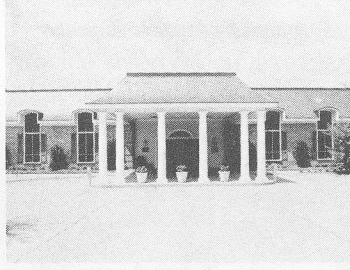


## Thomas County Public Library System



The Thomas County Public Library System was formed in 1988 when it separated from the Moultrie-Colquitt Regional Library System. The libraries in Thomas County at that time were small buildings, and much of the county was served by a bookmobile.

Local residents and Board members realized that the small libraries could not offer the kinds of library service they wanted and joined with the County Commissioners to pass a referendum to build new libraries and a jail. A building program began in 1992 to build new libraries in Thomasville, Meigs, and Coolidge. Coolidge had been served by a bookmobile. The Boston Library would be remodeled and expanded, Ochlocknee remodeled and Pavo replaced.

All of the new libraries except Coolidge had a history in Thomas County. The Thomasville Library dated back to just after the Civil War and had been located in the old post office since 1964. The Boston Library started in 1881, and in 1913 it became a Carnegie Library after a donation of \$6,000 from Andrew Carnegie; at that time Boston was the smallest community in the country with a Carnegie Library. Today, the building marks over 83 years of continuous service as a library. The Ochlocknee Library started just after World War II in 1946 with a state grant that also put deposit collections in Meigs and Pavo. The original Ochlocknee Library was destroyed in 1955 by fire. The new library was eventually named for Gladys M. Clark, Library Board Chairman when the libraries in the county began to unify. The first buildings in Meigs and Pavo came in 1976 and 1987, respectively.

Construction of the new 23,000 square foot library in Thomasville began in 1992 and was completed in April 1993. It was built in downtown Thomasville directly across from the Courthouse. At the same time, 2000 square foot buildings were constructed in Meigs and Coolidge, opening at the end of 1993. The Ochlocknee Library was a remodeled fire station, Pavo turned a former church/women's club into its branch library. The old Carnegie building in Boston maintained its charm but was rebuilt inside, expanded with a meeting room in the back and made handicapped accessible. By the end of 1993, Thomas County had a new library system consisting of six new or remodeled library buildings with over 36,000 square feet. Library service is located within fifteen minutes of anywhere in the county.

Results of these new buildings were immediate. In 1994 the library placed second in the nation for new library cards per capita in an ALA contest. In 1995 and 1996 circulation increased over 400% compared to the years before completion of the new buildings. This year circulation will approach 430,000 in a county of just over 40,000 residents. Every library in the system will circulate over 10,000 materials except for Ochlocknee with over 9,700. In the spirit of the classic film, "Build them and they will come."

