

THEY BUILT
BETTER



THAN THEY REALIZED

A Centennial History of Bethlehem Public Library

by Louise Grieco





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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Libraries are created by communities and in turn help create communities.

Our library's centennial provides the perfect opportunity for us to reflect on the library and our community. I have been surprised again and again by stories of dedication, foresight, and vision on the part of community members, board members and library staff. Without the efforts of these groups, the library would not exist as it does today.

To everyone who continues to make Bethlehem Public Library great, thank you. I look forward to our next century.

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, Library Director, May 2013

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In these pages you will learn about the Delmar Progress Club's far-reaching vision and the seriousness with which they pursued it. You will discover that as the library's house got bigger, so did the expectations of the community. You will read about the library's adventures beyond the building, from the bookmobiles of yesteryear to the technologies of today. And you will glimpse the library's essence—the collections, programs and services that enrich the community, but also reflect the community's richness.

From the outset, this book was intended to be a story rather than a collection of citations and annotations. Therefore, source material is listed primarily at the end of the book, with internal citations limited to direct quotations.

The appendices include two delightful early accounts of the Delmar Progress Club's history—transcriptions of manuscripts by two club historians—and the library's history to 1965 by Barbara Hotaling, printed from manuscript. That document was reissued in 1999 with intent to publish—a goal that is finally realized here.

The appendices also fill out the library's story with a roster of directors and board presidents, the first and latest annual reports, and trends in the library's holdings and circulation compared to the community's growing population.

Photos are drawn primarily from library archives, augmented with contributions from Ann VanDervort and bound copies of the Delmar *Spotlight*. Thanks to *Spotlight* staff for permission to use several photos and the Edwin Becker cartoons—and for consistently finding space over the years to publish library news.

I am grateful for the counsel and material help of many. Geoff Kirkpatrick demonstrated his confidence in me by inviting me to write this book; his review of the draft was essential. Bethlehem town historian Susan Leath also read the draft, and provided practical advice about preparing it for publication. She took on the daunting task of evaluating and choosing the archival photos, and did the detective work that cleared up some local-history mysteries. All that, and her calm optimism and enthusiasm, got me through several anxious days.

Thanks to Maureen Brown and her adult services staff for their help finding and bookmarking relevant newspaper coverage; to Frank Somers, who retrieved a hundred years of census data and scanned a hundred years of pictures; to Alex Ernst, who remembered looking up at the 1967 “automated checkout” machine as a child, and who assured me that the technology chapter contained no glitches; and to Mary Trev Thomas, who confirmed some astounding current collection data.

The Delmar Progress Club graciously supplied early documentation and permitted publication of their historians’ manuscripts. The titles of this book and its Afterword are drawn from the Boynton manuscript. John and Joseph McCarthy saw to the publication of the ebook.

Finally, thanks to my husband Tony, who read the manuscript, charted the data, and listened to the story as this book moved from idea to words.

Louise Grieco

Chapter 1

Founding

The story of the library cannot be told without the story of the Delmar Progress Club, which founded the library in 1913. These dedicated women have been instrumental in the cultural, educational and civic development of the town since 1901—a role that parallels the library’s own mission “to provide equal and uncensored access to resources and services that encourage lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, and professional growth.”

Delmar at the turn of the twentieth century was a rural hamlet with no sidewalks, no street lights, no postal delivery, no garbage collection, and inadequate rail service to jobs in Albany. Elva Hinman, inspired by a women’s literary club in Cobleskill, invited interested Delmar women to establish a club in Delmar for “the mental, moral, and social development of its members, and the civic betterment of the community” (Porter). Eleven women responded, and held their first meetings on each other’s front porches in the afternoons. Meetings soon moved to evenings so that husbands could care for children; members lit their way with hand-held lanterns.

The club joined the State Federation of Women’s Clubs in 1904 and the General Federation of Women’s Clubs in 1916. Accomplishments in those early years included spearheading the building of a new school (now the Masonic Temple on Kenwood Avenue), establishing a parent-teacher association and purchasing a piano for that school, visiting new families and giving to families in need, and improving rail service to Albany. Along the way they founded the Delmar Free Library.

In April 1913, the group was searching for a project to benefit the community in the long term. Following a suggestion by Mrs. Frank Sharpe, the club voted “to undertake the matter of installing a free library in the school building” (Progress Club meeting minutes April 14, 1913).



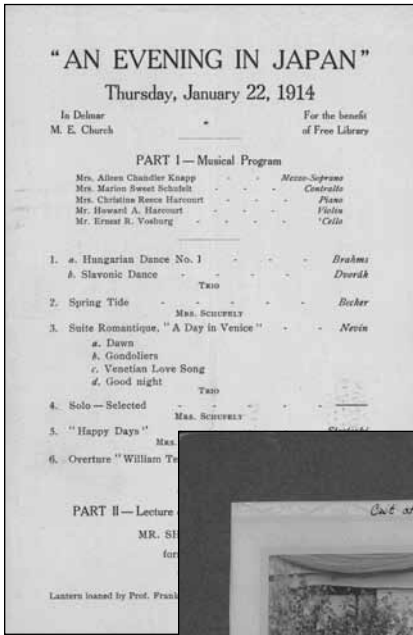
The Founders' first library was a schoolroom in what is now the Masonic Temple on the corner of Kenwood Avenue and Adams Street.
(1950, photo credit Dillenback; courtesy Ann VanDervort)

The Delmar Free Library Association was established on May 14 at the home of Clara Boynton, and a constitution was drawn up and signed by nineteen members: Mary Elizabeth Sharpe, Jessie R. Husted, Anna T. Phipps, Frances C. E. Shanks, Amy G. Pember, Frankie M. Gregg, Aileen C. Knapp, J. Elizabeth Smith, Annie S. Hatt, Margaret MacMillan, Marian I. Shufelt, Clara E. Y. Boynton, Mabelle C. Bruce, Luella M. Johnson, Anna Thornbury, Nettie V. Glenn, Flossie A. Gies, Blanche M. Kelly, and Mary L. V. Reynolds. The club secured a provisional charter from the New York State Board of Regents in July of that year; the state granted an absolute charter in November 1917.

In those early days, the Delmar Free Library Association sought help from the Library Extension Service of New York State, attending workshops in cataloging, book preparation and book repair. Staffing and maintenance responsibilities were divided among Progress Club members. The Association filed its first official annual report with the New York State Education Department in 1914, after only ten months of service. The level of professionalism and attention to detail at this stage underscores the Progress

Club’s vision and intent that the library would become a respected institution, enriching the community and the State.

The fledgling library was located in a tiny room in the Kenwood Avenue schoolhouse. To raise money for books and supplies, the club held all manner of fundraisers, including plays, card parties, lectures, dances, bake sales, a village directory, and door-to-door appeals. Their tireless fundraising also yielded Bethlehem’s first library building, erected in 1917 on land at the corner of Hawthorne Avenue and Adams Street donated by the George C. Adams estate.



An early fundraiser for a fledgling library: music and a lantern-slide lecture in 1914 (Bethlehem Public Library archives)

The cast of *What Became of Parker: a farce-comedy in four acts*, penned in 1898 by Maurice Hageman. The play was staged by the Progress Club in 1916 as a fundraiser for the new library building. All the parts were played by women. (Delmar Progress Club archives)



Progress Club volunteers ran the library for another fourteen years, counting custodial work among their many duties. As time passed and the library grew in holdings and popularity, it became apparent that volunteers alone could not maintain it. Notes made in the 1928 and 1929 annual reports to the State Education Department indicate increased staffing demands: "July 1, 1928 a trained librarian took charge...until September 15 when her assistant took over the work and is still in charge" (NYSED annual report 1928, note by Delmar Library Association president Ethel Blake). "A [Progress Club] chairman has been appointed to take care of the children's department...Groups of children are taken to the library by their teacher, introduced to the librarian and the uses of the library. Usually a story is told and books...recommended" (NYSED annual report 1929, note by Ethel Blake). In 1931 the club turned over operations to the Bethlehem Central School District, which hired Eula Hallam to be the library's first professional librarian and purchased contiguous land in anticipation that the library would continue to flourish.



Delmar Public Library's first "official" librarian Eula Hallam, c. 1933
(Bethlehem Public Library archives)

The Progress Club's decision to relinquish a project to which they had given so much thought and energy for so long must have been heart-wrenching. Mrs. Floyd Hiller, secretary for the Delmar Free Library Association, recorded on April 17, 1931 that the vote to transfer the library to the school district was taken "after a long and rather sorrowful discussion" (handwritten note, library archives). Provision was included in the motion that the property revert to the

Association should it cease to be maintained as a public library. The Association formally revoked that provision years later, when the building became the school district's headquarters and the library moved to its current location.

The Delmar Progress Club continued to serve the town in myriad ways, establishing a choral society, running community flower shows, planting trees, vigorously supporting charities and nonprofits in the Capital District, and organizing a Bethlehem driving tour at the town's behest. When the original library building was expanded in 1953, the Progress Club raised money to furnish the new Community Room.



Progress Club members Mrs. Murray Klingaman and Mrs. Anthony Proto relax during an antiques exhibition held in the library community room in 1961. The event was a fundraiser for the third and final extension of the library building at Hawthorne and Adams. *(Bethlehem Public Library archives)*

Community room chairs: a generous donation put to good use *(Bethlehem Public Library archives)*



Membership has grown from eleven women in 1901 to a current roster of 262 (November 2012). As membership rose, member interests became more varied, and in the early 1930s the club established interest groups—an organizational innovation that to this day accommodates the varying inclinations of a larger membership.

One of those early groups, the Civic Betterment Committee, named all the streets in Delmar so that the post office could initiate home delivery. It also petitioned the town for garbage collection, prohibition of firearms, and limits on 4th of July fireworks. Impetus for the formation of the Town Planning Board is credited to this group.

Today we see evidence of the club’s investment in the library every time we enter the building. The property’s extensive gardens were designed and planted by Progress Club members in 2004-05. They have faithfully tended and improved them ever since, providing a spectacular display that graces all seasons.



The entrance gardens today (*Bethlehem Public Library archives*)

In 1936, club historian Clara Boynton wrote of their founders that the Progress Club “stands as a monument to them, for they built better than they realized.” Her successor Alice Porter wrote in 1967, “To justify our existence we must do for others.” They have built well and done well—for women, for the library, and for the community.



A book good enough to eat: Progress Club president Dorothy Kellum (l.) and former library director Barbara Rau at the library's 50th anniversary celebration in 1963. (*Bethlehem Public Library archives*)

Former library directors Barbara Mladinov (l.) and Barbara Rau at the library's 75th anniversary celebration, 1988 (*Bethlehem Public Library archives*)



Delmar Progress Club float, 1976 Bethlehem Memorial Day Parade (*Delmar Progress Club archives*)



Architect's drawing of the first library building, 1913
(Bethlehem Public Library archives)



Delmar Free Library in 1925 (Bethlehem Public Library archives)

Chapter 2

Building

The tiny schoolroom—some claim it was a broom closet—that became the Delmar Free Library in 1913 was soon inadequate to its task. In 1916, after some negotiation of terms, the Delmar Progress Club accepted a donation of land from the George C. Adams estate and built the town's first library building on Hawthorne Avenue and Adams Place. Money was raised the old-fashioned way—lantern slide lectures, food sales, drama performances, card parties, and door-to-door appeals. The new library's design was donated by W. P. Pember, the architect-husband of a Progress Club member. The new library—a 720-square-foot cottage with a stucco exterior—opened in 1917 with a \$1,135.06 mortgage, which was discharged by 1920.



Vintage library, vintage cars, 1935 (*Bethlehem Public Library archives*)

The Progress Club staffed this library for another fourteen years; their volunteer service included bookbinding and custodial work as well as the business of lending books. In 1931 they approached the Bethlehem school district and committed the library to its care. The school district took over

proprietorship, hired paid staff, and purchased a bookmobile—the first in New York State to be operated by a school district public library.

As the town and the school district grew, the little building on Hawthorne and Adams saw three additions. The first, completed in 1954, expanded the building to 6,850 square feet at a cost of \$75,000. The added space accommodated 31,000 books and included a children’s room and a community room with kitchenette for use by community groups. The new meeting space was furnished with funds from a community auction sponsored by the Progress Club. A garage was built in 1959 for the bookmobile, periodical storage, and building maintenance; in 1961 a porch was enclosed and repurposed as a young adult room.



The library had added two wings by 1961.
(undated, Bethlehem Public Library archives)

New shelving arrived in 1967 to accommodate the piles of books stored on the floor—but by 1969, shelving designed for 31,000 books held 56,000 volumes, 1,400 record albums and 235 magazine subscriptions with three to five years’ worth of back issues, as well as pamphlets, picture files, music scores, maps and slides. The building had reached the limit of its capacity and usefulness. It became clear that a large-scale remedy would be required soon. In October of that year, the Bethlehem Board of Education announced that a vote would be taken to fund a new library building at a cost of \$1.5 million.



Series of cartoons by Edwin Becker published in the Spotlight before the November 1969 vote
(Spotlight 10.9, 10.16, 10.23 and 11.13.1969, used with permission)

Library trustees had worked for five years to develop this project. Among their criteria were a central location on a bus line, safe pedestrian and vehicular access, and adequate parking capacity. The proposed structure, sited on the corner of Delaware and Borthwick Avenues, was designed by Howard Geyer of Geyer and Hollister Associates in Delmar, but the inspiration and vision came from library director Barbara Rau. Her detailed proposal for the new library included provision for 32,000 square feet, with an expansion capacity of 10,000 square feet.



l. to r. Library director Barbara Rau, librarian Carol Alric, Marion Bardole and Mary Wasserbach examine blueprints for the new library building, 1970. (Bethlehem Public Library archives)

Circulation in 1969 was roughly 240,000; Rau foresaw a future circulation of half a million. (That benchmark was reached by 1992; currently it approaches three-quarters of a million.) Twenty years before the Americans With Disabilities Act, her proposal also called for single-floor access with no barriers to persons with disabilities. And long before environmentalists began advocating native plantings, her landscaping plan called for native plants and trees.

The referendum passed 1,370 to 1,145—a margin of 225 votes—on November 18, 1969. Bethlehem’s school district population at the time was about 23,000; 14,500 citizens held library cards.

Among those present at the groundbreaking ceremony in September 1970 was Sybil Selkirk, a past Progress Club president whose mother, Ethel A. Blake, had served as the second president of the Delmar Library Association from 1921-1941. Ethel had also been one of the original volunteers who staffed the library in its earliest days.

A projected opening date was set for November 1971. The enormous task of packing and moving began—and there was seasoned firewood to dispose of. The library’s adult lounge—once the original tiny library building—featured a fireplace, preserved through all those renovations. The winter before the move, staff kept a fire burning from 1-9pm each day, to use up firewood donated over the years. In that venerable woodpile were applewood from Adams Place, a maple chunk from Unionville, and the last of a great elm on the property that had succumbed in 1954.

The November 1971 opening date was delayed until the following spring; library officials cited shortage of manpower and supplier delays. A fire in the shelf-supplier’s factory warehouse held up the works in February 1972.

Moving day was finally set for the first week in May, and the community pitched in to help. The month before the move, patrons were encouraged to borrow ten extra books each, to lighten the load for the move. A local National Guard contingent took on the heavy work—moving equipment, setting up shelving, and moving most of the library’s 70,000 books, some of which were packed in more than a hundred fruit boxes set aside by the Elsmere A&P.



View toward the plaza entrance from the parking lot, December 1970
(Bethlehem Public Library archives)



One of the building's distinguishing features, May 1971 (Bethlehem Public Library archives)



Interior view of mezzanine stairs and structural reinforcements, June 1971 (Bethlehem Public Library archives)



Barbara Rau's vision complete
(undated, Bethlehem Public Library archives)



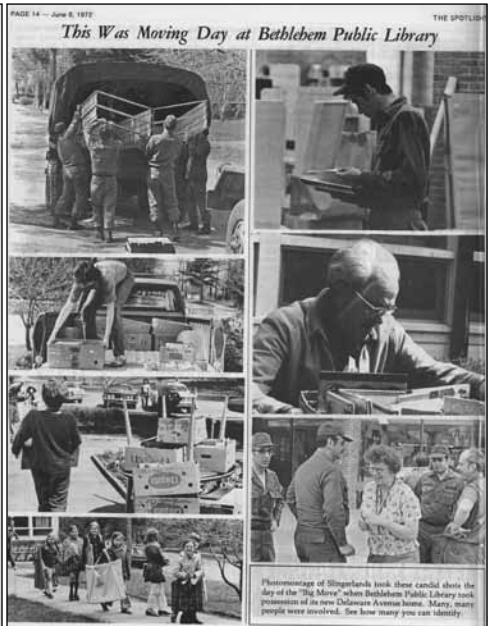
Elsmere A&P staff collect a hundred empty fruit boxes for the move. (April 1972, photo credit David Ashby; Bethlehem Public Library archives)

Cub Scouts moved library files; Girl Scouts moved the contents of the community kitchen and set up the new one. Members of the Tri-Village Welcome Wagon Club offered their help. A call also went out for a hundred high school volunteers to participate in a “March of the Records”—the 3,000 long-play albums that now made up the library’s audio collection. Exhorted to “be a part of the library’s Hit Parade,” each volunteer was asked to transport sixteen albums. Other volunteers were asked to move the library’s 3,000 magazines.

A thank-you note to the 1,895 moving day volunteers was published in the *Spotlight* on May 18, 1972: “Without you—no move! To the many people who moved the Library holdings and furniture: the folks who took out armfuls of books, the men of the First Battalion, 210th Armored Division, National Guard, the babies whose carriages rode full of magazines, the cake bakers, the Cub Scouts who ran errands, etc., the Girl Scouts who did a hundred things. Thank you all. Come see us.” No fines were charged that

month— a small token of gratitude to the community for approving this much-needed facility. The building on Hawthorne and Adams became the headquarters of the Bethlehem Central School District, and continued in that capacity until 2012.

The new library building—which three years later earned an award from the eastern New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects—accommodated over 120,000 books on shelves scaled to their users, unlike the precarious, ceiling-high shelves in the former building. An elevator linking the first floor to the mezzanine eased movement of materials and provided for disabled staff. Wider aisles between stacks and the open, one-story floor plan accommodated disabled patrons. Like its predecessor, the new building included meeting space and a kitchen, continuing its role as a place where Bethlehem’s citizens and service groups could gather. In 1984, board president and 20-year trustee Ethel Birchenough enhanced the community room with a generous gift— the Kawai grand piano still in use today for concerts and recitals.



Teen volunteers on Moving Day (courtesy Spotlight, used with permission)
 Moving Day montage (courtesy Spotlight, used with permission)



Barbara Rau pitches in at the
checkout desk, 1974
(*Bethlehem Public Library archives*)



Reference area, 1974
(*Bethlehem Public Library archives*)



Fiction stacks, 1974
(*Bethlehem Public Library archives*)

In 1973, library trustees were offered the building and land at the corner of Borthwick and Delaware Avenues. The cost would have been \$107,000. The trustees saw an opportunity, citing “provision for the future; rising property costs; to make a dangerous corner safer and protect library users” (*Spotlight* 6.7.73). The proposal went to the voters in the form of a referendum, and was defeated.

The town’s population continued to grow, and library holdings and services grew to meet increased use and demand. The library’s floor plan went through a series of iterations, and what was once commodious gradually became cramped. In 1990, the trustees announced in their annual budget message that they had “begun the long-range planning necessary to identify the growing needs and possible solutions” (*Footnotes*, May/June 1990).

The building’s second-floor mezzanine was designed to accommodate a full second floor if the need arose, and in 2000 a major building project was proposed that included this and other expansions and upgrades. But a bond in the amount of \$8.5 million—which included leasing of temporary space during construction—was defeated by the voters in December of that year.



Renovation 2004:
information desk
(*Bethlehem Public Library archives*)

In 2003 another bond in the amount of \$1.5 million went up for a vote. This time the plan was to reconfigure existing space more efficiently without adding to the building's height or footprint. The referendum passed in June of that year. Work began in October and was completed in a little over six months; the library remained open all but five days during that time. Construction took place in five phases, with patrons, staff and materials moving around the building to accommodate the work in different locations. Despite the upheaval, materials circulation exceeded half a million that year. The following year, circulation jumped to 627,987, clearly influenced by a renovation design that reflected an evolution in library services.

That renovation produced the interior we see today: ADA upgrades, a central information desk and improved checkout desk, expanded technology capacity, better lighting, a cheerful Children's Place, a dedicated teen area, three enclosed study rooms, and a local history room—the latter repurposed in 2012 as a small public meeting room. Sight lines have been restored and collections moved to more logical places. Banks of public computers serve both adults and young folks; freestanding catalog terminals dot the floor. The building is equipped for wireless computer use, inside and out.

This fine interior facelift demanded a similar effort on the grounds. An independent Landscape Committee was formed in 2004 to spearhead this project. The committee comprised representatives from the community, including Bethlehem First, Bethlehem Garden Club, Delmar Progress Club, and Friends of Bethlehem Public Library. An architect was enlisted to provide the overall design and hardscape. Most of the funding came from community donors, and most of the planting and garden design was accomplished by volunteers. The Progress Club has maintained these gardens ever since the first daffodils brightened the property. The library grounds provide an exuberant three-season display worthy of being included in Bethlehem's annual spring garden tour in 2013.

As part of the landscape project, a memorial bench campaign was also launched in 2004. Now twenty-two benches honoring donors' friends and relatives offer pleasant places for reading, conversation, contemplation and rest.

By 2008, over 300,000 people were visiting the library each year, and parking—especially on days when several library and community programs were on the calendar—was becoming an issue. Additional property had been acquired in 2000 and 2005 with the purchase of two contiguous lots at 51 and 53 Borthwick Avenue. This purchase was in accord with the board’s recognition of the library’s growing use as a community center.

In 2009, an architect was again employed to design a larger, safer, accessible and aesthetically pleasing parking lot. Parking capacity was increased by 35%, and parking for people with disabilities was expanded. Pedestrian crossings and a larger curbside book drop were installed, and a shelter was erected for persons waiting for rides on stormy days. Several large trees were relocated rather than destroyed, and in the spring of 2010 the Progress Club again stepped up with garden plans, plants, shrubs and trees.

Since its beginnings in the little schoolroom on Kenwood Avenue, Bethlehem’s library has responded to the needs of a growing community by growing and refining its facilities to accommodate expanding collections and services. The world has changed dramatically in the course of a hundred years, and the library’s role has evolved as well. It has become an information gateway, but it has also become a garden in our midst, where neighbors, friends and families gather to learn, explore, and have fun together.



Spanking new in 1931: New York State's first school district bookmobile was operated by Delmar Public Library. *(Bethlehem Public Library archives)*

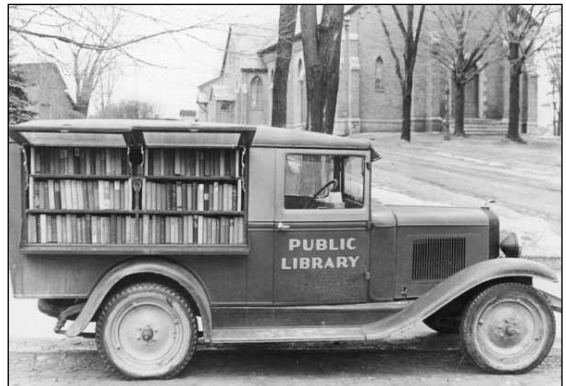


Braving the cold at Van Wies Point, January 1942 *(Bethlehem Public Library archives)*



Bookmobile at a Slingerlands school on New Scotland Road *(undated, courtesy Ann VanDervort)*

...and at the Community United Methodist Church in Slingerlands *(undated, courtesy Ann VanDervort)*



Chapter 3

Travelling

On December 9, 1931, a mere seven months after the transfer of the library from the Progress Club to the Bethlehem school district, the library's first bookmobile—a station wagon converted to accommodate 400 books—began its rounds. It was driven by Eula Hallam, the library's first professional librarian, and traversed about 34 miles each week. The Delmar Library bookmobile was the first in New York State to be operated by a school district public library.

In 1942 the station wagon was replaced by *Moby Dick*, a converted Mack truck customized to carry 1,000 books. Wartime conditions, especially gas rationing, immediately curtailed its service to rural areas. The Slingerlands, Elsmere and Bethlehem Center grade schools, the Unionville School, and the Clarksville General Store served as temporary library branches in the interim. The grade schools housed 350 books each, the Unionville School kept 200, and the Clarksville General Store retained 500. Refreshed frequently by library staff, these books saw a combined circulation of 1,942 items from October to December 1942.

In response to a seventeen-page petition, the federal government's Office of Defense Transportation granted a Certificate of War Necessity, and in June 1944 *Moby* returned to service. *Moby Dick* continued to take the library on the road for the next sixteen years.

The library's most well-travelled bookmobile was commissioned in 1959. It was custom-built by the Thomas F. Moroney Company of Shewsbury, Massachusetts on a 1959 International Harvester chassis. Dubbed "*Babe the Blue Ox*," it was state-of-the-art for the time and held 3,000 books. Before it saw service in Bethlehem, however, it travelled to Moscow's American National Exhibition in the summer of 1959, at the request of the American Book Publishers Council and the American Library Association. It went

the long way, transported by a Finnish freighter from Brooklyn's Pier 57 to Helsinki, then on to Moscow by rail.



Moby Dick and friends in 1945
(Bethlehem Public Library archives)

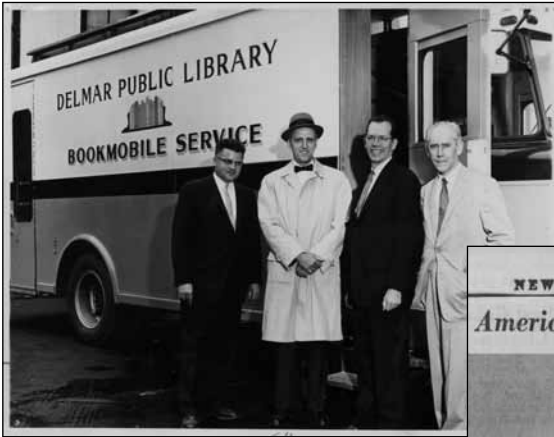
In addition to its store of books, the vehicle contained photographs of Delmar life captioned in Russian by R.P.I. professor Arman Bormanichinov. The library also provided 20,000 mimeographed greetings to Soviet visitors, which were virtually gone by the end of the exhibit's first day.

That bookmobile was extremely popular with Muscovites in those Iron Curtain days—so much so that about two thousand books mysteriously disappeared from the shelves. American publishers came to the rescue and airlifted 2,500 replacements to Moscow for the final days of the exhibition.



Moby Dick and friends in 1945
(Bethlehem Public Library archives)





Bound for Moscow (*New York Herald Tribune* 5.21.59, in *Bethlehem Public Library archives*)

The Bookmobile Goes to Moscow: on the Finn Lines pier in Brooklyn with l. to. r. bookmobile builder Thomas F. Moroney, library board president Theodore Wenzl, John Mackenzie Cory of the American Library Association, and Thomas J. McLaughlin, head of the Combined Book Exhibit delegation (*Publisher's Weekly* 5.25.59, photo by Robert Berenson, in *Bethlehem Public Library archives*)



A 3,000-book traveling library being hoisted aboard lighter for loading on a freighter at a Brooklyn pier yesterday. It is bound for Russia and the United States exhibit in Moscow from July 25 to Sept. 4. The bookmobile was provided by the town of Delmar. Also on the lighter, already on the lighter, is a shipment of home appliances and American home which is to be a feature of the exhibition.



Muscovites crowd into the Delmar Public Library bookmobile at the 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow (*Bethlehem Public Library archives*)

Mobile diplomacy: 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow (*Bethlehem Public Library archives*)



“Freedom to Read” is an idea that has resonated across oceans and ideologies, then and now.



Babe the Blue Ox in the field, circa 1960 (*Bethlehem Public Library archives*)

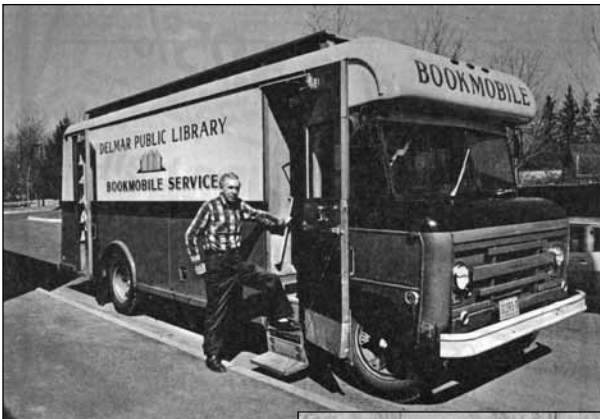
After that goodwill mission, Babe returned on January 5, 1960 and served the town of Bethlehem for more than sixteen years. With custodian Paul Goodfellow at the wheel, Babe traversed 200 miles a month, supplied with a representative sampling from each library collection. The bookmobile stopped every two weeks at prearranged locations in Slingerlands, Glenmont, Elsmere and Clarksville. Requests were also honored for doorstep service to houses in remote locations.

In July 1966, the GEX membership discount store in Latham, New York asked if the bookmobile could make a stop in their parking lot for a couple of hours on alternate Wednesday evenings. This request was granted, even though the store was outside the school district. It was seen as a valuable opportunity to show a greater public how bookmobile service worked and how it benefited the community at large.

One of Babe’s regular summer stops was the Clarksville firehouse every other Wednesday evening to show a film. Power for the projection equipment

was donated by James Brate, Sr., who provided access to electricity from his nearby store.

Eventually, fuel and maintenance costs took their toll, and Babe was retired on April 1, 1976, reflecting a trend in library service toward use of small vans or mail. It was replaced that December by the first of a succession of library vans—a canary-yellow Plymouth Voyager which made deliveries of books, magazines, pamphlets, recordings, and spoken-word cassettes to homebound residents in the district. This service became “Books to People” and continues today, bringing the library to temporarily or permanently disabled school district residents of all ages. Deliveries and pickups are still made every two weeks, although spoken-word cassettes have given way to DVDs, CDs and ebooks. Books to People carries forward a long tradition of expanding the library beyond its walls.



Library custodian Paul Goodfellow and Babe on their last week together (Spotlight 1.1.76)

The library's first van typified a general change in mobile library services. (Spotlight 4.1.76)



Liz Curtin and driver Paul Goodfellow prepare Bethlehem Library's new van for a new service to shut-ins. Cheryl Marks



The library's photocharger, 1974
(Bethlehem Public Library archives)

Chapter 4

Retooling

In 1967, hundreds of overdue books were tracked manually every week by the circulation department. This took 22 hours of staff time weekly. So in June of that year the library announced the launch of “automated checkout.”

“Automated checkout” in 1967 meant that library patrons no longer had to sign a card for each book they borrowed. Instead, a machine called a photocharger took a picture of the library card together with the book’s transaction card. This saved time for patrons but not for staff, who still had to manually check the photos against the due dates. But that’s not the most important part of the story—more on that later. First, here’s a look at library technology—from “ancient times” to the present.

In January 1974 the library purchased an IBM Model D electric typewriter for public use with proceeds from book sales. In 1976 a microfiche reader was installed, so patrons could access New York State Employment Service information in the library’s new job information center—one of only four such centers in the Capital Region. And in 1983, with help from the Upper Hudson Library System, the library set up a “public microcomputer room” equipped with an Apple IIe and printer. Soon the library was offering workshops for patrons on resumé preparation using computer software. Workshops for AppleWorks—an integrated word processor, spreadsheet and database manager—were offered repeatedly by popular demand.

In 1981, the library was manually managing an annual circulation count of 300,000. By the fall of that year, an automated circulation system was up and running behind the checkout desk, streamlining the whole operation and greatly increasing efficiency and accuracy.

In 1994, the holdings of seven libraries in the Upper Hudson Library System—Bethlehem Public Library among them—were linked in a

prototype automated catalog called LAARC (Library Automation in Albany and Rensselaer Counties). The computers were connected via telephone line to a Digital Equipment Corporation minicomputer—roughly the size of a modern-day server—located at Albany Public Library. That same year, a prediction was offered about access to the catalog from home:

Bethlehem and the other libraries in the UHLS system are striving to offer home access within the next few years. Patrons will need a computer and a modem, a device that transmits data via telephone lines. Online catalogs are the first step in libraries becoming part of the rapidly evolving computer networks that will link systems worldwide. This will be the mega-network now called the “information highway.” (Footnotes, May/June 1994)

A system-wide online catalog/automated circulation system followed. Called UHLAN (Upper Hudson Library Access Network), it was operational on a limited basis by the end of 1996. Seventeen terminals—for public and staff—were installed at Bethlehem Public Library, with a prediction that the building would eventually house 40 computers. Today the library has over a hundred: 20 public computers, 9 catalog stations, 52 staff computers (service desks and workstations) and 21 laptops for general patron use and library-sponsored programs. WiFi and high-capacity fiberoptic technology make this possible.



Old-fashioned board, new-fashioned players: WiFi chess game on library grounds (Bethlehem Public Library archives, used with permission)

Library staff began linking all holdings—160,000 items in 1996—to the new system, and integrating patron registrations. This proved a monumental task. Early predictions that the catalog would be fully operational the following spring were soon amended. By the summer of 1997, 50,000 items were linked; the job was not finished for several more months. But when it was done, the card catalog disappeared forever, and so did the idea that a library is limited to one building; now patrons have access to the shelves of all 29 libraries in the Upper Hudson Library System. Today’s automated system, in conjunction with an efficient courier service, generally moves materials among Upper Hudson libraries within a day or two.



Card catalog, 1972 (*Bethlehem Public Library archives*)

Networking at an automated catalog station, 2012
(*Bethlehem Public Library archives, used with permission*)



July 1998 marked one of the library’s first workshops for the public that addressed online technology. “Walking Through the Web” helped patrons find and evaluate websites, learn how to browse Netscape Navigator, and use the library website. Capacity crowds attended.

By September 1998, patrons could access the catalog and the library’s periodical database remotely via telnet software. In-house, three public Internet stations were up and running; patrons could sign up for a half-hour

per day, with extra time on a walk-in basis. Cost to print was 10 cents a page, and hasn't gone up since. Blank floppy disks—remember those?—cost a dollar at the reference desk.



Public computers, 2012 (*Bethlehem Public Library archives, used with permission*)

Also in 1998, the youth services department launched a homework help center, open Thursday evenings from 6-8pm during the school year. A homework computer and Internet access were available on a drop-in basis to students in grade K-8. Materials, equipment and software were coordinated with those of the Bethlehem Central School District. That initiative was revived in early 2013—this time with iPads and a cadre of teen volunteers available to help with basic homework questions.

In January 1999, the library launched “Look It Up”—a series of programs to help patrons navigate the library’s growing collection of online research tools. That collection has evolved and expanded over the years as these databases have proliferated and patrons of all ages have become more technologically sophisticated. Dozens of excellent online resources for children, teens and adults, chosen by librarians, are now available in the library and from home. Librarians have become experts in finding and selecting the most reliable, current, and appropriate online resources from an often bewildering array of possibilities.

As the end of the 20th century ticked toward the 21st, the world held its breath in the shadow of what was dubbed “Y2K” and its predictions of dire consequences for computers and computer-driven infrastructure. It seems that technology experts had not made provision for the first two digits of the new century. The library newsletter for November/December 1999 assured patrons that the library was “Y2K ready:”

The library has taken all the recommended steps to assure a smooth electronic transition into the new century. For more than a year, our Y2K committee has evaluated the situation, prioritized areas of concern, and solicited compliance assurances from our equipment and service providers. Of course, we are as vulnerable as anyone else to circumstances beyond our control, such as telephone and power outages. Nevertheless, we have laid contingency plans and are anticipating a regular Sunday opening on January 2. (Footnotes, Nov/Dec 1999)

The old century passed into the new without a hitch.

One of the first purchases in 2000 was a collection of 30 DVDs. At the time, only 6,000 titles were available in this new medium, compared to 70,000 on VHS tape. In addition to the timely *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the library’s first DVDs included *Dances with Wolves*, *Gone With the Wind*, *Good Will Hunting*, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, *Moonstruck*, *The Matrix*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *X-Files: the Movie*; as always, diverse patron preferences guided selection. VHS tapes were retained for a few years along with the growing DVD collection, but most were phased out by 2009. The library’s DVD collection now contains over 7,000 disks: feature films, children’s fare and documentaries, operas and musicals, TV series, travelogues, and tutorials of all kinds.

In September 2001 the library opened its first wireless computer lab; the laptops were purchased with a technology grant from the Albany County legislature. The lab enabled hands-on computer and Internet training for up to six people at a time. Workshops covered a range of basic skills, including how to set up an email account, search the Internet, and navigate the library website. This led to Computer Partners—one-on-one instruction for adults in computer basics—which was launched in 2005 and continues to this day.

In the past decade, the library's commitment to helping patrons use and understand technology has grown and adapted to a rapidly changing environment that includes WiFi, electronic gaming, online learning of all sorts, remote printing capability, digitization of local history ephemera, an increasingly interactive website, social media, downloadable books, ebooks, and ereaders.

Remember the 1967 version of “automated checkout”? The important part of the story is that at the time, the new technology was reported as “the latest step in the library's effort to give the community the most efficient service possible.” In the intervening years, technology has stormed the library world, revolutionizing cataloging and circulation, changing the way we think about and conduct research, linking libraries and their resources locally, regionally and globally. The library strives to continue “the most efficient service possible” as it begins its next hundred years.



Remote printer and two-way computer instruction station at the information desk, 2012 (*Bethlehem Public Library archives, used with permission*)

In 2012 the library began loaning ebooks preloaded with all of an author's works. (*Bethlehem Public Library archives*)



Chapter 5

Continuing

The library's diverse collections reflect the breadth and depth of community interests and needs. Books in their many genres and forms—hardcover, paperbacks, audiobooks, and a growing number of ebooks—are the mainstay. The bulk of the collection is, of course, hardcover fiction and nonfiction at all age levels. Beyond these, a few facts about other collections are noteworthy.

The library's collection of large-print books—2,900 volumes spanning several genres—began with fifty large-print titles acquired by library director Barbara Rau in 1967. The weekly large-print edition of the *New York Times*, now purchased by the library, was donated in those days by the Delmar Rotary Club.

Music has been available for loan since the '60s, when Rau purchased the library's first collection of long-play vinyl records for \$25. That collection, begun with the idea that it would attract more people to the library—has morphed into 3,840 music CDs ranging from rock and pop to classical, folk, and world music.

Magazines and newspapers, long available for loan in paper form, are now greatly enhanced by online subscriptions purchased by the library; both formats cover a galaxy of interests.

Over the years, other special collections have been added: multiple copies of book discussion titles, publications of interest to parents and teachers, local history documents and research tools, medical, consumer, financial and career collections. Along the way, space-eating hardcover reference volumes have given way to electronic versions. Movies were loaned in VHS format until 2009, gradually ceding shelf space to DVDs. The library's newest collections—300 videogames, 530 audiobooks, and 1,320 ebooks—are a response to the community's ever-increasing interest in new media.



Browsing the DVDs, 2012
(Bethlehem Public Library archives)



Storyhour with librarian Anna
Parrott, 1965 (Bethlehem Public
Library archives)



Summer Reading Club Parade 1973
(Bethlehem Public Library archives)

The library hosted the New York State Summer Reading kickoff event in May 2012. l. to r.: Upper Hudson Library System Executive Director Timothy Burke, Bethlehem Town Supervisor John Clarkson, Bethlehem Central School District Superintendent Thomas Douglas, NYS Representative Steven McLaughlin, NYS Senator Neil Breslin, NYS Deputy Commissioner for Cultural Education Geoffrey Cannell, library director Geoffrey Kirkpatrick (Bethlehem Public Library archives)



The years have seen the coming and going of various ephemerals, most of which have bowed to changing interests, limited storage space, and the Internet: quilt and sewing patterns, framed art prints for loan, catalogs and a coupon exchange, jigsaw puzzles, restaurant reviews and menus, and tax forms. Of these, only the tax forms survive today, both online and in their annual appearance in paper form from January to April.

But these material collections are only part of the story. The library's intangibles—programs and services—have enriched the life of the community daily and helped people cope with an increasingly complex world.

To give an account of a hundred years of programs and services would expand this book to several hundred pages. The most striking observation is that so little has changed over the years. Stories were read to children from the earliest days; the library has offered a regular schedule of preschool and family storytimes for decades. The annual Summer Reading Program—a requisite vacation activity for many children and their parents before them—has expanded to include children from preschool to high school, with opportunities to participate via computer log-in. The recent inclusion of preschoolers echoes the formation of a Read-To-Me Club in the summer of 1972.

What began in the summer of 1967 as Teen Time on the Green became Evenings on the Green two years later. Evenings on the Green welcomed folksinger Bill Spence as its first guest performer. This family series—which in its early years included talent shows, magicians, gymnastics, plays, and square dancing—has become an annual summer potpourri of rock, pop and folk music enjoyed by blanket-and-lawn-chair bearers of all ages. Judging from the crowds that fill the library's generous green space these days, it is hard to imagine how the former building's back lawn sufficed.

Summer concerts sparked a series of winter performances called A Little Sunday Music, which debuted in 2002. Successive seasons have explored everything from classical and early music to Broadway hits, choral repertory, opera, and 19th century parlor music. A decade later this popular series is still going strong, thanks to the support of the library's Friends.

The Friends of Bethlehem Public Library have been instrumental in expanding what is possible. They support cultural and educational programs



In 1984, long-time trustee Ethel Birchenough gifted the library with a grand piano, still in use today for concerts and recitals. Birchenough (l.) at the piano with former library director Barbara Mladinov (*Bethlehem Public Library archives*)

for the community and assist the library with special projects and purchases not covered by traditional funding. Their generosity launched Writers and Friends in 2008, with a roster of visiting authors that has included such luminaries as Russell Banks, Chris Bohjalian, Susan Cheever, Jeffery Deaver, Julia Spencer-Fleming and Donald Westlake among others; this year the library welcomes Gregory Maguire, Sue Grafton and Tess Gerritsen.

The Friends have underwritten the library's museum pass collection since 2007. They run bus trips to New York City during the winter holiday season, and, since 2009, excursions to Glimmerglass Opera in the summer for performances of *La Traviata*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Carmen*, *Aida*, and in 2013 a double bill—*The Flying Dutchman* and *Camelot*—always with lunch at the fabulous Otesaga Hotel. In 2000, they took a cue from the nation's fascination with "finds" and sponsored an antiques appraisal event. It was so popular that it was reprised in 2011 and 2012. In these and other ways, the Friends freely and generously contribute to the library's mission.

From 1990 to 2006, educator and longtime board president Theodor Wenzl was honored with an annual lecture series during American Education Week in November. The series' first guest was former UAlbany president Vincent O'Leary. Subsequent lecturers included, among others, Sol Hurok biographer Harlow Robinson, New Yorker contributor and author Dan Hofstadter, beloved Bethlehem Central High School teacher Helen Adler, *Albany Times Union* journalist and author Paul Grondahl, Albany Symphony Orchestra conductor David Alan Miller, and Hudson Valley artist Len Tantillo.



UAlbany president Vincent O'Leary talks with Wenzl Lecture attendees, 1990. (Bethlehem Public Library archives)

An ongoing, intermittent travel series begun in 2005 honors the memory of Delmar resident and avid traveler Al Russell. Film series over the years have celebrated such diverse subjects as mystery and suspense, silent movies, Jane Austen, westerns, and 1960s European cinema.

As technology has interjected itself into daily life, the library has been ready with workshops and one-on-one sessions to help people learn how to use it. From Apple IIe in 1983 to ebooks in 2013, library staff have become experts in the latest technological tools, and then shared their expertise with patrons.

In 1984, after almost two years of negotiations, public access cable television came to the library. The local cable franchise, via municipal agreement, purchases and maintains the equipment, and the library provides the rest:

studio space and utilities, staffing, technical support, and free expertise and instruction to citizens who wish to produce shows.

From an initial commitment of three or four hours of public programming per week, the station now provides an average of eleven hours of programming per day during the week and about nine hours of weekend shows. Its offerings over the years have included programs on the arts, public affairs, health, religion, and education. Most of these are produced by members of the community. The station also maintains a 24-hour community calendar.

The library's public access station will celebrate its thirtieth anniversary in 2014. From its beginnings as Bethlehem Channel 16 to its current form as the Bethlehem Community Network, public access television at the library has given the community a voice.

The library's television studio is just one example of how the library shares its space with the community. The first renovation at Hawthorne Avenue and Adams Place in 1954 included a meeting room and kitchenette for use as community meeting space—a function the library considers essential. Since 1972 the current building's two meeting rooms and kitchen have been the gathering place for scouts, collectors, musicians, book clubs, service clubs, civic meetings, town and school groups, discussion groups, writers' groups, support groups and parent groups. These rooms also serve the town as a polling place. In 2011-12 Bethlehem Public Library's meeting rooms accommodated over 400 public meetings and over a thousand library programs.

The library's definition of community space also extends vertically. The lobby walls have hosted exhibits by artists in the community since the building opened in 1972. To this day, Bethlehem's artists have signed up to display work in a variety of media for a month, free of charge. There is a waiting list of two years.

The current building's first exhibitor was Florence Becker, who displayed her award-winning photographs. The permanent mural across from the interior entrance doors was a gift of her husband, artist Edwin Becker. "Man: The Symbol Maker" was finished for the opening of the new building in May 1972.

For its first eighteen years, the library was staffed entirely by volunteers—the intrepid women of the Delmar Progress Club. Community volunteers continue to be a vital conduit for library services, and in turn, provide an avenue for many who are interested in giving back to their community. Teens volunteer to help with Summer Reading Program activities and the library’s Homework Center. Computer-savvy adults tutor other adults in basic computer and Internet skills as part of an ongoing Computer Partners program conceived, structured and operated by the library since 2005. Since the landscaping renovation in 2005, volunteer gardeners design, plant and maintain the gardens on the library grounds. The library’s latest venture is a volunteer job coach, engaged to offer expert help to adults and students looking to polish their job-search skills.

The library has gone on the road, as well, from the first bookmobile route in 1931 to Books to People deliveries today. Library staff visit Bethlehem’s elementary, middle and high schools, run summer storytimes in the Bethlehem town parks, stock a summer paperback rack at the town pool, share books with nursing home residents, and partner programs with Bethlehem Senior Projects, Inc. From its beginnings, the library has looked for meaningful ways to connect with young and old, the infirm, and the underserved.

Bethlehem Public Library’s collections, programs and services reflect the evolving interests, needs and concerns of its community. In its hundred years of service to the town of Bethlehem and beyond, the library has continually found ways to creatively meet the challenges of change.



Library love: Valentine’s Day craft program
(undated, Bethlehem Public Library archives)

Concentration: library craft program,
2012 (Bethlehem Public Library archives, used
with permission)



“For the Years to Come”

—an Afterword

The past hundred years have encompassed two world wars, global and local violence, the rise of automobiles and the suburbs they made possible, the invention of the first airplane and manned space flight. The tallest skyscrapers have been built and destroyed. Vast tracts of wilderness have been preserved; vaster tracts have been lost to industry and commerce. The personal computer has become mightier than the pen, and a world of information is literally available at one’s fingertips.

Amid these changes, Bethlehem Public Library was born, grew, and thrived, becoming one of the region’s major civic and cultural institutions. It has met society’s changes and challenges with skill and agility, becoming always what its community wants it to be. At the same time, it proves the maxim that “the more things change, the more they stay the same.” Book discussions, storytimes, concerts, meeting space, education, community outreach—these elements of community service have been a constant thread in this library’s history for a hundred years, and doubtless will be for a hundred more.

Libraries will continue to evolve, but they will survive because we need them to. They contain the treasures of the past, the energy of the present, and the seeds of the future. Long may they live.

Louise Grieco, May 2013

LIBRARY DIRECTORS*

Jessie Husted 1914-1921*

Ethel Blake, 1921-1931

Eula Hallam 1931-1935 *first paid professional librarian*

Elizabeth Moat 1935-1941

Dorothy Creifelds 1941-1943

Grace Farwell 1943-1948

Kathryn Obenaus 1948-1952 (acting)

Marcella Bopp 1952-1954

Frances Spatz 1954-1955 (acting)

Barbara Rau 1955-1975

Kay Ann Cassell 1975-1981

John Hodges 1981-1984

Barbara Mladinov 1984-1996

Nancy Pieri 1996-2011

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick 2011-present

**The school district began hiring paid credentialed librarians when the library came under its aegis in 1931; before that time, “librarian” was an honorary title. “Director” is a relatively recent development in Bethlehem Public Library’s administration.*

LIBRARY BOARD PRESIDENTS*

Jessie E. Husted 1914-1921

Ethel A. Blake 1921-1941

Arthur Schmidt 1941-1945

Mr. F. L. Ottman 1945-1949

Arthur Schmidt 1949-1950:**

Theodore Wenzl 1952-1980**

Ethel Birchenough 1980-1986

Joyce Strand 1986-1995

Susan Birkhead 1995-2002

John Hathaway 2002-2004

Paula Read 2004-2008

Aaron Baldwin 2008-2010

John Sobiecki 2010-2012

John McCarthy 2012-present

**Before 1931, "president" meant president of the Delmar Free Library Association. The library's first official trustees were drawn from that Association when the library became a school district library in 1931. Gertrude Gillett was elected to a one-year term, Florence Holmes two years, Grace Haswell three years, Isabella Ottman four years, and Ethel A. Blake five years. In subsequent annual elections, each seat became a 5-year term. Beginning in 1931 and ever since, library trustees have been elected by voters residing in the school district. The board of trustees increased from 5 to 7 in 1995, after a petition to the NYS Board of Regents was granted in December 1994.*

***No annual report found for 1950*

FIRST REPORT TO THE NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT 1914

copy

Annual library report for year ending June 30, 1914

To The University of the State of New York

Place Welmar, N. Y.

Name of library Welmar Free Library

If there are any questions which it is impossible to answer accurately, please do not leave a blank but give your best estimate, with a question mark before the number.

If it is not practicable to give the facts for June 30th, give them for your own date, clearly indicating the change wherever June 30th is printed in this blank.

Free for lending to public Yes

Lends to limited class only (Students, club members, subscribers, etc.) _____

Lends to limited class only but is free to public for reference _____

Free to public for reference (No circulation) _____

For reference use by limited class only (No circulation) _____

Number of weeks open during year 52

Number of days open each week 3

Number of hours open each day the library is open 1 1/2

For adults For children Total

Number of bound volumes at beginning _____

" " " added by purchase _____

" " " added by gift _____

" " " lost or withdrawn _____

Total number at end of year _____

Number of volumes in foreign languages _____

What languages are represented? _____

Stat-M 14-1300 (7-1310)

	Adults	Children	Total
Number of volumes of fiction lent free for home use	3673	323	3996
Number of volumes of nonfiction lent free for home use	245	57	302
Total free circulation for home use	3918	380	4298
Circulation from pay duplicate collection (if any)			
Total number of unbound magazines lent for home use			
Number of new borrowers registered during the year	253		
Total number of borrowers registered since 19 _____	(Insert the date of last renewal)		
Number of newspapers and periodicals currently received			
Do you make use of the State traveling libraries? <u>Have had two</u>			
Any special provision for children?			
Number of assistants to librarian <u>Members of Association</u>			

Receipts from		Payments for	
Local taxation	\$ _____	Books	\$288.67
State grants	200.00	Periodicals	
Endowment funds		Binding	
Membership fees		Salaries, librarian	
Fines	25.22	" assistants	
Gifts	199.45	" janitor service	
Entertainments	52.77	Rent	
Other sources		Heat and light	
Total	\$477.44	Permanent improvements	
Unexpended balance from previous year	\$ _____	Other expenses	41.21
Grand total	\$477.44	Total	\$329.88
		Balance on hand	\$147.56
		Grand total	\$477.44

Rules for counting circulation

1 The circulation should be accurately recorded each day, counting one for each lending of a bound volume for home use.

2 Renewals of books under library rules at or near the end of regular terms of loan may also be counted, but no increase should be made because books are read by others or for any other reason.

3 Books lent directly through delivery stations and branches should be included, but the circulation from collections of books sent to schools or elsewhere for distribution should not be included. A separate statement of such traveling libraries should be made.

4 Books lent for pay (pay duplicate collection) should be reported separately in the space provided.

In these rules there is no intent to determine the policy of any library as to the manner or terms of circulation, but only to place the count on a uniform basis which will render comparison possible.

Additional information

Here insert statement regarding changes in organization, brief description of new rooms or building, increased facilities and any handicaps assumed but not required, with names of donors and amount, object and conditions of each gift, together with any other information useful for the summary of library progress printed in the report to the Legislature.

This is a new library - has been in existence only since September 1918. So our report is made for ten months. We have now at the publishers a list of books soon to be added to the library which will be included in next report. The books of this library are kept in a room set aside for our use in the public school building therefore we are under no expense for heat, light or janitor service.

Trustees' names

(Signatures not necessary, but names of all the trustees should be given)

Mrs. James E. Husted
 Mrs. Ida Boynton
 Mrs. Frank S. Sharp
 Mrs. Charles E. Shankles
 Miss J. Elizabeth Smith

Mrs. George J. Hatt Librarian

APPRAISE. This report must be verified by each of the presiding officer, either president of the institution or chairman of its trustees. The report should be read and approved by the trustees, but if this can not be done before August 1st, it should be sent as soon as sworn to and read to the trustees afterward. In the absence of the president, the acting president should verify the report as that it may be forwarded without delay.

STATE OF NEW YORK

COUNTY OF

12.

 Delmar _____ residing in _____ in said county, duly sworn, deposes and says that he is presiding officer of _____ that the foregoing report was prepared as directed on this sheet and he verily believes it to be in all respects true, and that an exact copy has been filed with the permanent records of the library.

Jessie R. Husted
 President of Delmar Free Library Assn

Subscribed and sworn to

before me _____ 1914

George J. Hatt
 Clerk

BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY ANNUAL REPORT 2011-12

POINTS OF INTEREST

- ♦ Writers and Friends welcomed authors Julia Spencer-Fleming, James Howard Kunstler, and a local author forum.
- ♦ Through an ALA grant, we hosted the national touring exhibit *A Fine Romance: Jewish Songwriters, American Songs 1910-1965*.
- ♦ Book Buddies, an ongoing read-aloud program, paired teens with kids in grade K-5 to build reading confidence.
- ♦ Ebook training sessions continued to provide help to new owners. We began lending ebooks and grew our ebook stash to include *Kindle Collections*—compilations of ALL books by a particular author.
- ♦ We traveled (in our community room chairs) to Iceland with Richard Hartnett, the Catskills with Alan Via and his dog Bookah, and various Capital District diners with Michael Engle.
- ♦ We added new opportunities for Bethlehem residents to volunteer at the library.
- ♦ Our library Friends sponsored an antiques appraisal and a book donation event.
- ♦ TV-18 became BCN-TV, available on Time Warner and FiOS channels.
- ♦ We partnered with the Bethlehem Emergency Management Office to present an Emergency Preparedness Fair.
- ♦ We celebrated the 200th anniversary of *Sense and Sensibility* with our program series Austentatious.
- ♦ We hosted a gallery talk by Bethlehem Town Historian Susan Leath in honor of her new book, *Bethlehem*.
- ♦ We continued to open up our meeting rooms to teens for group study before the January and June Regents exams.
- ♦ Monday Night at the Movies, book discussion groups, and Listening Parties drew loyal followings.
- ♦ We continued our ongoing service to the community through school and assisted living outreach, Books to People, participation in the Town's senior health fair, and our annual blood drive.
- ♦ Evenings on the Green and A Little Sunday Music are longstanding favorites that continue to draw large audiences each year.
- ♦ We hosted the statewide launch of Summer Reading in New York Libraries. Guests included Senator Neil Breslin, Representative Steven McLaughlin, BCSD Superintendent Thomas Douglas and Bethlehem Town Supervisor John Clarkson.

BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY ANNUAL REPORT 2011-12

MISSION

Bethlehem Public Library values its responsibility to enhance the general welfare and quality of life in the community and region it serves. The library pursues excellence in its mission: to provide equal and uncensored access to resources and services that encourage lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, and professional growth.

LIBRARY TRUSTEES

(CURRENT 2012-13)

John McCarthy, president

Jeremy Martelle, vice-president

Tamra Wright, treasurer

Mary Redmond, assistant treasurer

John Sobiecki, secretary

Joyce Becker, trustee

Mark Kissinger, trustee

trustees@bethlehempubliclibrary.org

FRIENDS OF BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY

(CURRENT 2012-13)

Elissa Zwiebach, president

Marsha Levin, vice-president

Michael Levin, treasurer

Sandra Ryther, secretary

Polly Hartman, Meryl Norek,

Marianne Purcell, Mary Kim Purcell,

Sue Viscuso, at-large members

Jillian Hooper, student representative

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, library liaison

<http://friends.bethlehempubliclibrary.org>

BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY ANNUAL REPORT 2011-12

GOODS AND SERVICES

PEOPLE

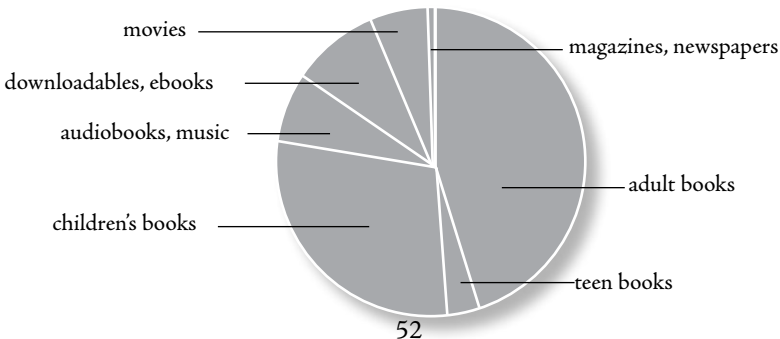
Bethlehem population	26,609	
library cardholders	19,765	
library visitors	_____	379,007
website visitors	343,470	
library staff, full-time	31	
library staff, part-time	44	
(includes student pages)		

BUDGET _____ \$3,941,450

personnel	\$3,030,375
materials	\$344,000
operations	\$567,075

COLLECTIONS _____ 136,959 items

adult books	61,260
teen books	4,525
children's books	42,212
audiobooks, music	9,437
downloadables, ebooks	12,485
movies	7,040
magazines, newspapers	265
museum passes	14



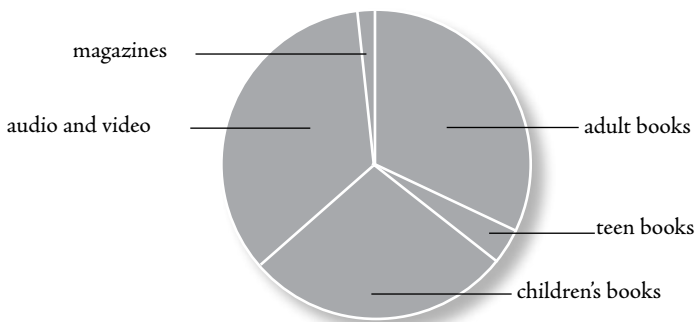
 BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY ANNUAL REPORT 2011-12

GOODS AND SERVICES

CIRCULATION

764,919

adult books	252,829
teen books	25,250
children's books	197,982
audio and video	274,585
magazines	14,273



SERVICES

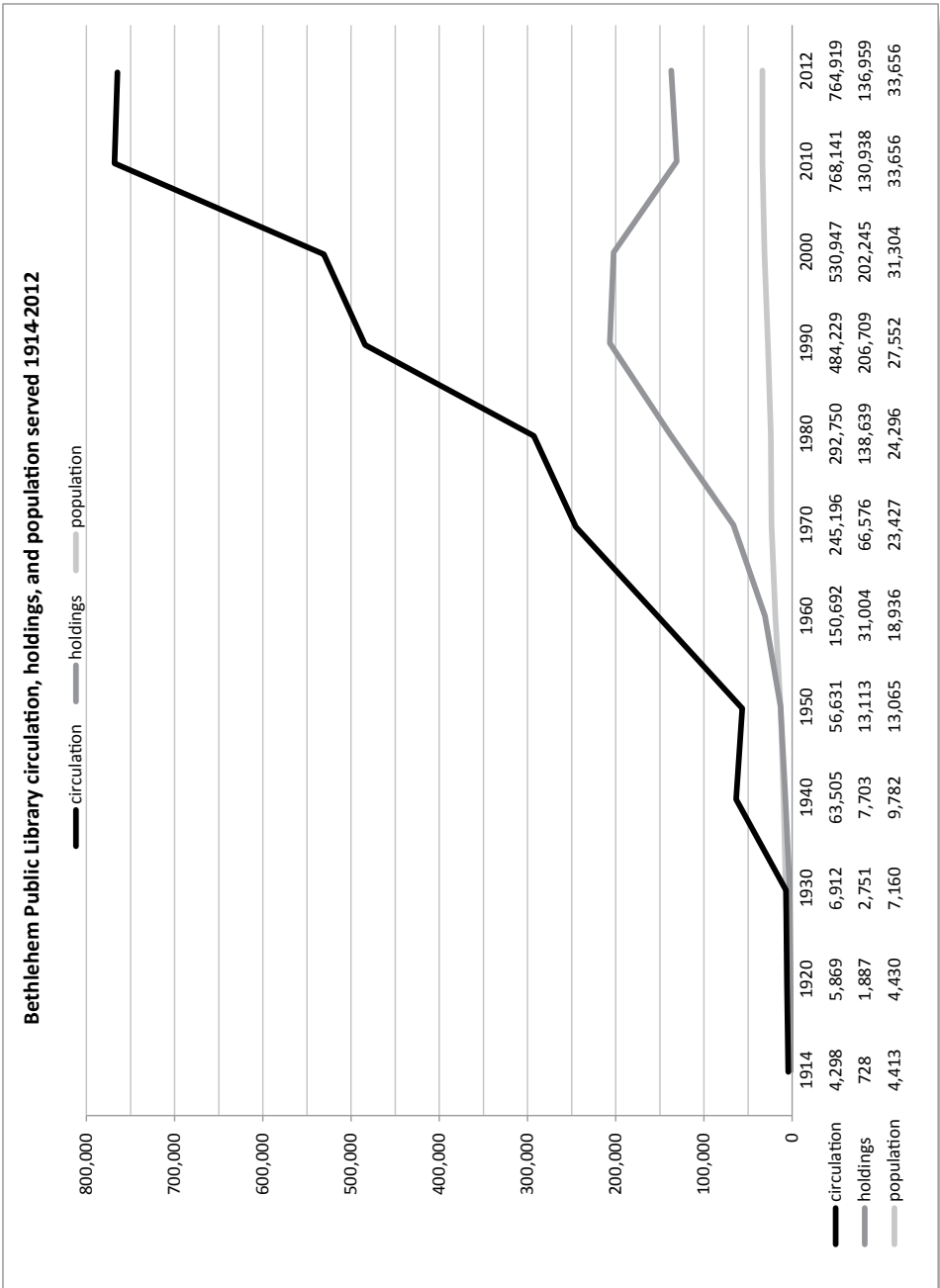
questions answered	82,594
holds placed	123,393
interlibrary loans in	81,352
interlibrary loans out	58,804
public meetings	400
public computer use	42,451
museum pass loans	682

we answered **1,588**
reference questions every week

PLUS

Computer Partners + museum passes + wireless access
 + wireless printing + study rooms + Bethlehem history
 online + Playaways + ebooks + *footnotes* newsletter +
 consumer health reference + BCSD yearbooks online
 + laptop loans + e-reader loans + local history collection

BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY CIRCULATION, HOLDINGS, AND POPULATION SERVED 1914-2012 — SOURCES AND NOTES



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2010: American Fact Finder. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. Web. 8 March 2013.

SOURCES:

Bethlehem Public Library reports to NYS Education Department (worksheets and copies) 1914-2010

Bethlehem Public Library annual report FY 2011-12

NOTES:

The library's first report to the NYS Education Department was filed in 1914, based on 10 months of operation.

1920 and 1950 reports to NYS Education Department were missing from library files; entries were taken from previous year.

HISTORY OF DELMAR PROGRESS CLUB FROM YEAR 1901 TO 1936, WRITTEN BY CLARA E. BOYNTON, HISTORIAN

(transcript, printed with permission of the Delmar Progress Club)

The Delmar Progress Club was organized in the fall of 1901 by Miss Elva Hinman, a young woman of charming personality and rare intellectual ability who received her inspiration from attending a meeting of a flourishing literary Club in Cobleskill.

Expressing her ideas to a few of her friends who heartily extended their co-operation, a meeting was called and the Progress Club was organized, later called Delmar Progress Club—its purpose to be the mental, moral, and social development of its members, and the civic betterment of the community.

Officers were elected. A Constitution and by-laws were drawn.

Its study started with a varied program prepared by a different committee every few weeks, and was made for a short time only. Consequently, a different line of work followed, until in the year 1903-1904 a printed program was issued for the year.

During the infancy of the Club, the by-laws were rigidly kept. The meetings were held at three in the afternoon at the different homes of the members. Every member was expected to be present at the roll-call. It was considered a grave error to be tardy and each member found guilty was so registered and a five-cent fee collected.

At each meeting, a critic was appointed for the following meeting. Her duty was to take note of words mispronounced, phrases that were ungrammatical or any expression or act that was not favorable to the dignity of the club—the mention or correction of which was to benefit the members.

She was also to note the general order and report all these items at the next meeting. In this way better poise and discipline were maintained.

At this time the club dues were fifty cents—a year later seventy-five cents, then one dollar, at present time (1927) two dollars.

A visiting committee was appointed each two weeks by the president. Their duty was to make calls especially on new residents. Object—mutual helpfulness.

For a time the meetings were held alternately--afternoon meetings at 3:30, evening meetings at 8 o'clock. Finally a vote was taken to hold all meetings in the evening.

Many countries have been studied: their physical features, history, people, religion, education, commerce and transportation, facilities, industries, poets, authors, artists, its noted men and women, social life etc.

Feb. 12, 1906 we made application to join the State Federation and in May 1916 we joined the National and General Federation.

I cannot tell all that has been accomplished. I will mention a few things done through the first thirty five years.

Our committee waited on the D. & H. Company requesting better train service. The Company complied.

We were instrumental in having smoking prohibited in the D. & H. depot.

A piano was purchased for the school building.

Singing was taught the children. Pictures were hung upon the walls.

A Parent-Teachers Association was organized in the year 1909—its object to stimulate healthy co-operation between the school and the home and to give support to any movement which had for its purpose the improvement of the school.

Many fine lectures, entertainments, and musicals have been given in the Churches for the benefit of the Community, the Club-members bearing all expenses.

Money was given from time to time to families who had illness or [were] in need.

A loan chest was established with full emergency equipment. The articles have been loaned to many, have proven a great help.

Perhaps, our greatest achievement was the building of the Delmar Free Library.

We wished to achieve something beneficial to this community for the years to come. Many suggestions were discussed and laid aside. Finally, Mrs. Frank Sharpe suggested building a library. This idea was enthusiastically received. One lovely afternoon in May 1913, thirteen club ladies gathered at the home of the Club secretary Mrs. Boynton—talked the matter over, organized, and went to work.

Food sales, card parties, masquerades, dramas, going from door to door soliciting gifts from friends, were the ways of obtaining means to build the pretty little library. Its first officials were President Mrs. James E. Husted, Vice President Mrs. Frank Sharpe, Secretary-Treasurer Mrs. Ira Boynton. A Constitution was adopted. The first library was in the old schoolhouse now the Masonic Temple until 1917. At that time the George B. Adams Estate gave the site on which the Library now stands. They were largely aided by generous contributions from Mrs. Wm. Sullivan who liberally donated to the memory of her husband—not only to the building fund but she freely and unselfishly paid for the finishing of the interior and the furniture.

A generous contributor was E. F. Williams who edited and donated the first family directory with the understanding that the sales of the directory would be used for the upkeep of the building. For years the ladies of the Club did all the work even to the cleaning and binding of the books. There was a small mortgage on the building but in 1920 the mortgage was discharged and burned and the Library was free from debt.

The older members gratefully remember Mr. W. P. Pember, our resident architect who generously donated his time and talent in the construction of the building.

With the growth of the community, the work of the carrying on the Library became more and more arduous and the official board decided to turn it over to the school district. In the evening of April 6, 1931, a delegation of

the Library Association, Mrs. Blake, Boynton and Rosboro met the School Board and discussed the situation and in May 1931, the School Board voted to accept and maintain the Library. Since that time the Board has purchased 60 ft. on Adams St. and 55 ft. on Hawthorne Avenue being in the rear of the Library Building for the protection of the interests of the Library.

The Club has grown in numbers from the original eleven women to its present enrollment of 250 representative women from all parts of the Tri-Village area. In 1929 the Club became legally incorporated, so that it could administer the nucleus of a building fund for a club-house, which is planned someday to own. In 1928 the Club sponsored the Community Chorus which developed into the splendid Choral Society of which we were justly proud. This enterprising group presented every year splendid concerts and several of the best known of Gilbert & Sullivan's light operas under the talented leadership of Prof. Fred Kerner.

By 1933 the Club had become so large that it was departmentalized, having five groups of study: The American Home, Drama, Garden, Government, Modern Literature and later the Music Group. The groups have been able to interest a large membership with varied tastes and interests.

The latest development of the Club has been the flower exhibit arranged by the garden group which has already become one of the best displays of the kind anywhere in Albany Co.

No account of the Progress Club would be complete without mention of the many prominent entertainers and speakers it has brought to Delmar and which has been shared with the community on its guest evenings.

As the Club has grown and prospered it is no exaggeration to say it has enriched the cultural and social life of our community and in this way it has truly carried out the early ambitions of its founders. Today it stands as a monument to them for they built better than they realized.

Not only in Delmar is the Club known but it has a reputation among the Club women of the State for carrying on one of the best programs of any of the Clubs in the State Federation of Women's Clubs.

In closing I will read a few lines written and dedicated to the Club by Miss Clara Dyer, daughter of our organizer.

*Beyond the hills the pathway leads, and we
Well-poised upon the mountainside,
Pause for a moment. Far below us lie the
Green and fertile fields of our endeavor
Dew-wet and smiling in the morning sun.
All we have labored, all that we have given
Of our abundance was well spent
For this—the larger vision of our hopes
And dreams come true.
We turn rejoicing,
Far beyond the hills the path still leads
And we have still to follow with our faith
A flame beyond us in the darkness
And our zeal a sword.*

Clara E. Boynton, Historian

HISTORY OF THE DELMAR PROGRESS CLUB 1901-1968

BY ALICE PORTER

(transcript, printed with permission of the Delmar Progress Club)

Close your eyes for a minute and picture what Delmar looked like 67 years ago. A little rural hamlet—no sidewalks—no street lights, two churches and no organizations.

Elva Hinman, a well-known woman in the community, had been to Cobleskill for a visit and was impressed with the Woman's Club there. Upon her return home, she called together interested women and there were eleven who responded. Some husbands there were who felt woman's place was in the home and would not let their wives go, saying, "It boded no good."

Mrs. Carolyn Rouse was elected President in 1901. The object of the Club, the Minutes state, was "for the mental, moral and social development of the members and the betterment of the community." Just how we have helped the morals would require some research but as for the betterment of the community, we have much evidence.

A critic was appointed to take notes of words mispronounced or grammatical errors or acts or expressions not in keeping with the dignity of the Club. For sixteen years there was a five-cent fine for being absent.

Picture these women going to meetings at night with lanterns in their hands; the Club started out as a porch party but changed to night meetings so the men could mind the children. The women were looking, figuratively speaking, for "light, more light," for only through knowledge and education and cooperative action could women improve themselves or their community.

Early timidity gave way to action and the Club joined the State Federation of Women's Clubs in 1904 and the General Federation in 1916.

The first visitors in 15 years to inspect the two-room schoolhouse were a committee from the Progress Club. They found repairs badly needed and saw to it that improvements were made. The women were shocked at the

conditions they found and set out to create interest in building a new school. (This is now the Masonic Temple.)

On February 6, 1909, the Club called a parent-teachers meeting and funds were raised to purchase a piano. The Principal agreed to have vocal instruction for a half-hour Fridays. A sewing club for mothers was conducted with twelve enrolled.

Picture again this community with no transportation to Albany except by train. When the six o'clock train came in, it looked like a factory let out. According to the Secretary's Minutes of the Club, I quote: "A committee was formed to wait on the officials of the D. & H. Railroad and to request better train service and a clean waiting room." The request was granted. In addition, "No Smoking" signs were posted, smoke being offensive to the ladies.

The Progress Club in 1912 raised money for books and [in 1913] set up the first free library in a little room at the head of the stairs in the school. They formed a library association and in 1916 with a Club membership of 25, set out to build a library. From the Adams estate the Club was given a piece of land on which to build. Money was raised by donations, lantern slide lectures, plays and food sales. When approached, one man said it was a "superfluity" and would not donate but his wife gave \$1; this is the library you enjoy today. For fifteen years it was run with volunteer service and one year a total of 4,246 books were loaned. As the town grew, so did the needs of the library until it became impossible to handle with volunteers. In 1931 it was given to the Central School District.

This "superfluity" in 1964 distributed 204,854 books. Were it not for the Progress Club, one may wonder if we would have a library today. We have never ceased our interest in the library. In 1954 a community auction sponsored by the Club raised money to furnish the Community Room.

In 1928 the Club organized a choral society with a paid director. For several years Gilbert and Sullivan operas were produced.

When the membership in the Club reached 200, it became impossible to meet in homes and arrangements were made to meet in the churches.

With the increase in membership, interests became varied and the Club departmentalized. Membership at this time had been increased to 300. We then made arrangements to meet in the Junior High School, which at that time was our High School.

In 1931 the Civic Betterment Committee was organized with Helen Piper as Chairman. Their first project was to get mail delivery. A petition to the Town Board revealed the fact that first the streets had to be named. (One street had four different names for its various sections.) Naming the streets seemed quite simple until it was learned that the streets for the entire Town of Bethlehem had to be named before the Town would erect street signs. This the Committee did and the houses were numbered, making the Town eligible for mail delivery.

Among other accomplishments of this Committee was an ordinance to control Fourth of July fireworks.

A second ordinance was brought about to prohibit the use of firearms in the community. There had been an epidemic of bullets shattering windows in several homes.

The Civic Betterment Committee petitioned the Town to provide garbage collection which did away with digging holes in back yards to bury the refuse.

At one time 150 trees were planted in back of the library and an elm tree was set each side of the library honoring the founder, Mrs. Hinman, and a much beloved President, Mrs. Humphrey.

In 1935 the Club organized a community flower show with Alice Porter as Chairman. Over 1000 visitors registered for the first show. This was an annual affair which continued for several years.

The Garden Group has done outstanding work in decorating the library and the Albany Rescue Mission for Christmas as well as arranging flowers for the Veterans' Hospital. This group plays an active part in the Tulip Show at the Albany Institute of History and Art, and again holds an annual flower show.

Almost since the beginning the Club has provided the Home for Incurables with pumpkin pies and jellies for Thanksgiving.

The association for the Blind finds the Club yearly topping the list in the sale of articles. For a time, a vacant store at the Four Corners was used for this sale, which was heated with a little coal stove. Up to this time (1965) the highest amount raised was \$1700 (as of 1967, \$2700).

An annual scholarship of \$50 was given to a worthy High School Senior with recommendation that an increase in the amount be made when possible (now in 1967 \$200 yearly). Contributions are made annually to the Ada Franklin Third District Scholarship Fund, and donations to many other civic and philanthropic organizations.

The State Scholarship Fund has been given \$75 which carried with it the privilege of placing three names on the Honor Roll. Members so honored are Mrs. Edwin Piper, Mrs. George Porter and Mrs. Burton Chase.

We have now adopted the policy of donating books to the library in memory of deceased members.

Several Progress Club members have held office in the State Federation; your author served ten years as State Historian and at the request of the General Federation, wrote a summary of 57 years of New York State Federation history, which was published.

The Delmar Progress Club is looked upon as a force in the community. It is now a practice for a representative of the Civic Betterment Committee to attend Town Board meetings. The Club is credited with being the instigator of the Town Planning Board.

When the Town Fathers wanted a tour of the Town of Bethlehem brochure planned, they came to the Progress Club in 1965. A drive-yourself tour registered 800 participants.

In 1966 an extremely successful "garden therapy" program was instituted in conjunction with, and at the request of, the Red Cross at the Veterans' Administration Hospital in Albany. This is proving to be very worthwhile in rehabilitating seriously handicapped patients.

As we review the past 67 years, we pay tribute to the founders of the Delmar Progress Club. We can look back with pride to its many accomplishments. We must not become just a social club, for to justify our existence we must do for others.

Matthew Arnold once said, "If ever the world sees a time when women shall come together purely and simply for the benefit and good of mankind, it will be a power such as the world has never known."

The Delmar Public Library A History

by

Barbara Hotaling

[1965]

Edited by Charles Fisher

Printed by *The Friends of the Bethlehem Public Library*

June 20, 1999

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The original of this document is a single undated typewritten copy that resides in the vertical file of the Bethlehem Public Library under the heading "Bethlehem Public Library – History". It consists of a title page, 15 pages of text, and a bibliography just over two pages.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Barbara Hotaling for the immense effort that went into the creation of this simple, succinct, story of our beloved institution. She clearly demonstrates to us the value of periodically taking stock and summing up. She allows us to become aware of other debts we owe to those who came even earlier. We acknowledge these debts by taking on the many tasks of moving the library's enterprise forward.

To engage the energies of the community in helping the library into its next phase, we must undertake the twin tasks of history: gathering the stories, and retelling them to a new generation. Both sets of tasks are essential. The facts, the records, must be patiently gathered day by day and organized in a way that makes them accessible. This is the work of the journalist and the archivist, and the library has been quietly carrying it on since its founding. But the gathering is not enough. Periodically those with affection for the institution must reformulate the facts into narratives of people and their lives, and tell them to all who will listen. The stories must be brought to life by the creative process. Inspiration, of ourselves and others, is the true goal.

Since The Delmar Public Library – A History was written 34 years ago, the major retrospective event has been the library's 75th anniversary in 1988. Although displays were organized and library history was probably thoroughly aired, the event does not seem to have produced a summative document of the degree of completeness and detail of A History covering the years since 1965. Now, eleven years later, the Friends of the Library and the Library are beginning a collaboration to fill this need. The conversion of this document into electronic format and its printing and dispersal is a first small step toward this end. I hope that at the Library's 100th anniversary in 2013, the community will be enriched by the work we embark on today.

–Charles Fisher

The Delmar Public Library

A History

The Town of Bethlehem is located south of and adjacent to the City of Albany, New York. It was incorporated in 1793. Up through the nineteenth century it was essentially a rural community. Today parts still remain rural in character, although it is now largely suburban.

The population of the town today is over 19,000. In 1910 it was 4,413.¹ Over the past half century not only has the Town grown and the nature of its population changed, but there have also been accompanying changes in the services provided for the townspeople. There are today two sewer districts, a water district and four fire districts. A modern police department serves the Town. There are numerous churches of various denominations, a number of civic and business organizations, a community drama group, and a weekly news pamphlet, the *Spotlight*.

Perhaps of most pride to the community is its Central School District, which includes a Senior High School, a Junior High School, and a number of elementary schools. Included in the Bethlehem Central School District is the Delmar Library. "Governed by its own Board of Trustees, the library district boundaries are coterminous with the Bethlehem Central School District boundaries. Financial support comes from taxpayers of this school district."²

The Town was small in 1913, the year of the library's founding, but it was not isolated, nor was it lacking in the human resources needed for growth and progress. A group of women in the village of Delmar who were interested in the future of the village had organized the Delmar Progress Club in 1901. These women wanted to provide the community with something which would benefit it in the years ahead. Mrs. Frank Sharpe suggested starting a library.³ The idea was accepted with enthusiasm.

1 Population information available at Town Clerk's Office in the Town Hall in the Town of Bethlehem.

2 *Central Highlights*, April, 1965, p. 6.

3 *Albany County Post*, Nov. 20, 1936.

On May 14, 1913 the Delmar Free Library Association was “organized by members of the Delmar Progress Club at a meeting held at the home of Mrs. Ira Boynton.”⁴ At this meeting the constitution was adopted. Article one reads: “Name: The name of this association shall be Delmar Free Library Association and the Library shall be called the Delmar Free Library.”⁵ Article three refers to the object of the Association. “Object: Its object shall be to maintain a circulating library and reading room free for public use to the inhabitants of School District Number Ten.”⁶ Article seven states: “Trustees: The affairs of the association shall be managed by a board of five trustees, consisting of the President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer [sic], and two others.”⁷ Those women who signed the constitution were: Mary Elizabeth Sharpe, Jessie R. Husted, Anna T. Phipps, Frances C. E. Shanks, Amy G. Pember, Frankie M. Gregg, Aileen C. Knapp, J. Elizabeth Smith, Annie S. Hatt, Margaret MacMillan, Marian I. Shufelt, Clara E. Y. Boynton, Mabelle C. Bruce, Luella M. Johnson, Anna Thornbury, Nettie V. Glenn, Flossie A. Gies, Blanch M. Kelly, Mary L. V. Reynolds.⁸ The women elected Mrs. James E. Husted, president; Mrs. Frank Sharpe, Vice-President; and Mrs. Ira Boynton, secretary-treasurer. They also decided that no one could become a member of the Library Association unless she was a member of the Progress Club. Mrs. Husted appointed Mrs. Hatt to act with the Board of Trustees in selecting books for the new library.

A committee of the Progress Club compiled the first Family Directory of Delmar. It was edited and presented to the Club in June, 1913 by C. F. Williams. The proceeds from its sale were to be used for the benefit of the Delmar Free Library.

The Library opened for the first time on August 16, 1913 in one room on the second floor of the school at the corner of Kenwood Avenue and Adams Street – in the building which is today the Masonic Temple.⁹ It was run on

4 Delmar Free Library Association, *Secretary's Book 1913-1917*, p. 11.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

9 Mrs. Alice Porter, in an interview with the writer, June 9, 1965.

a volunteer basis by the ladies of the Club. On August 29, the Association made an expenditure of \$193.19 to Baker and Taylor for books.¹⁰ This is the first significant expenditure recorded. On January 28, 1914 a legal meeting of the Library Association was held at Mrs. Hatt's home. Its purpose was to register an application for money from the state for books for the library. Those members present who registered were Mrs. Husted, Mrs. Sharpe, Mrs. Knapp, Miss J. Elizabeth Smith, Mrs. Gregg, Mrs. Hatt, Mrs. Bruce, Mrs. Shanks, and Mrs. Boynton.¹¹ It is entered in the Treasurer's Book that the library received \$100 from the State Department of Education on April 17, 1914. A similar amount was received from the State Public Library Fund on June 11, 1915.

At the annual meeting of the Delmar Free Library Association on May 12, 1915 it was reported that the balance in the treasury was \$273.¹² with all bills paid. Mrs. Hatt reported that the library had 889 books and that its circulation was 8,509.¹² The motion that residents of the village of Elsmere be allowed to use the Delmar Free Library if they paid a dollar a year per family was passed. Notices of this action were placed in the post office. It was also suggested that the Association start a building fund.

The annual report of the Library Association for 1915-1916 states that there were only two regular meetings during the year with a quorum present at only one. At that meeting, "it was voted that the trustees of the library be given power to transact all business connected with the library."¹³

The annual report for 1915-1916 does record two special meetings, however. These were of immediate and future importance to the Association and to the Town. The first was called at the close of the Progress Club meeting on November 8, 1915. At that time a letter to Mrs. Husted from Mr. Samuel A. Nuttall was read. It offered as a gift from the George C. Adams estate to the Delmar Free Library Association a building site on which to erect a library building. The letter stated that this was in recognition of the efforts

10 Delmar Free Library Association, *Treasurer's Book 1913-1917*. Baker and Taylor is a New York City book wholesaler.

11 Delmar Free Library Association, *Secretary's Book 1913-1917*, p. 16.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

made by the Association to create a building fund. It reads in part: "We had thought of giving the plot which contains something like 8,000 or 10,000 square feet for a small park, but upon reconsideration think the village will be best served by donating it for a Village Library."¹⁴ A special meeting was called for November 12.

There was much dissatisfaction among those present at the meeting of November 12, 1915. "Certain restrictions and requirements"¹⁵ which were connected with the acceptance of the site brought forth much discussion and disagreement. The trustees were given full power to act in the matter, and the meeting was adjourned with no definite action taken. On February 10, 1916 a reply was sent to Mr. Nuttall, executor of the George C. Adams Estate. It "stated that owing to certain demands and restrictions with which the trustees feel they could not consistently comply, they had thought it wise to refuse the gift which they did with regret..."¹⁶ The trustees proposed that the Association attempt to find another site which might be purchased at a reasonable price and on which an inexpensive building might be erected.

Later a member of the Adams family and Mr. Nuttall visited Mrs. Husted in an effort to have the trustees reconsider the offer. "Certain concessions were made by the estate and a gift of \$1,000 from Mrs. Rachel A. Sullivan for inside furnishing and finishing of the library was promised if the offer was accepted."¹⁷ Before formally accepting the gift a canvass was made to find out how much could be obtained from residents of Delmar toward the library building fund.

The annual meeting of the Delmar Free Library Association for 1915-1916 was held the second Wednesday in May. It was an important meeting in the history of the library. At it the motion to build the library was carried unanimously. Plans for the building were submitted free of charge by Delmar architect Mr. Walter P. R. Pember, the husband of one of the members. At this meeting it was also reported that the library now had 1,150 books and that

14 Samuel A. Nuttall letter to Mrs. James E. Husted, undated.

15 Delmar Free Library Association, *Secretary's Book 1913-1917*, p. 25. These are not elaborated.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

its circulation for the year was 3,870. The balance in the bank was \$63.55.¹⁸

The Abstract of Title to the land located at the corner of Hawthorne Avenue and Adams Street is dated July 8, 1916. It gave title to the land to the Delmar Free Library Association for considerations of \$1.00. It stipulated the conditions that the Association within one year must erect on the property a library building to cost not less than \$3,000 and to be used for library purposes for the people of Delmar. It also stipulated that no liquor or other intoxicating drink should ever be sold on the property – an indication that the temperance movement had taken hold in Delmar as well as in other parts of the country.

A canvass of the village of Delmar was undertaken to raise money for the building. Progress Club women also gave sales, dramas, masquerades, and card parties with the proceeds going to the building fund. At a meeting of the trustees on September 23, 1916 it was reported that the canvass was not providing the needed funds, and the question was raised as to whether or not they should proceed with plans for the library. Mrs. Rachel Sullivan offered an additional \$500 to the building fund in memory of her husband. With this gift and revised plans from Mr. Pember the trustees voted on September 25, 1916 to enter into contracts for construction. On September 29, the contracts were drawn up and signed. The contractor was Mr. Hotaling. The plans called for a one-story terra cotta block library building with a slate roof.

On October 4, the Secretary's Book records \$1,175 in the bank and pledges which should raise it to \$1,400. It records \$1,912.06 in the bank by November 8. At that time also we have evidence that the library and its activities were beginning to go beyond the confines of the Progress Club. The president suggested that the time had come for the Library Association to withdraw "in measure from the Progress Club and to act as an independent organization."¹⁹ The motion was passed that members of the Association be assessed \$1 a year for the maintenance of the building.

The new library opened sometime in the Spring of 1917. The exact date is unavailable. Expenditures for the erection of the building exclusive of the interior of the main room and the furnishing totaled \$3,342.60.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

128 people contributed	\$1582.50
Net receipts from entertainments	548.28
Interest on bank deposits	11.76
Amount contributed for change in porch	<u>65.00</u>
Total	2207.54
Estimated amount of mortgage	<u>1135.06</u>
	\$3342.60 ²⁰
Value of property	\$6000.00
Value of books on shelves	<u>\$2000.00</u>
Total value of property	\$8000.00 ²¹

During this period the library was operating under a provisional charter which was to expire in May 1918. At a meeting held October 10, 1917 the trustees signed an application to be sent to the Board of Regents for an absolute charter for the library.

The mortgage on the building was discharged and burned in 1920, leaving the library free from debt.²² The library was still being run on a volunteer basis as it was to be until 1931. It was open several nights during the week: Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday through 1920, but only Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday after that. The busiest times were always Friday and Saturday nights. The Record of Books Lent during 1917-1918 shows an average of between 50 and 70 on Saturday evenings, whereas other days showed only 20 to 40 books charged out.

20 *Report of Board of Trustees of the Delmar Free Library Association, 1916.*

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Albany County Post, Nov. 20, 1936.*

Through the 1920's the library continued to operate on a volunteer basis by women of the community. By this time women other than Progress Club members were helping, although the women of the Progress Club remained the backbone of the venture. Besides the normal duties of charging books in and out and keeping the library in order, the women also acted as custodians and bookbinders.

By 1930 the Board of Trustees decided that continuing to operate the library on this basis was too much of a burden. Mrs. Francis Blake and Mrs. Allen Humphrey, delegates of the Library Association met with the School Board April 6, 1931 to discuss turning the library over to the school district. On May 5, the School Board of the Central Rural School District number six voted to accept the offer of the trustees. It took over the library on the conditions that it would be maintained as a free public library for the free use of the District and that the School Board would annually appropriate the amount of money required to operate the library in accordance with the standards set by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York.²³ The Certificate of Establishment of a New Library is dated Tuesday, May 5, 1931. The trustees elected at this time and their terms were: Mrs. Gertrude Gillette[sic], one year; Mrs. Florence Holmes, two years; Miss Grace Haswell, three years; Mrs. Isabella Ottman, four years; and Mrs. Ethel A. Blake, five years.²⁴ Their successors were to be elected by the voters of the Central School District number six to serve for five years. The actual transfer of the property from the Delmar Free Library Association to the Central Rural School District number six of the Towns of Bethlehem and New Scotland is dated July 15, 1931.

An inventory made in April reports that the library now had 2,700 bound books in good condition and 50 books needing repair. In 1935-1936 the School Board bought 55 feet of property on Hawthorne Avenue and 67 feet on Adams Street to the rear of the building.²⁵ The Board felt that this would be needed if the library were ever to expand.

23 Form of Vote on Conditional Gift, 1931.

24 Certificate of Establishment of a New Library, May 5, 1931.

25 *Albany County Post*, op. Cit.

After taking over the library in 1931, the School Board made a second decisive step. It purchased a truck to be used as a bookmobile. This then became the first bookmobile to be operated by any school district in the entire state, although three other counties and several cities in the state did have bookmobiles at that time.²⁶ Mrs. Ethel Blake was instrumental in starting the project and with the librarian, Mrs. Eula Hallam, planned and routed the work of the truck.

The Book Truck made its first trip December 9, 1931. It carried 400 books and was driven by Mrs. Hallam. The truck covered the 34 square miles of the district in twice a week trips. The schedule was as follows:

Tuesday

WGY Store, Slingerlands	9:15 am
Goldring Floral Shop	10:00
Pine Tree Service Station	11:00
Harbeck Store, Normansville	1:30 pm
Normansville School	2:00
Elsmere Confectioner	3:00
Van Schaick Bulb Garden	4:00
Kenwood and Elsmere Corner	4:30

Thursday

Houck's Corners School	9:30 am
Bethlehem Center	11:00
Kenwood	12:30 pm
Glenmont	1:30
Van Wies Point School	2:30 ²⁷

Circulation before the initiation of the bookmobile had been about 100 volumes a week. With the bookmobile this figure jumped to about 100 volumes a day. This is a certain indication of its popularity.

In 1942 the District bought a second bookmobile. This one was named the Moby Dick. This was a Mack truck with a Hicks body. It was lined with

26 *Knickerbocker Press*, Dec. 10, 1931.

book cases with a deck and racks of magazines in the rear.²⁷ Moby Dick made its maiden trip on March 13, 1942, driven by Miss Dorothy Creifields the librarian. This vehicle could carry 1000 books to the avid readers in the more distant parts of the District. Soon after this, Moby Dick was required to go into hibernation for a period of close to two years during World War II. Again attesting to the popularity of this service is a petition sent to the Office of Defense Transportation asking for the release of the bookmobile in order that library service might be continued. Attached are seventeen pages of names of the men, women and children served by Moby Dick. Permission was granted May 17, 1944. In 1947 the librarian, Grace Farwell, reported that the bookmobile was covering four routes every two weeks for a total run of 64 miles.

In 1958 the library's third bookmobile was ordered from the Thomas F. Maroney Co. It was an International Harvester 1959 model with a capacity of 3000 books. The outside was painted blue with a white top. Consequently Delmar's third bookmobile came to be named Babe the Blue Ox.

Before the new bookmobile could be delivered to Delmar, the American Book Publisher's Council requested the use of the vehicle for the summer as part of the United States exhibit to be held in Moscow from July 25 to September 4, 1959. Delmar was chosen as a typical American community to be represented. Moreover it had a brand new bookmobile which could be sent to Moscow while the Moby Dick was still operating at home, causing no break in the library's service to the community. The library trustees voted to send the new bookmobile to Moscow.

Sponsored by the American Library Association and stocked with 2,800 books by the American Book Publishers' Council, the bookmobile left Brooklyn May 11, 1959 on the Finn Board bound for Helsinki. From Helsinki it went by rail to Moscow. It was a well attended attraction at the Exhibit, although it was closed for a short period while more books were collected in the United States to take the place of the many stolen by Russian visitors. Delmar's bookmobile returned to the United States November 6, but Delmar was not to see it for another month. It went back to the Thomas F. Maroney

27 Grace Farwell, *Facts Concerning Bookmobile of Delmar Public Library*, 1947.

Co. for refurbishing before its trip to Delmar. The money for this, and the cost of shipping and insurance during the trip was donated by the American Library Association.

On January 5, 1960 the much traveled bookmobile got down to the routine job of delivering books to the people of the Bethlehem Central School District. Today it covers an area of 77 square miles in four routes, stopping at individual homes and neighborhood stops. It goes out all day Tuesdays and Thursdays and on Wednesday evenings under the guidance of Mrs. Pearl Carmen who has been bookmobile driver and librarian since 1944.²⁸ Today it is driven by Paul Goodfellow who also serves as custodian for the library.

The Town of Bethlehem was growing, and in 1950 the census reported the population to be 13,065. The library too had grown much since its founding. In fact it was outgrowing its home. In 1953 the library trustees reported the "20 by 20 foot building in a state of disrepair and inadequate to house the book needs of the area."²⁹ They proposed an addition to the library which was to cost \$75,000. At the annual meeting of the Bethlehem Central School District on May 5, 1953 it was voted to go ahead with the addition. The plans were made by architect John N. Brownrigg Jr. with the help of the trustees headed by Dr. Theodore C. Wenzl and the Friends of the Delmar Library Committee. They proposed to:

Integrate the present library, built in 1917, in a 5,100 square foot concrete block structure to house adult and children's reading room, a community reading room, stacks for 25,000 books, bookmobile garage, librarian's office and work room... The addition will be a one-story wing south of the present structure...³⁰

The new building opened August 1, 1954. Its size was about twelve times that of the original building which today is the adult reading room. The new library also contained a community room and kitchenette which was to be used for community meetings and activities. Since the budget did not include money for the furnishing of this room, the Progress Club came to the aid of the library. By 1955 the Progress Club had grown from its original 25 members to

28 Mrs. Barbara Rau, an interview with the writer, June 14, 1965.

29 *Knickerbocker News*, April 23, 1953.

30 *Ibid.*

280. They sponsored a community auction in memory of the early members who had raised money for, maintained, and staffed the original library. The Club raised a total of \$1,282.70 to be used to furnish the community room.³¹

The Friends of the Library Committee had worked with Dr. Wenzl and the trustees during the period of expansion, providing suggestions and securing community support for the addition. On September 16, 1954 they met at the library to organize as a permanent organization to work as an advisory group, and to act to publicize the library and its activities. Nine people met that night to officially form the Friends of the Library. They were: Mr. Charles M. Armstrong, Mrs. E. W. Flinton, Mr. John J. Hotaling, Mr. Earl S. Jones, Mrs. Joseph B. Lindsey Jr., Mrs. John B. McMillan, Mr. Peter Muirhead, Dr. M. L. Tainter, and Mrs. Richard O. Taylor.³²

The library expanded twice again after the initial addition in 1954. In 1958-59 a new garage was built, releasing space for a custodian's room and a periodical storage area. 1961 saw the enclosing of the porch behind the children's room in order to start a young adults' room. The library was given a new coat of paint in 1962 – a pale pinky gray. It now stands “in the pink” centrally located and serving the district's ever growing population.

The library too, is still growing – in the books and magazines available and in the services it provides. Today it employs nine full-time and two half-time staff members, two of whom are graduate librarians. It also employs one full-time and one half-time custodian, ten pages, and five substitutes. In 1931 total circulation was 10,700.³³ For 1964 it was 204,944.³⁴ The 1,100 library borrowers in 1931 could choose from a total of 2,430 volumes.³⁵ In 1964 there were 12,346 borrowers and about 42,000 books available, besides 803 record albums, 175 periodicals, 810 pamphlets, 25 framed prints and a few film strips.³⁶

31 Progress Club, *Report of Auction*, 1955.

32 Friends of Library notice, Sept. 16, 1954.

33 *Altamont Enterprise*, Nov. 7, 1941.

34 *Central Highlights*, April, 1965.

35 *Altamont Enterprise*, Nov. 7, 1941.

36 *Central Highlights*, April, 1965.

Numerous services have been inaugurated under head librarian Mrs. Barbara Rau. The library made framed pictures available and started a Great Books discussion group in 1963. A photocopying machine was purchased and a picture file was begun in 1964. A few film strips were purchased in 1965 and made available to the public. Great Decisions discussions are planned for the fall with continued sandwich and book sessions.³⁷ Story hours are conducted for children from pre-school through fifth grade, and a summer reading program is also available to the children.

Art interests are not ignored. In October, 1959 the library held its first annual Bizarre Bazaar. This is an outdoor art show held at the side of the library for three days in the fall. In 1964 over 150 local artists were represented in the exhibition with awards made by the Rotary Club of Delmar. Monthly art shows are held in the library under the supervision of Mrs. Clover Mikol; and Mrs. Evelyn Sanvidge arranges for interesting displays from the collections of art objects and hobbies of local residents.³⁸

What started out in 1913 in one room of the old school house has grown and expanded until today the Delmar Public Library is one of the most popular and most used facilities in the community. The library budget passed for 1966 by the voters of the school district totals \$100,540³⁹, a far cry from the \$3,000 appropriated for maintenance in 1931.⁴⁰

Property owners in the school district probably little realize how small a part of their tax money goes to support their library. Yet, the services provided by the library are very much apparent to those who use it regularly, to those who are served by its bookmobile, and even to those who see its inside only when they are in dire need of a specific piece of information. The Delmar Public Library has grown with and reflected the changing character of the Town during the past half century. It may certainly be expected to continue in a similar manner in the future.

37 Mrs. Barbara Rau, an interview with the writer, June 18, 1965.

38 Central Highlights, April, 1965.

39 *Ibid.*

40 Certificate of Establishment of a New Library, May 5, 1931.

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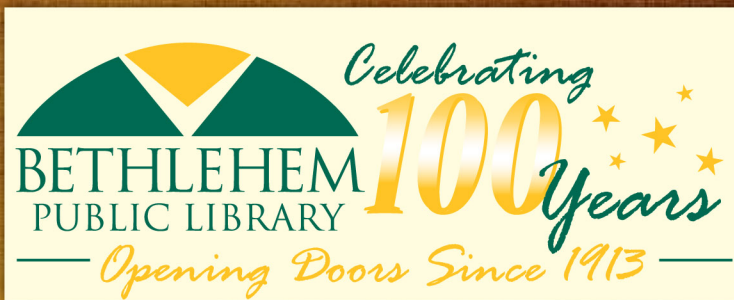
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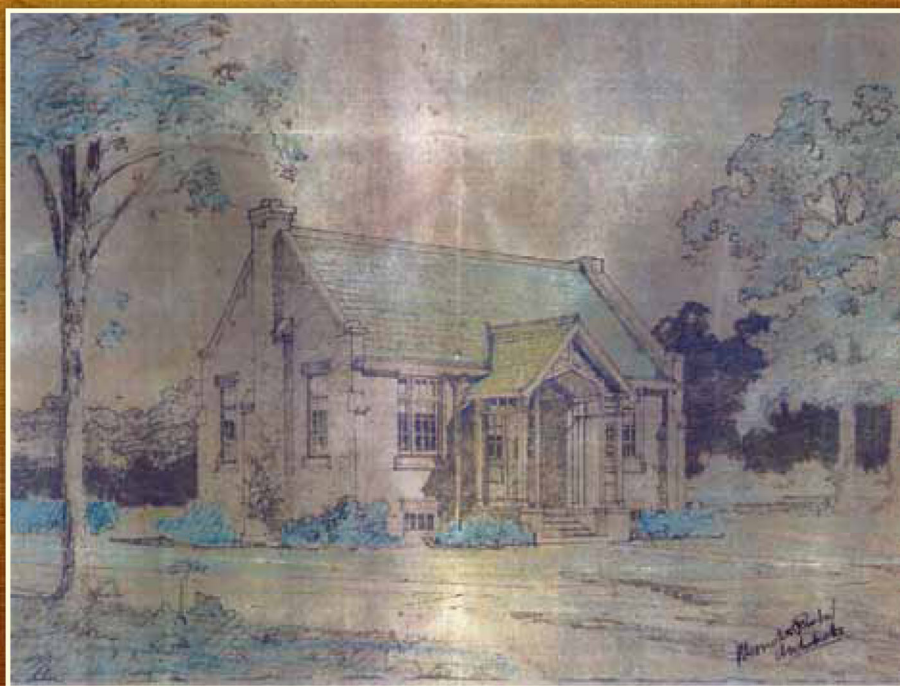
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