demands of her readers. However after several years of donations, the collection outgrew her home and was moved “uptown” to the square. The new location was ideal for the work, but a 1928 fire-damaged the stock of books and serials and led organizers to abandon the service. Florence Gardner attempted to re-introduce library service to the county, “but it failed due to lack of interest.” (Allen County Library History Files)

Library services were dormant in the county until the spring of 1954 when Main Street Methodist Church pastor Reverend W. L. Baker made a presentation to the Scottsville Rotary Club about his experiences with bookmobile and library services in other counties where he had served. The time for re-introducing local library service was ripe, as Kentucky’s great bookmobile movement was concurrently gathering momentum. The Rotary Club in conjunction with several other civic and religious organizations, as well as the city and county schools, and the city and county governments, made a presentation to the Allen County Fiscal Court shortly

thereafter which resulted in a \$750 annual appropriation from county coffers for operation of a new library. In June 1953, Fiscal Court Judge Hayden Eaton appointed the first Allen County Public Library Board: Anna Payne Whitney, Chairman; Woodward C. Broughton, Vice-chairman, Mrs. Oakley Weaver, Treasurer; Bess Morehead, Secretary; and Estus Perry, Bookmobile chairman.

The board hired Minnie Holland Dixon (1885-1981) as the first librarian and bookmobile driver. Her college training and experience in librarianship were a rare find in a small community. With the assistance of board member Bess Morehead, Dixon launched the new library in the basement of the Horseshoe Cafeteria on South Court Street in downtown Scottsville. Board member W.C. Broughton and Leon Whitlow built the library's shelves. The library officially opened on 10 August 1954, and Billy Allen was the first person to sign the register and check out the first book. Business was brisk and funds small, so library advocate LaVerne Fraim assisted Dixon in the library for a year with no remuneration, "because she felt the need of a public library." The Library Extension Division sent books to the fledgling operation and others were donated by the public or purchased with monetary donations. One early patron donated over 700 volumes to the new operation. Mrs. Dixon's efficient operation was recognized by the Library Extension Division as "one of the best jobs in the state." ("History of the Allen County Library")

A little over a month after the fledgling library opened its doors, Allen County received its first bookmobile. The novel contraption was one of 84 presented to libraries across the state. The presentation was made on 16 September 1954 at the Kentucky State Fairgrounds in Louisville before an appreciative audience of 7,000 library supporters. The funding for this work

had largely been raised through the independent Friends of Kentucky Libraries with the assistance of several businessmen and the inimitable Mary Bingham. (Jeffrey, "Friends of Kentucky Libraries," 19-20) Reynolds Metal Company donated the funds to purchase Allen County's bookmobile. Board chairman, Anna Whitney was on hand to accept the bookmobile from Governor Lawrence W. Wetherby; in the parade the vehicle was driven by library board member W.C. Broughton, who also drove it back to Scottsville. Mrs. Dixon had planned well and within three days the bookmobile began its three-day weekly schedule. The first day of operation found Mrs. Dixon and the bookmobile at four county schools. At the first stop alone, she checked out 159 books. The bookmobile had a phenomenal impact on library services within the county in those early years. It would be several decades before the number of books checked out at the library downtown would match the number charged from the bookmobile. ("Bookmobile Now Serving")

Like most worthwhile efforts, Allen County's library movement enjoyed initial success. With fervor and "right thinking" on their side, library supporters were able to craft a solid but unpredictable funding base for their operation. To the fiscal court's commitment of \$750, they added an additional \$500 from the County Board of Education, and a number of clubs made donations that helped the organization stay in operation. In March of 1955, a Friends of the Library organization was established "to help with securing pledges for library service in 1955-1956." ([Allen County] Library-Bookmobile Board Minutes, 11 Mar. 1955) Memberships were issued for dues of \$1 per person, and the organization parked the bookmobile in front of the courthouse in order to solicit memberships. Many community members also helped solicit memberships in a door-to-door campaign. Again, the initial effort appear successful, but really

generated more goodwill than financial backing. Supporters knew the library was essential, and they crowed about its upwardly spiraling circulation statistics. Still, few public institutions can survive on goodwill alone.

The Friends of the Library met in early-September 1956 and voted to ask for a plebiscite to seek the electorate's opinion on the matter of public financial support for the library. Under Kentucky law, the Board could ask via referendum for tax support varying from five to fifteen cents per \$100 of assessed property valuation. For the matter to be placed on the November 1956 general election ballot, supporters were required to present a petition with signatures equaling at least 5% of the people who had voted in the last general election. Organizers determined that they needed at least 200 signatures. ("Kentucky Revised Statutes 173.310") One ardent supporter voiced his confidence in the democratic process: "Give the people the truth and they will vote on it." The meeting "closed with prayer for guidance." The signatures were easily collected and the matter placed on the ballot. Allen County residents supported the effort, and at the beginning of the next fiscal year the library received an direct appropriation from the Fiscal Court of \$4,999, not a taxing district. ("Allen County Library History") The library physically moved during this period to the Carter Realty & Auction Building, where it enjoyed ground level accommodations. Within two years, the collection had reached 3,000 volumes and annual circulation was near 40,000, a good 75% of that from the bookmobile.

By the next fiscal year, the Court declared a shortfall in tax revenues and dubiously questioned its legal responsibility to support the library while simultaneously casting suspicion on the integrity of the 1956 petition. Feeling justified, the court removed the library's appropriation when planning the county's 1958-1959 budget. Once this news surfaced, the

library board and library supporters went into full combat mode. Mrs. Whitney and County Judge Allen S. Secrest both sent letters to the state Attorney General's office asking for a review of the matter. The office declared that "after voter approval was given to library service, it became the statutory duty of Fiscal Court to establish and maintain the service annually and perpetually." Although the county claimed hardship because of the revenue shortfall, the Attorney General's office proffered no pity and noted "that the County had no alternative but to scale down appropriations to other agencies in order to provide a library appropriation, which might also be scaled down proportionately." ("Allen Told It Must Provide Book Service") Still in doubt, Allen County officials conferred with Department of Revenue officials the next week. It was finally determined that the only way the appropriation could be removed from the county's budget was through a public referendum.

Finally in early-July, the Fiscal Court reluctantly made a library appropriation of \$3,399. One week later the Court received another petition from parties wishing that library support be removed and asking that the issue be placed on the ballot. The petition's preamble stated that Allen County voters now had "full knowledge of facts" and should be given the opportunity to decide "whether or not the Library Service shall remain an agency completely dependent upon the County Government." (Petition) Library supporters were suspicious about the methods used in gathering names and were initially denied access to it. Members of the Fiscal Court intimated that if other government entities would help in supporting the library, a referendum might not be needed. The Court reasoned that since the library was used by Scottsville citizens, the city should ante up some funding and since the majority of the library's users were children

that both city and county schools should also bear a portion of the expense. (“Other Accounts Cut” and “Court Orders New Library Vote” “Allen Will Vote.”)

The reduced appropriation did affect morale at the library. Mrs. Dixon wrote in her weekly “Library Notes” column:

As you know by now the Local Library funds have been scaled down...This will work a hardship on the Service, as we need the full amount to operate successfully. We have struggled and we can struggle again, and not die from malnutrition...Men and women, let’s get behind the Library and raise a little extra money to tide the Service over...Let’s scrape up a little money from somewhere and show folks that we in Scottsville and Allen County believe in education and enlightenment. (“Library Notes”)

In a public statement, Mrs. Whitney proved more eloquent. After some critical remarks about the “huge gravel loader you see occasionally” and questioning the need for secretarial support when “previous judges got along without,” Whitney penned:

The future belongs to the child and it is important that children have the chance to prepare for adult life by learning the values to be found in books. The youth of the nation, of Kentucky, of Allen County and Scottsville are everybody’s business, and children of America are the promise and hope of the future. “Give us books!” say the children. “Give us wings that are powerful and strong. Help us to escape into the far away. Build us azure palaces in the midst of enchanted gardens.”

After further polemics, Whitney advised citizens: "Go to the polls in November and show the politicians that you are laying up treasures where moth and rust will not corrupt."(Library Chairman")

The library board members worked strategically before the election. Mrs. Whitney reported that she had discussed the issue with County Superintendent Noble Allen, who reminded her that the schools operated on election days.(4) However, he assured her that he and many other county educators would be at the polls prior to 8:00 a.m. and after school let out until closing. She and W.C. Broughton also talked with several clubs and government agencies, but they were not overly encouraged. Still, Whitney was confident of victory. "We know it is right," she wrote Broughton, "to have the Lib.[rary], & I believe with the help of God and right thinking people we will win if we work."(Undated letter, Whitney to Boughton) When the board met in August they approved use of the bookmobile to "haul voters to poles (sic) who have no way to go. But no money from the treasury [is] to be spent to buy votes."(Board Minutes, 2 Aug. 1958)

In August the Fiscal Court approved the wording that would appear on the ballot: "Shall the Fiscal court continue to provide free Public Library Service for Allen County? Yes or No." The referendum was, again, not for a taxing district, but for a direct appropriation from the county. Both sides again conferred with the Attorney General's office to seek its opinion on how the wording would appear on the ballot. A great deal of discussion was also generated when the new regional library in Glasgow began operation in 1958. Could library services be provided from the regional library and thus reduce the money necessary to operate the local

operation? The Attorney General declared “that the fiscal court of Allen County is without authority to strike from the ballot the question.” (Opinion Published) So, after another week of political wrangling and the local newspapers teeming with heated rhetoric, the people made the decision: 1,187 voted YES to retain county funding and 497 voted NO. The NOs carried in only two of the county’s 20 precincts, and they were in very rural sections. (“Library Tax” and “Light Vote”)

With the election imbroglio behind them, library supporters once again utilized their energies in the positive work of advocating library services. The library staff had been very active promoting the first National Library Week held in April 1958. In 1959, they had even more reason to celebrate. A proclamation from the mayor appeared in the local papers as well as a library advertisement sponsored by a local bank and the Allen County Board of Education. “Let reading,” the ad admonished “make your own life more interesting to yourself and to others.” (“National Library Week” [advertisement]) Encouraged by recent events, Mrs. Dixon was once again in fine style, writing: “The sweetest sight of all...is a human being bent over an open book. This my friends, is the highest good of our high profession—to exalt the printed book above all other creations of man, to bring boys and girls, men and women, the rich and the poor of all colors and creeds, to turn from the vanities of a foolish world, from the troubles of a tragic world to the truth and beauty, the power and solace awaiting them between the covers of a book.” (“Library Notes”)

For her creative and courageous work for library services in Allen County, Mrs. Dixon was selected from all the librarians in the U.S Second Congressional District as a delegate to a special session of the American Library Association held in Washington, D.C. in June 1959. One

local editor noted this as “quite an honor,” but one worthy of Dixon and “her early and untiring service in organizing and setting up the Allen County Library and Bookmobile Service.” Indeed, the community owed a debt of gratitude to this indefatigable librarian. Due to illness and other responsibilities, Mrs. Dixon resigned as librarian later in 1959 and Mrs. Ruby Claire Jackson became librarian. After a short tenure, Jackson assumed responsibilities as the bookmobile librarian, and Mrs. Arthur Vaughan accepted the position of librarian. Ruby Claire Jackson remained employed by the library in various positions for nearly four decades.(3)

With competent staffing and secure funding, the library board began to ponder moving into larger facilities. The board discovered a structure, on East Main Street which had once housed the General Telephone Exchange, which was vacant and available for purchase. The first floor would be adequate for the library, and the second floor could provide rental income. The board submitted a bid of \$8,500 in September 1960, and it was accepted. With savings of a little over \$2,500, the board authorized its chairman and secretary to borrow the remainder. The deed was executed in February 1961. Within a month, repairs and re-decorating in the amount of \$401 were completed and the library was moved by Arthur Vaughan and “five unnamed school boys who worked without murmur or pay” in “Mr. Vaughan’s farm truck.” The doors were opened to the public on April 16 with approximately 300 people viewing the new facility during a three-hour reception. New shelves were added in June, and later that summer the library procured a new “coke machine” that was a hit with the younger crowd.(Library Minutes) The first year in their building, the library reported a collection of nearly 9,000 volumes with a circulation rate of a little over 120,000. Books checked out from the bookmobile still accounted for nearly 75% of the library’s circulation, indicating its significant

impact. ("Circulation Comparison") High circulation could also be attributed in part to the wide array of items that patrons could check out: books, serials, phonograph records, art, even athletic equipment. Increased programming was also bringing people in the door; story hour was a huge success as were ancillary programming such as a chess club initiated by Mrs. Jackson.

Just as the library was beginning to enjoy sustained success, perhaps its greatest champion, Anna Payne Whitney (1894-1987), retired from the board. She had fearlessly but politely faced opposition within the community for her library advocacy, and she never shied away from an opportunity to publicly share her conviction about the educational value of library services to a community. With little fanfare she refused to be re-appointed, citing the needs of the family's farming operation, her husband's desire for peace, and her own age as contributing factors. Even in resigning, she proffered her "help with anything...I'm at the service of the Library Board any time." (Letter from Whitney to Broughton, 13 June 1960) For her thirty-seven year tenure as an educator and her "contributions to the Allen County Library and Bookmobile Service," the local Veterans of Foreign Wars recognized Whitney with their Outstanding Citizen Award in 1962, a well-deserved honor.

Soon requests were being made for usage of the second floor. The first group granted access was the Allen County Homemakers in June 1962. In 1963, the Patrick Gilmore Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution was granted a one-year lease-free access to two large rooms on the second floor for an Allen County Museum. This idea appealed to the board and the community. In exchange for improvements and a monthly prorated utility payment, the DAR planned a room where artifacts and historical documents related to the area's proud

heritage could be displayed and admired. One newspaper touted the benefits: education, cultural stewardship, heritage tourism, and civic pride. A Committee was established in November 1963 to guide the project. A membership drive in the Spring of 1964 was extremely successful, with Norman Simmons recorded as the first member; the local Jaycees chapter was the first organization to have 100% of its members affiliate with the new effort. The first museum acquisition was a large oak spinning wheel donated by Mrs. Ira York. The organization advertised that they “would like to have any article of historical value, such as antiques, firearms, family heirlooms, or any thing appropriate to a museum such as is not seen every day.” R.C. Colas were served at the Allen County Museum dedication on 5 September 1964, and the affair was attendees deemed it “a great success.” (“Opening of Scottsville”) It also helped foment positive relationships for the library within the community.

The library’s bookmobile was the single most important outreach tool that the library possessed, and its charismatic driver Ruby Claire Jackson its biggest champion. Before consolidation, the county had nearly three dozen schools, which the bookmobile visited, as well as other stops. By 1966, the mint green bookmobile that Allen County had received as a gift in 1954 was requiring more complicated maintenance. Fortunately state library leaders had planned for the gradual replacement of those early vehicles, and Allen County received a new bookmobile in early-1966. The larger vehicle could hold 2,000 volumes as compared to its predecessor’s limit of 700. One of the seventh grade boys from the “Book Brigade” who helped transfer the books from the old to the new bookmobile noted that the vehicle’s collection was “bigger than the library at school!!” Additional stops were added to the bookmobile’s itinerary, and its circulation continued to be three times that of the downtown library.

With collections, patrons, programming, and circulation increasing, it was no surprise that the Board began discussing a new building as early as February 1964. The library was receiving its annual appropriation from the Fiscal Court, but the Board recognized that this method was tenuous at best. State support had been essential to the library's success. In 1966, the state had provided the new bookmobile at a cost of \$8,000 and had provided 1,449 new books to the facility as opposed to the 168 that had been purchased with county funds. In the mid-1960s, state library officials began a concentrated campaign to help counties establish taxing districts. With stable funding, libraries could begin to plan in a more autonomous fashion and not depend on the capricious nature of politics. ("KRS 173.720") By 1966 at least 30 counties in Kentucky had voted to create library taxing districts. After a meeting with representatives from the regional library and the Kentucky Department of Libraries in February 1967 to discuss the matter, the Allen County Library Board chose in April not to pursue the taxing district since a bond issue to build a new high school was on the May general election ballot. They did discuss the future and noted that 1,200 names would be required for the petition.

At their August 1967 meeting the Board voted unanimously to pursue the petition route in order to "raise additional funds." The group crafted the rationale and the petition's preamble at that meeting. They also bemoaned the fact that they would have to gather 1,600 signatures rather than 1,200, because the turnout at the May general election had been high due to the bond issue. They called for a meeting of all those interested in circulating the petition on August 31, when they determined to begin the petition's circulation directly after Labor Day. An effort would be made to contact all Homemakers Clubs, women's clubs, and teachers. At the

August 31 meeting, mimeographed petitions were distributed, and organizers asked that all copies be returned to the library with “as many signatures as possible within a two week period.” By November 1, the Board determined that they had the required number of names, but “decided to secure more to cover any invalid signatures.”(Board Minutes) Once again Anna Whitney stepped up to lead the charge.

The County Judge attended a called meeting of the Library Board in February 1968, where he informed them that the Court Clerk had determined, after careful screening, that the petition did not contain enough qualified signatures. A detailed report showed that 168 signatures could not be identified as registered voters, that 124 signatures were repeated, and that 5 signatures were repeated three times, thus the petition contained only 2,217 qualified signatures which did not meet the minimum 2,445 signatures required to place the matter on the ballot.(Board minutes) Mrs. Whitney sent a lengthy letter to the paper the following week apologizing for what might appear as impropriety but was actually a result of the rush to get the signatures submitted. In summation, she penned: “Since so many people keep asking about the petition, I take this means of clearing up some things, and also defending our citizens who are God-fearing people who were innocent...As to what will happen to the Library in the future—watch!”(Letters to the Editor) Despite the negative news, library supporters celebrated in March 1968 when the Board made the last payment on the mortgage for the old telephone building.(Board Minutes)

With leverage on its side, the County Judge informed the board at their March 1968 meeting that rather than their expected \$9,100 appropriation, the Board would receive only \$7,050 in the new fiscal year “based on the rolled back rate on the present tax

assessment.”(Board Minutes) The Board agreed to accept this appropriation, but did ask the opinion of the State Local Finance Officer, D.M. Magill, about the matter. He replied that based on the increased formula found in revised statutes the county should be funding the library in an amount somewhere between \$8,400 and \$25,000.(Letter, Magill to Secret) Although discussions about suing the Court for the difference ensued, the Board refused to act.

The library survived under penurious conditions for the next few years. Finally a group decided to undertake another attempt to establish a taxing district if they library was to survive. The Board also still dreamed of constructing a new building, and this was not feasible under its current budget. To help facilitate advocacy efforts and “desiring to improve the local library services,” a new Friends of the Library group was established in April 1975. With their assistance, a new petition drive was started to gather the necessary signatures for the Fiscal Court to establish a library taxing district. The effort began on 28 July 1975 with the first signature and culminated with the Board’s vice chairman Charles Harris presenting the petition containing 1,565 names to Fiscal Court. The taxing district was approved that evening and the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives (KDLA) was notified of the same.

With the assurance of a steady income, the Board immediately began planning for a new building. Application was made with KDLA for financial assistance, and the group began discussions with two architects. The Board finally employed Joseph P. Wilk of Bowling Green, who prepared plans for a 6,000 square feet Colonial Revival structure that would sit on the former site of the hallowed Jacksonian Hotel. Besides typical library functions, the building would also include a hospitality room capable of seating from 75 to 100 people and an inviting porch that would overlook the square. The building was initially expected to cost in the

neighborhood of \$150,000, but final estimates with furniture and fixtures came to \$278,000.

State aid was approved in the amount of \$225,336 with the remainder to be matched locally.

With pomp and pride officials broke ground for the new building in February 1977. None too soon for the old telephone building burned the same month. Scrambling for a new site, the Board finally rented the old offices of Dr. John Meredith in the Graves Building on the public square for a temporary location. This made the completion of the new building vital to the library's future. Completed quickly by contractor Alliance Construction Company of Glasgow, the new structure opened with a ribbon cutting on 3 January 1978; dedication ceremonies were held on 11 June 1978 with Wendell P. Butler, Secretary of the Education and Arts Cabinet, speaking. The new building housed approximately 28,000 volumes (some fire damaged) and boasted a staff of five headed by Head Librarian Lola Weaver.

As the library moved into the 1980s, state officials were aware of the precipitous decline in Allen County's circulation statistics. Evelyn Richardson, regional librarian, expressed her concern at the first Board meeting in 1981, stating that if circulation remained low that "there was always a chance that a public library could be closed." She stated that with the library's new building and ideal location should help generate higher circulation.(Board Minutes) In the library's 1983 report, the staff acknowledged that they must "constantly...publicize and promote the library in order to reach those people who are not library users."(Annual Report) One factor in the circulation decline was that the bookmobile no longer generated the circulation figures it once had. After years of repairs, the 1966 bookmobile was replaced in 1977, and in 1990 that bookmobile was sent to Gerstenslager Company in Wooster, Ohio, and retrofitted. KDLA paid \$6,200 of this bill, leaving the Board to absorb the remaining \$17.37.

Once again the bookmobile had heating and now had the luxury of air conditioning. Other equipment highlights during the era included the purchase of the library's first computer in 1986 for \$2,432. A new check out system from the Gaylord Company, which utilized individual library cards and allowed for greater privacy, was initiated in 1987. It was an immediate success. During the system's initial week of operation, the library issued 138 adult and 90 children's library cards, although some unfamiliar with library jargon questioned the action of "charging a book." Before the decade ended, the Board noted with pride that "the building indebtedness has been paid off and the deed recorded" in March 1987.(Minutes) A mortgage burning ceremony was held the following month during National Library Week.

The 1990s saw the library began to focus on long-term growth. One of the major activities of the decade was strategic planning and the development and implementation of a long range plan. The committee appointed in December 1990 to create the plan met with the board, community organizations, and focus groups before composing the document which identified one primary role and two secondary roles for the library with corresponding objectives and goals. The group identified the library's primary role as: "Preschoolers' Door to Learning." It considered the library's secondary roles as: "Community Activities Center" and "Popular Materials Center." The document, presented to the board in May 1990, was to drive programming as well as the budget.(Minutes; Long Range Plan) Joanne Meador, who had been hired as assistant librarian in 1981 and promoted to library director in 1986, helped oversee implementation of the new plan. Because library programming with a focus on preschool activities was considered paramount, it was determined to close the library's program room to outside use in August 1994.(Minutes) The library board also voted to transfer a collection of

local history and genealogical material to the Allen County Historical Society in 1993, as the heritage group had just purchased the Dr. Pellie Graves house on North 4th Street for use as a museum and genealogical center.

Besides promoting strategic planning during the 1990s, librarians and the Board began to contemplate how computers would affect the library's evolution. The library began the 1990s with the purchase of a brand new fax machine at a cost of \$1,519. Later that year they added an automated General Periodical Index workstation, which was heavily used initially by Lindsey Wilson College students. In May 1991 Joanne Meador discussed with the board a meeting of the Kentucky Library Network that she had attended in which the advantages of automated library catalogs were discussed. In the Fall of 1996 the staff attended a workshop in Bowling Green for internet training, as KDLA was going to make it accessible to all public libraries. Changes in technology were quickly coming, and the staff took advantage of all training opportunities.

Facilities usage was of great concern to the Board, as they considered themselves stewards of a building that many people had struggled to see constructed. By the mid-1990s, they were in constant maintenance mode. Wanting to upgrade certain parts of the facilities and needing to comply with the American Disabilities Act and local fire marshal requirements, the library closed for a week in February 1995 for remodeling. Maintenance of the retrofitted bookmobile also continued to escalate, and when the board had the opportunity to replace it in the Fall of 1997, they did so.

The Allen County Public Library began the new millennium automating the library's catalog, a necessary step in creating a more efficient library system and in promoting library

cooperation. The Board approved the staff's recommendation to use Library Corporation as the automation vendor at a cost of \$26,170. This tedious process was absolutely essential in bringing the library into the computer age. To this day, the library continues to take advantage of automation and computers to curb costs. Current Library Director Sheila Stovall, hired in 2005, noted that a self-check-out station was recently installed for both patron privacy and to free staff for other responsibilities.

In addition to creating better and wider access to books and information services, the Board recognized that as Allen County grew the 1978 building was not meeting the minimum space and collection standards set by KDLA. For example, in 2000 for a county the size of Allen County, the minimum space allocation standard was 13,000 square feet; the 1978 building was only 6,000 square feet, less than half that suggested. Standards for collection size were also not feasible in a building that small. The concept of providing public access computers and a large community room had not been considered or even thought of when the older building was constructed. The board had been saving money for a building project for some time. When Stovall became library director, she was blessed to find that one million dollars had already been earmarked for such a project. At public meetings, the Board asked the community if they wanted to move the library away from the public square where architects and planners could start from scratch or stay in its present location and work with that land locked site. Community leaders and the public overwhelmingly requested that the library remain in its present location.

The Board hired Pearson & Peters Architects of Lexington to design the new structure, and the firm did a masterful job of creating a practical and useful building on an awkward lot. For patron safety, the front entrance with its inviting front portico was retained but

permanently closed. The architects enhanced the old entrance with a lovely brick fence and plaza accented by appealing landscaping. They added a two story addition to the rear of the structure, which is also where parking was located. An attractive tower entrance crowned with a white frame cupola, not only served egress and ingress purposes it became a new downtown landmark. The total cost of the 10,000 square foot addition and renovation was \$2,014,305 for building construction and \$565,904 for furniture and equipment. The community support for the project was gratifying. Today, the Allen County Public Library serves the community's "need to know" and Stovall notes that it "is not a warehouse for books, it is a community meeting place and a very important part of Allen County's future."(Interview) What an honor to so many men and women who had patiently and progressively pushed for library services over the years.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) In different documents, the starting date of the library is listed as 1915 and 1921. Either is possible. The Library Extension Service started in 1910, and they almost immediately began sending out crates of books.
- 2) Sallie Porter Edmonds was born in 1854 the daughter of J.A. and Talitha N. Edmonds. She was interested in local history and in 1928 penned a detailed street by street identification of buildings in Scottsville, which was sealed in a jar and placed in the cornerstone of the Dr. Johnson building, which also housed the Masonic Hall. When this structure burned in 1984 and was razed, the jar containing the history was found. This treasured resource was printed in the newspaper and is used to document the city's history. Edmonds died on 11 August 1935 and was interred in Scottsville City Cemetery downtown.
- 3) The Allen County Public Library's children's programming room is named for Mrs. Jackson, who early in her tenure started story hours at certain bookmobile stops and was always a stalwart library advocate.
- 4) Noble Allen served for many years as the Superintendent of Allen County Schools. Initially his budget included support for the public library, and he was always an advocate for the institution. Later, he served capably on the Library's board, most notably when the 1978 building was constructed. For his service, the library's beautiful community room, which is heavily used, bears his name.

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