

BUILDING

"... it must be a comforting thought to have a fine library building with beautifully equipped departments to house books, films, people, and other ... an institution of learning might better have a program."

(From "A Mountain To Lean The Eyes Agin")

There you have it — a touch of my philosophy about librarianship. I said this in my first official address before the membership of the American Library Association, in Los Angeles. At that time we were still operating out of a small amount of space in the basement of the Sanford Library at West Georgia College.

I am fully convinced that having to wait many years for a headquarters building and fine branch library structures was a blessing — perhaps in disguise, because it forced us beyond walls right to the people. It demanded a faith, not only on our part but also on that of the public.

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A BEACON IN THE NIGHT

... "The new negro library is the first of its kind. The state department anticipates sending many interested groups to learn of the plan of the King Street Branch."

(Lucile Nix in **Carroll Times-Free Press**)

The sun had just hidden behind the skyline that late afternoon in the fall of 1948. Looking at the beautiful sunset while hurrying from the Post Office in Carrollton towards my car, I was enroute to the college to check once more to see that the collection on the Station Wagon included everything to answer specified requests for the next day's service run. Just as I reached my car I saw Sam West, custodian at the Post Office, coming towards me.

"You know what you are to my people?" he began speaking to me as he drew near. Suddenly above our heads a streetlight came on, shining across the approaching dusk. "You are that light," he said gently.

I was so deeply moved that my throat was tight and a feeling of ineptness came over me. Sam was referring to our effort to get a library for Blacks and my own work with them in our area.

My "Emory" survey of Carroll and Heard counties had indicated that about one-fifth of the area population was black. With segregation a way of life I realized that if we were to develop service for all, we must make plans to include all, though necessarily a segregated framework, at that time. Of course the races were segregated in all kinds of services and institutions, based on Georgia law or on tradition. I recognized that in setting up a dual library system, I would be making my assignment painfully difficult as a few white citizens would be wary of what I was doing and some Black leaders outside the area might attempt to use the program to "stir folks up". I knew there were several fine Negro leaders, respected not only by Blacks but also by the White business segment and the power structure of the area.

When I went to work I discovered that the most outstanding black educator in the area and our most respected black citizen was Crogman Mullins. Crogman was interested in this library business, finding the time to get to all meetings we called. Together with Corrine West, Danetta Sanders, L. S. Molette, and a few other leaders, he organized the backing we needed to get the Black library started.

We were also helped a great deal by Tammie Thomas, the Negro Home Demonstration Agent. She knew the rural people better than possibly anybody else did. Later, as we organized to raise funds to build the library, she served on the area committee to get all the people involved.

In the early days after the regional system got underway, Danetta Sanders and I shared many thoughts about the appalling need for literacy. We agreed that our first step should be to purchase easy materials which Danetta would use in her work with the children, and all sorts of materials to help the teachers in their classroom instruction and Mrs. Thomas in her community work. I had made a solemn promise which I kept: To buy only brand new books and not to put old and used books off on the Blacks.

In Heard County we had found a strong ally in a much loved principal, Mary E. Johnson, for whom a school in the county had been named. She developed the proper climate for us there. I visited

every school for Blacks, meeting all the principals, talking of our dream to have a fine library program for them eventually. I don't think many of them felt much would come of it, though they seemingly did not doubt my sincerity.

In the fall of 1946 (our third year in operation) I discussed with my official board the very real need for a central point of service to negroes.

"We should be building a collection of books and recordings with a library in mind," I told them. "We can't do this in the space we have here at the college; besides, we need a meeting place so we can have night programs with the adults.

"Do you have anything specifically in mind?" I was asked — and I was ready for the question.

"Yes, there's a piece of land lying idle on King Street (in the heart of the Black settlement). If the city would agree for us to use it, do you think we can work something out in the way of a small building?"

J. Hubert Griffin, chairman of my board, and also a member of the Carrollton City Council (later to become mayor) said he was sure the city would be glad to turn the land over to us to erect a library. He promised to take the matter up with the council the following Monday evening. We were given the official go-ahead, with the stipulation that it would be used only for the stated purpose.

Joe McGiboney, Treasurer of the Regional Library Board, offered to talk about our proposal with Bob Cousins, Director of Negro Education at the State Department of Education. Bob was delighted, suggesting that there was a good possibility we could get a War Surplus Building from one of the Forts in Georgia since many were being dismantled right then. Up at Fort Oglethorpe in North Georgia Bob and Joe came upon a telephone exchange building which they thought might serve our purpose. It was agreed that we would dismantle it and bring the building to Carrollton.

L. S. Molette, another black leader and Principal of Carroll County Training Center, told us that he had been talking with the Carroll County black Veterans. They volunteered to drive their own trucks up to Oglethorpe, dismantle the building, and bring it home. We had already accepted the offer of Carroll Soil Conservation to grade the lot.

When and how the reconstruction would be done had to wait for a meeting of the planning committee. It was then decided to get

volunteer labor under the supervision of a carpenter to reassemble the building as nearly as possible the way it was and we would take it from that point.

When this part of the project was done, I stayed behind alone, walking up and down absolutely appalled. What I saw made me sick. I was looking at junk — an abused structure of the poorest quality. It resembled a beat-up boxcar with an open end — paint peeling, shingles hanging, like a structure too discouraged to hang on for another bout with mankind. **It's been in a war, all right**, I thought.

Corrine West, Sam's wife, came along, saw me standing there in utter dejection and walked over to commiserate with me.

"No, oh, no! I can't have this!" I said.

"It is awful," she said, "but we know you. You'll work something out."

A few evenings later, I called the key Blacks together at the Carroll Training School for a conference with our board members present. We discussed ways and means of doing something positive about preparing the headquarters library for the Blacks. I explained that our State Consultants, our Library Board, and all white people in places of community leadership were pleased with our proposition.

"I sincerely want to help; but I must have a free hand in studying priorities and acting upon my findings. I will not cheat nor belittle you, nor put off old materials on you. If we are able to reconstruct, re-do the building and make a neat library out of it, we will plan together to develop a program to help all you people. Are you with us?"

Immediately the consensus surfaced: Let's get on with it. L. S. Molette said:

"Let's all lay some dollars out here as earnest money for Miss Foster. She is trying to gain our support; so let's prove we trust her and are ready to get to work." To my astonishment, \$200.00 was laid on the table before we left.

The group agreed to raise \$2,000.00, but actually in the next two years we raised \$4,583.01, \$450.00 of which was donated by the Iota Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta, the national honor society. Crogman Mullins was asked to serve as treasurer.

Danetta Sanders suggested that we form fund-raising committees in every black settlement. Crogman Mullins, who was Chairman of the Board of Trustees for Moore's Chapel Methodist Church in Car-

rollton, said he would arrange for the local committees to meet every Sunday afternoon at the Chapel to report and check up on progress. It was decided to have each local chairman read the names of the donors and amounts each had given, then turn over the lists and the money to the Treasurer of King Street Planning Committee.

Meantime I drew up plans for a library building of a little over 1200 square feet out of the remains of the old telephone exchange. The board hired good carpenters who went to work building on to the open end, putting down a new floor and tiling it; adding a small portico at the entrance; and partitioning off some 144 square feet for an office, work space, and rest room. Small windows were added all around on the service side of the building to enhance appearances and give more light.

Landscaping for the branch was done as a gift by the Flower Garden Club of Carrollton under the direction of Landscaper and Florist Harry Anderson.

Lucile Nix and Sarah Jones, chief Library Consultants of Georgia Department of Education, came down to see the branch and Lucile said: "You have a fine library for the Blacks. It is the prettiest converted building I have seen. This is a 'first' in the State."

The question was frequently asked of me: "Why didn't you apply for a big grant from some agency so you wouldn't have had to work so hard to pay for the building conversion?"

We had discussed this matter at several Board meetings. It was my firm conviction that the Blacks would take great pride in the finished product, if they actually brought the idea to reality through their own hard work and that the white population could not criticize the fact that the Blacks were getting a central library, recognizing that black planning, determination, and sacrifice had made it possible.

One day I had a call from Beverly Wheatcroft of the State Department Staff, asking whether or not we would accept a Bookmobile for work with Negroes if one were given us. I knew I did not have to worry about the attitude of my Board; hence I answered immediately that we would be honored and grateful for such a gift if no strings were attached.

"This is a surprise to you, I know," she said; "but your program is being considered along with two others — one in North Carolina and one in Louisiana. Of course you may not get it; however, the committee responsible for making the choice is very impressed with your library's work with Blacks. We are proud of you, too, whether you get the Bookmobile or not. All of us hoped the final judgment

would be in our favor — and it was! Several members of the Board went up with me to Clark College for the formal presentation.

This actually was our first real Bookmobile and so the Blacks in West Georgia Regional Library area had their own Library Building and their own Bookmobile — (a vehicle built specifically for that purpose) — before the Whites had either.

Well, back to the building and the design of its interior: In those days the neatest possible shelving was done by cabinet makers, pre-dating the attractive, colorful metal library shelves on the market now. These constructions were customarily either finished in natural tones or painted some color suitable for the particular situation. We decided to paint white, and I must say the result was clean, inviting looking against seafoam finished walls.

All the merchants and suppliers of building and decorating materials were kind to us as we worked to pay on bills by the month or by "the effort." "By the effort" refers to the diversified methods we all used to raise money. "Ask and ye shall receive" was put to a rather simple interpretation. Maids, wardmen, cooks, janitors, the Red Cross, the Boy Scouts, etc., approached the white segment of our society for contributions. Even I got into the act:

In a manner of speaking, tin cup in hand, as the then teacher, I stood before the Allie Beall Sunday School Class of Business and Professional Women at the Carrollton First Methodist Church one April morning, looked each in the eye, then proceeded:

"Girls, today I have laid aside the regular lesson plan for a discourse of my own on the topic **It is more blessed to give than to receive.** On Wednesday the Twentieth, the library will sponsor a booth during the Veterans Field Day project.

"As you know, this is a giant-sized undertaking sponsored by three hundred members of the Carroll County Veterans Farm Training classes. The seventy-four and one-half acre farm chosen by lottery will have twenty-eight tractors and other equipment there to rip out stumps, fill gulleys, smooth the land, treat the soil, landscape, build a large laying house, build fencing, and plant several different crops, such as peppers and cotton. Soil Conservation is donating services of men and equipment. An oil company is giving five hundred gallons of gas and oil. Forty-eight business firms over the county have promised to give cash, fertilizers, lime, phasphate, seed, and building materials to the tune of \$1500.00, in addition to the \$800.00 contributed by G. I. Trainees and their eleven instructors! They have also called upon interested agencies to make preparations to feed the thousands who will attend.

"You know we are trying to pay off our indebtedness on the King Street Library. Since agencies at a fee of ten dollars have been invited to set up booths out there at the land project to feed the people expected, we decided to have a library booth to help feed the crowds and turn all the profits over to help pay for the King Street Project. All the arrangements are made and most of the food supplied. I am not asking you for money per se, but we need cakes and pies — the kind **men** like."

Such an overwhelming response of help stands out today in my memory. Those girls surrounded me with the spirit of giving. They organized right then and there: who would bake what, who would prepare slaw to go with the barbecue and Brunswick stew, when and where they would get everything together, who would show up at what time to assist in the booth.

We asked Stewart Martin, a local mortician, to lend us a tent to cover our heads and our wares. He not only complied but also erected it for us, along with tables for serving, etc.

All donors now had a stake in King Street Library! With such all-out cooperation, how could we fail? As it turned out, ours was a super-popular one-day eatery. The big attraction emanated from the fact that everybody knew about Charlie Ball's Famous Barbecue; besides, we had all the fixin's and a roof over our heads. We were "Big" business!"

Our contribution moneywise was only a small part of the big to-do. Over the long haul, all sorts of activities were carried out in the Black settlements. It was not altogether a "gimme" proposition. Much of the needed cash was raised the hard way by the Negroes themselves, though we did realize a fair amount from our Friends of the Library membership drive at one dollar per member. The white segment of our society approved of the project wholeheartedly and proved to be no hinderance but instead, a great help.

The Carroll Board of Education at the Library Board's request had moved the office of the Jeannes Supervisor, Lilian Price, from a school over to King Street Library. Lilian was to serve temporarily as supervisor of the library program at the building. Open hours were set accordingly, with most adult activity and service taking place in the evenings.

Now I want to quote from a turned-down leaf in the King Street Story. Prior to processing the new collection, I had gone over to the State Public Library Division to discuss the possibility of an ugly problem that might raise its head.

"Someone", I said, "just might say 'Are you mixing the books?' I want to put a symbol on the spine of every volume to be ready for this query."

They showed me a section of shelving where the spine of each book bore a neat triangle (Δ). I needed no explanation; so I simply told the Consultants that we would do the same thing if there was no objection —and we did.

Strangely enough, only one such question came our way.

"Edith, you aren't mixing the books, are you?"

I pointed to the books in front of us — all new, neatly processed and arranged. "See that triangle? That assures the Negroes that their books are **theirs**."

Doubtless this gentleman, if he knew about it, was shocked later to learn that I myself drove the Delta Sigma Theta gift Bookmobile for two years, setting up service points for Negroes in all counties, getting routones ironed out and the routes established. Miss Price couldn't drive the vehicle; besides, that assignment was important and far-reaching, calling for the direction of a professional librarian. I wanted it done right and I had no Black Librarian on the Staff at the time. First Miss Sanders, then Miss Price had prepared the way so well that the work was expedited and I was accepted immediately as a friend and co-worker.

Another little interesting footnote on the turned-down page had to do with my comrades in City Services — the Police Department. Not a word was said to me about it; but it finally penetrated my consciousness that whenever I went over to a meeting at night in the Black settlement, a police car would trail me. For a while I said nothing about it, but one evening when I got out of my car, I walked back to the trailing Police car.

"Why are you following me?" I asked.

"Oh, Miss Foster," they said, "something bad could happen to you."

"I love you and appreciate your thoughtfulness," I grinned at them. "I am not afraid, however, for the Blacks know I am working very hard for them. If they see you drive up behind me every time I come to a planning meeting about the proposed library, they will think I have asked for protection. I am really trying to earn their confidence, and this is no way to do it."

"We understand," they said. "Just call us then if you ever have any cause to worry. We don't want anything to happen to you."

During the first two summers we instituted a program for children at King Street. By the end of the summer of 1951, we realized that our overall regional services were expanding to such an extent that I could no longer "stand in" whenever I was needed at the branch library. We had to have a Black Librarian to devote full time to the project. The right kind of person would also be able to develop a total program of service for the Negroes — not one mainly allied to teachers and the schools, though that was one of our main objectives. Since most of the Blacks worked during the day, it was necessary to plan practically all adult activities for the evening hours, a fact that was becoming more and more of a problem for me.

When the Regional Library Board met in September, 1951, I brought up the subject of adding a Black to the Staff. We could not afford a professional librarian; however, I felt we must take this very important first step at that time. Joe McGiboney said go ahead and talk with Lilian Price about some Black teacher whom I myself would approach. She with no hesitancy named Leroy Childs, a young Social Science Instructor at Bowdon, as the one with all the proper "credentials".

I talked with Mr. Childs about what the assignment would mean: responsibilities, challenges, dedication, sacrifice — but all-in-all, the opportunity to enrich the lives of many people and to broaden his own horizons. He accepted the post; so King Street Branch was on its way to finer things!

Turning Leroy Childs into a librarian was an assignment we really enjoyed because he was conscientious about his work, interested in people and had the type of personal and educational background to become a leader in every sense of the word. The State Public Library Division was impressed with his ability and application; hence we joined forces in working out a plan to assist him in attending North Carolina College at Durham (He was a native of Wilmington, North Carolina, and a graduate of North Carolina College) to take some undergraduate Library Science courses, then to go on to the Graduate Library School at Atlanta University. He went to school on Saturdays and all during the summers.

Meantime, his wife, Vivian, one of the finest Primary School Teachers in the area, served as Librarian at King Street in the summers while Leroy was away. The Jeannes Supervisor "stood in" the rest of the time. The children streamed in to participate in the Vacation

Reading Program, where every week Mrs. Childs enthralled them during her story-telling hour.

When the American Library Association project called "American Heritage Discussions" came along, we participated totally, including King Street, preparing this portion of the program by sharing our State Grant with the Negroes, sending both Leroy Childs and Lilian Price to a Training Institute in Atlanta.

We encouraged the College people to plan special programs for Blacks at King Street. The finest thing (their own idea) that came out of this cooperative effort was a series called **Study Nights**.

We also tapped the State Department of Education's resources for programs at King Street. As a matter of fact, the very first program for Black adults we implemented after the library opened was handled for us by the Distributive Education Unit of the Department of Education. This was a two weeks institute, following which each participant was awarded an official State Certificate. Their topics for study included preparation of menus, proper manners and dress on the job, proper street dress, cleanliness of person, etc. Dr. Ingram, President of the College, was so impressed that he asked Miss Dixon, the State Instructor, to repeat the program for the Staff at the College.

King Street earned its place in the library sun. It served at a time when Negroes in our area had no central place for library services. In great measure the success of this project can be attributed to Leroy Childs. He returned with his brand-new graduate degree and the same eagerness to help which we had first detected in him — his philosophy was shiney bright in the knowledge that one grows richer in the experience of serving through librarianship when and where the need presents itself. King Street Library under his administration stood on the little hill till 1967, overlooking the settlement somewhat as a beacon in "the night", beckoning the people to turn to its light for a source of knowledge and understanding.

2

LITTLE HOUSE: HEADQUARTERS

... "fondest dreams begin to materialize . . ."
(Carroll County Times-Free Press)

It was a beautiful spring morning in 1958 I was sitting at my desk (a very special old oak desk my Mother had had made years and years before, for her use, planning a talk I was to make the next

day at a civic club dinner when Dr. Ingram, came around to the outside door, stuck his head inside to say:

"Can you stop long enough to attend a rally in the grove? The whole student body and faculty will be there to hear an announcement I have to make."

"Yes, sir, I'll be right there," I answered as I immediately followed along to get the news.

Dr. Ingram, standing up on a table where he easily could be seen and heard, announced that Governor Griffin had just allocated a sizable amount of money to West Georgia College to be used to build a new dormitory for girls and to re-model and increase the size of Sanford Library. A roar of approval went up from the gathering, except that my voice was silent. The students were told they could have the rest of the day off. I saw Dr. Ingram looking right at me; but I turned away, finding it difficult to assimilate the full significance of this news. Suddenly I knew that without warning and preparation, the time for us to leave the campus was upon us — not that Dr. Ingram intended for us to leave permanently.

I went back to my office to think. Operation Library the previous year had shown that the people were ready for a building proposal. The Board was with me; but we had not had time to prepare ourselves for such a big venture.

As has often been the case, I went upstairs to talk with my friend, Anne Weaver, West Georgia College Librarian.

"Anne", I said, "it's time for us to move out into a public library building to house the headquarters for the system. We have such a program going all over the region, with initial plans being activated now to include Paulding as our fifth county, that people do not realize we are slowly being squeezed to death being so cramped. We must have a larger library building. We'll have to move out while your library is being enlarged anyway."

"You and I are probably the only ones on the campus who know you can't bring your library back," Anne said. "You do need a building, and we are growing so much that we'll need to use Sanford Library 'in toto'."

On May 12, I received a letter from Dr. Ingram explaining how proud he was of our public library's growth and expansions — the need for the latter making it imperative that we either build our own extension to Sanford Library or find new quarters. The College plans, he said, would leave space for us to build there if we so desired.

"Whatever happens," he wrote, "be assured of our continued goodwill and cooperation. Our good wishes to you and your wonderful Board."

His fine communication made it clear that he understood our needs and would remain our supporter and friend as we moved into a new phase of our program. Renovation of Sanford Library, he told me, would begin no sooner than sixty or less than ninety days.

I immediately called a meeting of our Board to discuss the matter. All agreed that the time had come for us to provide our own headquarters library. We knew it would not be possible within a few months to buy land suitable for a permanent site and construct a library building adequate to meet the demands of the future. This was eight years prior to expansion of the Federal Library Services Act to include construction and fourteen years before Georgia Legislature would appropriate funds for construction of public libraries. We were entirely on our own.

I explained to my Board that we needed to put into action a plan that would get us moved as early as possible to downtown Carrollton where we could set up a central system, thus for the first time becoming a true public library resource. Our 1958-59 fiscal year actually would begin on July 1, but the heaviest demands upon us would not begin till late September; so we had some valuable time.

"Look the local situation over," I was told. "Find a place that suits your purpose. We will rent until we have time to plan and build a permanent structure."

When word got around that we were leaving the College, I was approached by representatives of two communities other than Carrollton to urge me to look over their situation as a possible location for the library system's headquarters. This would not be in the best interest of all concerned, we felt, since the system's headquarters needed to be in the geographic center of the region. The Carrollton Mayor and Council dissolved the Carrollton Library Board, placing the city's library service directly into our hands.

I spent weeks trying to find a suitable building, to no avail; but early in August I noticed an advertisement in the county paper about a duplex up for auction by the Carrollton Federal Savings and Loan Association. It was located about halfway between the college and town — a fairly new house. I borrowed the key and carefully looked over the dwelling. Satisfied that with some changes it would do, I called Hubert Griffin, Chairman of my Board, informed him that I

had found a place that I thought might take us through to the day when we could build a permanent structure.

He laughed. "OK, if you want it. I was going to try to buy it as a business investment; however, I'll see what I can do to get it for the library."

He talked with Andrew McGukin, President of Carrollton Federal Savings and Loan Association, one of the area's outstanding public-spirited citizens, who had been a friend of the library program all through the years. (He later became Chairman of Neva Lomason Memorial Library Building Committee and thereafter, Chairman of West Georgia Regional Library Board.)

Andy and our Board worked out an agreement whereby for \$10,700, the building and site could become library property. We were to pay \$150.00 per month on a rental-ownership basis till the note was retired. Again Hubert went out on a limb in behalf of the people, as he was to do so many times as long as he lived in Carrollton, agreeing to sign a personal note so we could legally take possession.

Meantime I drew up a plan for the change necessary inside the building, and for a doubling the size of the building by putting an addition on the rear of the building.

On a blistering hot August afternoon at five o'clock, I had the Board convene on the west side of the little building to make final decisions. I had borrowed chairs so all could sit. Quickly they began to agree that I had truly found a suitable location to serve as our first region-owned headquarters.

Carrollton's Superintendent of Schools, F. M. Chalker, said: "Edith, we have backed you in everything you have recommended thus far and you have not led us wrong. I move we accept this proposal and close the deal worked out between Andy and Hubert."

"Just a minute," I injected quickly. "Don't you think we need to add central airconditioning to our proposed building plans?"

How they did laugh! They caught — or should I say, "felt" — the point.

"Very definitely!" all members agreed, wiping their dripping brows.

We had about \$3000.00 in a savings account, earmarked for equipment. The Board decided to borrow \$7000.00 from one of the banks after Hubert insisted that he would personally sign on behalf of the Board. I recommended that we organize a Friends of the Library

Association to see us through the effort and to take some of the load of securing funds off the Board. It was a happy decision.

The Friends of the Library included not only individuals but also clubs, agencies, institutions, industries, businesses. The rally to our cause is one of the most beautiful parts of the story of our building program. The smallest donation was 50¢; the largest, \$5000.00. Even the contractor, J. B. Stallings, got into the act, actually cutting 20% off the cost of construction. Imperial Book Company through our good friend, Bob Freeman, presented us with a complete Stereo System. Ideal Pictures, through Jack Bradford, gave us a fine record player. Dr. Steve Worthy presented a beautiful oak table with six matching chairs and the Carrollton Garden Club completely landscaped the grounds. The Carrollton City Government had already graded the surrounding space and prepared soil and a parking area for us.

In September Barnes Freight Lines at no cost to us, moved us from the College to our new home. My Staff had labored all summer packing books in order, placing them into corrugated boxes and plainly marking each box for quick distribution to the proper section of the new building and for ease in shelving. We also incorporated the Carrollton Public Library's books into the new center's collection.

We had Open House on Wednesday afternoon, October 15, 1958. That day, with people milling about, chatter going on th air as WLBB interviewed key people from our State Government and around the region in a live broadcast, Hubert Griffin moved along to speak to me again.

"Edith, isn't this a fine library!" he exclaimed.

"It is," I said. "There's only one thing wrong."

"What?" I really shocked him with my answer:

"It isn't big enough!" (I won't tell you what Hubert said.)

When the State Auditor came to check our books, he said our financial plan of repayment was sound and to have no fear but carry on.

We did just that, retiring the entire debt in five years, meantime working Paulding County into the region, carrying out our plan of assisting all elementary schools to set up central school libraries, and outlining and promoting a program of direct service to all segments of our region's society.

(DEER LICK)

“—May this library serve well its purpose to provide intellectual backgrounds and cultural development for the citizens of this area.”

(Douglas County Sentinel)

Lithia Springs, sprawled across the eastern side of Douglas County, was once the habitation of Cherokee Indians who dwelled there to drink the waters of the “medicine” springs. It was the Cherokees who dubbed the area “Deer Lick” because deer frequented the place to lick the rocks for the saline properties. It retained this name for over one hundred years.

Lithia Springs is steeped in much tradition. I grew up thirty miles or so away, knowing this; but I encountered it at every turn when I took up the responsibility as Director of Library Services for Douglas County. By 1962 the community was really hurting for a branch library.

We encouraged immediate exploration for a possible location which would serve as “a library” on a long-term basis. At the time, H. T. Bomar was Chairman of the Board of Commissioners. He suggested that the library be located at the “little courthouse” in the heart of downtown Lithia. He asked me to inspect the building and recommend the changes and improvements needed.

I followed up on his request, deciding it certainly would suffice for a “beginner” and drew up a plan for the floor space as well as a sketch of the completed library area including shelving and equipment. The plan was approved early in 1963 and work got underway immediately, most of it on a volunteer basis by members of the Ruritan Club. We moved about 3500 processed and cataloged volumes from our headquarters to the new branch, part of which comprised a long-term loan from the State’s Public Library Division, part on indefinite placement from our System Extension Collection, and part newly prepared books purchased specifically for Lithia Springs Branch.

In late 1963 we held Open House, which brought out State Consultants and Legislators to see what Douglas County had done to help itself. Betty Hagler, who had been serving as a Teacher’s Aide in the elementary school, agreed to be the first librarian, working on a volunteer basis. The first hours of operation were set so she could continue to work at the school during the mornings. Our staff trained her in clinics and counseled her all along the way.

The whole county was experiencing "growing pains" by this time. Between 1960 and 1970, serious analyses showed that the greatest growth was taking place in the eastern segment of the county. It was projected that by 1975, the population around that part of the county which surrounded Lithia Springs area would be above 16,000. Amazing as it may sound, 80% of the total labor in the county was working outside the county — primarily in Fulton and Cobb Counties. Douglas definitely was shown to be a "bedroom" county, which constituted a great problem for the county administration.

Our in-depth, continuous surveys indicated two factors of concern to us in the library program: (1) many of the people were holding Library Borrowers Cards at the municipal libraries (Atlanta, Marietta, etc.) and (2) numbers of these people were becoming annoyed that Lithia Springs did not have a decent library structure for housing thousands of volumes and other materials, and for programming. The former was a blight on the county record, but the latter was the prod that we needed to meet the needs and demands of an ever-growing, cosmopolitan population.

By 1972 I had prepared the Director's Legend of what the community needed, based on realistic findings. State Consultants approved my program for a new building, in toto: footage, arrangements, costs, etc.; however, we were caught by the curtailment of Federal Allotments for public libraries.

Meantime Federal Revenue Sharing — a program for towns and cities — became a reality and replaced the allotments. Shortly afterwards, State Building Funds became available on a first-come, first-grant basis. R. L. Smith, Chairman of the Douglas County Board of Commissioners, agreed to use some of the Federal allocation to adjust expenditures so he could meet his local matching requirement to draw State Funds for building the library. The Atlanta Presbytery donated land for the building, lying midway between U. S. Highway 78 to the north and I-20 to the south of the town. Sewage lines at the time had not been extended into that area; hence the State Health Department would not OK our going ahead with the building until they were available. The plan was deterred, not discarded, and we put an architect to work drawing up blueprints.

Although I had agreed years before and promised to build this library, time over-took me. I retired after Fiscal 1976; nevertheless, my successor, Leroy Childs, has efficiently and expeditiously carried out the commitment. The magnificent building is completed and is working to have one of the state's most dynamic programs in the coming years.

Annette Winn, Chairman of the Lithia Springs Library Board and vice-chairman of West Georgia Regional Library Board, when the ground-breaking ceremony took place in December, 1976 said:

"May this library serve well its purpose to provide intellectual backgrounds and cultural development for the citizens of this area." It will!

She has been the inspiration that kept the spark alive when the winds of hope blew cold. It is at her door the credit should be laid for the step-by-step development of the Lithia Spring Branch Library, though she had plenty of help.

4.

EXPERIMENT IN STEEL

... "one of the finest examples of community citizenship . . ."
(Tallapoosa Journal-Beacon)

I suppose one might say a brainstorm put a branch in Tallapoosa. That's what the **Atlanta Journal** called it in a special feature by Joe Dabney. The idea that it **could** be done, is **must** be done, it **would** be done originated in the brain of Mrs. Frank Straton.

Dot Straton is not a native of Tallapoosa. She and Frank had moved there a short time before, when he went to work as an engineer for Dixisteel, an affiliate of Atlantic Steel. She was amazed at the tremendous interest in reading and literature in Tallapoosa and that end of the county. Upon inquiring around, she found that Haralson County, though it had no branch library per se, was a part of West Georgia Regional Library area, being served through the public schools, private kindergartens, the courthouse, filling stations, private homes, collections that had been established. Many Haralson Countians were commuting regularly to Carrollton to use the headquarters library collection.

Tallapoosa, in the western part of the county, at one time had had a small town library, she learned; but during the depression it had closed down. Why not start one again, she kept saying to her friends and neighbors around town. She talked continuously about the possibility to the Mayor, Dr. R. D. Allen, and his wife, Betty, till finally it was suggested that they should visit me and discuss the possibility.

In the early spring of 1963 when they came for a conference, I assured them that getting a library for Tallapoosa could be done if

they would do their part. There were no State or Federal governmental funds available for building libraries in those days; but they could see what had been done locally by determination and cooperation as they were right then sitting in "The Little House" — our first region-owned headquarters.

The ladies went away excited. "Never fear," they assured me (and themselves). "We'll be back with something more positive next time."

"Set up a planning committee," I urged them. "Be sure you have the city and county governments represented. Call a meeting and invite me to it. I'll lay out specifics and make them a challenge."

The library committee was soon named and I met with them to explain how our system worked and the part the State Government pledged in the over-all service program as well as the responsibilities that would be purely local. I told them that the community would have to provide quarters.

When they did report the next time, I was in for a big surprise. Dixiesteel had offered to give them an all-steel building (the exterior, of course)! Was it allowable? I had neither heard nor read of one anywhere in the country; but I instantly saw the potential for using steel. In their case, the great advantage was that the outside of the structure would cost the people nothing. Frank Straton would direct the assembling so it would be proper and correct.

I talked with the State Consultants, who agreed with me that it would be an interesting "first" experiment in library building. Since it would be constructed on a concrete slab, it could even be moved to another location later if that were desirable, and additions of the original structure possible. John Hall Jacobs, Director of the Atlanta Public Library System, and a noted consultant on public library buildings, became very interested in erecting a steel exterior, feeling that he might like to try it for branches, as it could be moved from one place to another. He agreed that it never had been tried.

The site for the Tallapoosa Branch Library was also donated; so I proceeded. After studying the community in detail, I drew up plans for a 2400 square feet structure. We decided to have a local cabinet-maker construct all the shelving, using standard blueprints. We at headquarters agreed to select and order oak tables, chairs, card catalogs, and other needed equipment from a library furniture dealer, based on bids. They began to raise necessary funds.

The first civic donation was from the A. J. McBride Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (\$1000.00), followed shortly by funds from the Lions Club, the Tallapoosa Garden Club, the Jay-

cees, the city and county governments, the American Thread Co., and Dixisteel. A Friends of the Library organization was formed, with a membership fee of \$2.00. It became a matter of pride in that end of the county for a citizen to carry a Friends of the Library Membership Card in his or her pocket.

Immediately the erection of the building began. It may sound like cold architecture; but truly the soft autumn tan set against a rolling green slope, with light-green industrial fiberglass windows inserted high across the sides and back of the building, very attractive, gave an inviting, comfortable appearance.

The interior walls were paneled with Luan mahogany, giving a rich, rather elegant finish. The base was covered with medium-light vinyl plastic tiling (popular at the time) mainly solid in color but with a slight additional touch which reflected the tones of the walls and the furniture.

Of course I had to come up with at least one memorable episode with the "Don't get smug" implication just to keep my feet on the ground. To explain, let me say that I had been called by the Librarian to come over to Tallapoosa to show them how to put the new tables together. I started over there post-haste, taking Rudene Hollingsworth with me to help.

We loved Belle Brewer, the Librarian, very much. She was a most unusual person, very educated and cultured, who had recently retired as the Latin and Math teacher at Tallapoosa High School — she was the widow of a fine Superintendent of the Tallapoosa Schools. Belle was possibly the most respected, beloved citizen in that section of the county and she had a delightful sense of humor, always putting matters in proper prospective. She had agreed to become Librarian to help us get the program off the ground and we certainly were fortunate to have her.

Well, that afternoon Rudene and I were delighted to see that the card catalogs, tables, chairs, cabinets, etc., which we had selected and ordered had arrived. They were beautiful (if I say so myself). We went to work putting them together. Somehow, and I'll never know why, a large, round oak table top, leaning securely against the end of a row of low stacks, without being touched, bounced over and came to a crashing stop, atop my left big toe.

The pain was so severe I very nearly screamed. As it was, I did moan awhile. Belle, Rudene, and some high school students did the actual work as I directed most of the action from my chair of pain.

I knew the toe was smashed, and the foot was swelling so much that my shoe was getting tight. Not wanting Belle to worry, I made little of the pain there; however, as Rudene and I made our way to my car, I asked her to drive the twenty-five miles home.

"Is it broken?" she asked.

"I'm sure it is," I moaned. "I must get help as soon as we get back to Carrollton."

"Miss Foster," the young lady at the clinic said, "What is the matter?"

"I nearly left a toe in Tallapoosa," I said. "Please get me some help."

"Which doctor?"

"The first one who can see me," I answered.

"Let's see. That will be Dr. Martin."

"Fine," I mumbled as I dragged my aching limb over to a bench to sit. I was lucky. Mac Martin and his wife, Carole, were and are great friends of mine, big library users, along with their children. He was at the time one of the on-coming great M.D.'s — Now an outstanding surgeon in these parts.

I had forgotten about it, but Mac and Carole — adventuresome souls — had some weeks before, taken to the ski slopes in North Carolina, where Mac had indulged in an amateurish tumble, breaking a leg. At the time of my mishap, he still was getting about in a wheelchair.

Well, I was sent in for X-rays. At last Mac wheeled to my couch of pain, saying:

"Edith, it's a pretty good crack. I've tried to warn you about lifting those big tomes . . ."

"Mac," I cut him off, "I believe it I were in **your** shape, for a foolish reason, I'd keep my mouth shut about **me**!"

How he laughed!

By way of parenthetical reference, let me say that recently over lunch together, Mac, Carole, and I were still laughing about the episode. I teased him about giving up dangerous skiing the way he did, for flying — yes, **flying**. They own their own plane, flying all over the country having a great time.

"Hey! How about flying with us." It was Carole talking. "Would you be afraid?"

"No," I laughed; "but I tell you what. Let's wait till my book is finished and in the hands of my publisher. I don't admit to being accident-prone; but there's always the doubtful big toe!"

The toe was pretty well cracked up, you see. Though I was on crutches for several weeks, we continued planning the Haralson County Civic Library's open house. The building, completely readied, was a departure from the "tried and true"; but it was and is an attractive and serviceable structure, at that time answering the needs in the community of Tallapoosa. It also stands as a constant reminder that "where there's a will, there's a way."

5

"SKINT CHESTNUT"

"...one of the greatest assets to come to the county . . ."

(Douglas County Sentinel)

Skint Chestnut (Douglasville) — oh, my! I was truly excited over adding Douglas County to our system. Leroy Childs and I were very busy out in the county making contact with people whose support we needed, and in working out Bookmobile routes to take care of public centers and services to schools. Two key Douglas Countians, of whom I have previously written, paced us every step of the way, smoothing out obstacles, abetting our devoted efforts to organize on a sound basis. This was during the demonstrations in the Spring of 1951 and on into 1951-52 Fiscal year. Those two are still serving the cause of the library program, both in Douglas County and in the Region — Annette Winn of Lithia Springs and Ruth Warren of Douglasville. I have never known a finer pair of public-spirited workers, firmly supportive of the Regional Library program!

A devastating fire ripped through the Courthouse in 1956, resulting in our suffering not only a loss in materials but also comfortable, convenient quarters; however, when the new Courthouse was completed and Open House held in 1957. There we were back in business with an off-the-street direct entrance to a beautifully finished library room. The quarters were not adequate for programming nor could they allow for much growth; however, we necessarily had to proceed until time presented a possibility for building a library to serve as the central materials resource for Douglas County and to become a focal point for a variety of county cultural, educational, and civic activity — which possibility was not too long in coming.

With expansion of the Library Services Act to include construction in 1965, many of us were already busy surveying the needs of our individual areas and projecting far enough into the future to determine the size of proposed buildings as we would indicate in the required application for Federal Grants (through State allocations) to match local funds. Douglas County Public Library was included in this study we made.

R. L. Smith, Chairman of Douglas County Board of Commissioners at the time, as well as the other members, and Douglasville City officials, was eager to build the library. I explained to him that accurate studies had indicated that two — and possibly three — libraries would be needed in a decade: at Douglasville, at Lithia Springs, and somewhere in the southeastern part of the county. He agreed with me. Our services in Douglas County, I told him, were going to have no focal point if we did not move shortly to build a library in Douglasville. The Commissioners asked me to write the program and prepare the documents.

Let me explain that the "Program" is the librarian's legend calling for so much footage at thus many dollars per square foot, spaces in footage needed for particular functions, equipment, supplies, land requirements, lighting, etc. This has to be approved by State Library Consultants, as does the whole packet sent up. Accompanying the legend are some fourteen or so documents including application for the Matching Grant with the total budget itemized for expenditures, contract with an accredited architect, soil testing results, assurances of compliance with several Governmental regulations both State and Federal, etc. All these papers are co-signed by the local authority and Regional Library Board Chairman. The governing authority to oversee the building project is the Regional Library Board. The Director of Services is the responsible **consultant** throughout the whole procedure, from first steps in planning to final acceptance by the Public Library Division of Georgia Department of Education and the service projects following. In the event special Federal Funds are involved, other documents must be prepared by the Director for the Library Division and/or whatever agency in Washington is concerned. Once the building is approved and accepted, management is turned over to the local Library Board, which operates under the aegis of the county commissioner(s) with the Regional Board serving as the official body (in relationship with the State Government) and the Regional Library Director the over-all professional consultant.

Douglas County Public Library was built in 1966 and the early part of 1967. It was opened for service by the summer of 1967. The Public Library is a beautiful structure, conveniently located adjacent

to the County courthouse, with Fannie Mae Davis as Librarian. A fine program has been developed which relates to the expressed needs of the people — an impossible accomplishment before the library building became a reality. These services include work with organized agencies and institutions as well as with the individual. (Most have been mentioned earlier.) It was recognized by all official agencies concerned on state and local levels, and by me as Director of Services, that with potential growth projected, some day considerably more library space will necessarily be forthcoming. At this point, Douglas County Public Library has already become an asset to the entire county.

6.

“MANNA FROM HEAVEN”

“. . . a red-letter day for Heard Countians . . .
a tremendous contribution to the people . . .”

(The Cemco Views)

“We are pleased to advise you that your Federal Proposal under LSCA, Title I, for this fiscal year has been revised and approved for funding . . .”

“Congratulations on the fine work you and your staff put into the planning and writing of this project, and we look forward to seeing it underway.”

(Carlton Thaxton, Director of the Public Library
Division, Georgia Department of Education)

Happy day! What a great joy and privilege it was for us to be planning a branch library in Heard County! We always had had a very special warmth for that little pioneering area in the southern part of our region; in fact, never once in the thirty-two years of my tenure did I ever encounter a negative note from its people.

One day in the early fall of 1971, I received a communication from Carlton Thaxton indicating that a very few “special” grants were to be allocated for projects. Two grants would be in our category, for \$10,000 each. I asked Leroy Childs to talk with me about the idea of setting up a branch library in Heard County, which was the only county in our system without at least one public library. Of course we realized we could not carry out a total construction effort; but we decided that utilizing some of the State allocations, plus forthcoming local help on the county level in addition to the \$10,000 Grant, would guarantee the minimum funds for a library.

I explained the possibility to our Regional Library Board members from Heard County and requested that they call a meeting of interested citizens including the Mayor of Franklin (county seat of Heard), the Board of Commissioners, Clerk of the Court, School Board officials, etc., to meet with Leroy and me to explore the public library idea. We were asked to proceed with the application for the special grant. We had solid and total support of the power structure of the county.

Two or three of the men present were on the Hospital Board in the county at the time. Since the Heard County Hospital had closed, the adjunct Doctors' Building had been vacant for at least two years. The men suggested that they could possibly get permission from the entire Hospital board to turn the Doctor's Building over for our use. There was no opposition from the Hospital Authority.

We released the first news to the public without saying anything about any proposed place for the library. I myself had an odd feeling about the Doctor's Building, though I knew we could "make do" if we had no other place available. Some repairs would be necessary. The rooms were rather small, however, demanding many changes in its design in order to create a library. The Authority was hesitant about our doing this — and rightly so.

Meantime, The Manager of Carroll Electric Membership Corporation wrote me a letter of congratulations and offered a large room absolutely free in the EMC Building in Franklin, with "gratis" heat, light, airconditioning, and telephone. There was an outside entrance to the room; so we could make a comfortable entrance directly into the library. If we chose to locate in the building we could prepare the room according to our own plan. There was no anticipation that EMC would ask us to withdraw from the building. The Board of EMC, comprised of representatives of Carroll, Heard, and Haralson Counties, had approved and applauded this good citizenship suggestion on the part of their Manager, asking him to notify the proper authorities through me. Our Library Board decided it would be better to accept this offer rather than the Doctors' Building.

The Governmental authorities in the county appointed a Library Planning Committee made up of members of both races. It was one of the most faithful, most able planning committees with which I have ever had the pleasure of working. Those knowledgeable about carpeting took on the responsibility of selecting the carpet. They chose well indeed. Mayor Burl Arrington, County Commission Chairman Hugh Goodson, and County School Superintendent Hershel Dowdy worked on an operating budget and the naming of the all-important first of-

ficial Library Board. It was just a magnificent representative Board. Others provided a list of all the organized civic, educational, and cultural groups in the county, together with the contact person and the address of each. The purpose of this was two-fold: to enable us to survey at once the service activities already going on in the county, and to select wisely the books and other library materials for starting and building up the new branch library collection so it could be useful to the people and these organized groups.

We spent the money for the finest of equipment, shelving, carpeting, and other furnishings. We liberally shared the Regional Library's 1971-72 State allocation for materials, purchasing books, periodicals, framed prints of art masterpieces, etc. As is customary, we also provided materials from the collections in the Regional Extension Department; so that by the time we were ready for business, 3,000 pieces of material had been shelved, including several sets of encyclopedias, along with a fine beginning AV collection.

While the renovation was going on, we decided to move an old Bookmobile down there and park it right beside the EMC Building. (This was a vehicle we had decided to pull out of service and sell.) Rebecca Chambers, who was the Office Cashier for EMC in Heard County and whose office joined the library through a connecting door, was to receive the returned books when the Mobile Library was closed and accept requests for titles and subject matter in our absence. She also agreed to register new patrons since she had an "I know you" relationship with so many people and everyone liked her. We were happy with this arrangement.

Rudene Hollingsworth of our Staff agreed to drive down the three days we first opened the Branch, to serve as Librarian via the Bookmobile. Following the Open House, on June 7, 1972, Marsha Dobbs, our excellent West Georgia College Student Assistant on our Staff, who lived in the vicinity of Franklin, was sent to carry out the library program during the summer. Before the first months passed, the Heard County Public Library Board had found a "librarian" — Edna Summers — a person with fine professional potential. The Board paid her travel expenses to a learn-on-the job stint at Neva Lomason Library, where we trained her in routines and helped her develop a philosophy about librarianship. (Edna later died following a heart attack and the Board appointed Janice Todd, another lifetime Heard Countian, who as I have said, to my astonishment later when I discovered it, turned out to be Janice Gentry of the fabulous Gentry book-reading clan I got to know in the early Fifties.)

So it was that like Manna from Heaven, a Special Grant falling into our hands enabled us to develop a branch library at Franklin — but then, Heard is a very “special” county. This turned out to be a preliminary step towards the building of a beautiful library structure, which has since that time been accomplished under the able planning of Leroy Childs, who succeeded me as Director of West Georgia Regional Library, and the superb county leadership.

7.

ANOTHER GOLD STRIKE

“... a recognized need of a growing and progressive city . . .”
(The Villa Rican)

There has always been a soft spot in my heart for Villa Rica, for it was N V. Dyer, the Superintendent of Villa Rica Schools, who kept the schools squarely behind us in the third year of our regional demonstration when the Carroll County Board of Education dropped our contract.

In the early Sixties I wrote a program for a public library based on a survey of the community, hoping that the City Government would undertake the project. For years we had maintained two public service centers in Villa Rica — one in Old Town and the other downtown in the business area. The community simply outgrew these small deposit centers. The need for a larger library was evident.

Villa Rica is a very old town. It was incorporated in 1830 following the discovery of gold in 1826 in that part of Carroll County. Among the distinguished early settlers was Samuel C. Candler, progenitor of some of Georgia's most outstanding citizens. The people certainly appreciate the more substantial, finer things in life. I found it interesting that so many of them signed up for borrowers' cards when we set up our first headquarters in the Little House.

We should have had a real branch library in Villa Rica long before 1973. It awaited the leadership of Liz Hairston Candler, who came there as a teacher who had turned into a high school librarian, following her marriage to Bill Candler! We became warm friends, often discussing mutual library ideas, including the very great need for a public library in her community. One day she came to my office to tell me a brick structure formerly used as the Doctors Building, sitting squarely in the heart of downtown Villa Rica, had been offered to us for a library by the Mayor and Council — that is, the front half of the building, the other half was being utilized as a County Health Center.

I joined Mrs. Candler over there the next day to discuss the proposition. I explained that since the entire building would not be used for the library, the project was not eligible for State or Federal Grants. It would have to have locally financed. I agreed to sketch a design of the service area which carpenters, electricians, etc., could follow, and to draw up a list of furniture needed, as well as to work with Liz in overseeing the project. A local planning committee was set up to help us, especially in raising the necessary funds to pay bills. I itemized the costs of the library equipment and made arrangements with library equipment dealers to come to Villa Rica. We knew approximately how much the total building would be.

Carrollton Federal Savings and Loan Association, which maintains a branch in Villa Rica, gave a financial boost to light up the money tree, with \$1500.00 to be put out at interest for the proposed library, with an agreement that the original sum was to be matched locally before it could be drawn. We set up a Savings Account in the name of the Villa Rica Public Library. Considerable work was donated by local agencies and individuals — such as putting in a proper electrical system, painting, etc. Without even including donated help, the funds for matching the Special FS & L Grant were raised and we proceeded with the project as money kept trickling in to swell the fund. We had been busy selecting, processing and cataloging about 3500 volumes so as to have them ready for use by the fall of 1973. Carrie Penrose, a former schoolteacher who is both energetic, bright, and in possession of a great deal of common sense as well as verve, was named Librarian. Immediately a program was set in motion by our Staff to train her in the responsibilities that accompany administering a branch library. In her case this proved to be no problem at all because working in the field of Education was old-hat to Carrie.

So it was that after the first futile efforts to get a public library branch in Villa Rica in the mid-sixties, there we were in 1973, with the help of a live "sparkplug", making a real strike once again the heart of the City of Gold. It was our sixth branch started "from scratch."

8 and 9

TWINS — NO LESS!

"... a reality through the great civic pride and citizenship of the Warren and Ava Sewell Foundation."

(Bowdon Bulletin)

I'll draw the curtain on the travails connected with conducting simultaneously not one but two library building projects so similar in size, financing, character of design, and finally, the actual naming thereof, that forever after, now that the mission is accomplished, I shall think and speak of the joyful creation of our "twin projects".

In the late fifties, J. Hubert Griffin, Chairman of our Regional Board, and I went to Bowdon to talk with Lamar Plunkett, outstanding Bowdon industrialist and benefactor, about the future of our Regional Library, building-wise. Lamar had served on our Board earlier and also had quietly helped us financially from time to time in the early doing when we really had no semblance of an operating budget. I had always found him to be sincere, frank, and interested in our young library projects.

"It isn't going to be easy," I said, "to pass a bond issue in Carroll County to build a headquarters library for the system. We don't dare agitate for any more new branch library buildings when we don't as yet have a decent headquarters. Feelers we have put out indicate that a bond issue would be defeated. What do you suggest we could do at this point?"

His response to us was the encouragement to concentrate our efforts on securing funds for a Regional Headquarters. When the time was right, he spelled out for me, he would lend a hand to help build branches. He would keep his word to us on this as encouragement to the citizens of Bowdon to develop their own public library. I had tried twice in the 1950's to get a public library program started: once with the Bowdon Garden club sponsoring the library in a lovely little building situated in the heart of town. Since no local person we could train as librarian was put on the town payroll and no official board was set up, the project died. When the new City Hall was finished I again tried, asking for a room just off the street entrance. This direct appeal to the powers-that-be got us the room; however, no library board was ever appointed and "volunteer" librarians were asked to manage the library. As experience had shown before that over a short haul even, this system just never works adequately. After a very exciting summer program, the effort slowed, then died.

The extension of Library Services Act to include construction gave me the opportunity again to approach the subject of a public library in Bowdon. Interest immediately materialized there when I discussed the need and the urgency for a local library with Dr. Walter Gresham newly elected Councilman. I explained my previous efforts in behalf of his community, furnishing copious data about our library program and how it operated. I pled for help. Dr. Gresham secured a

document signed by the Mayor and every single member of the City Council expressing assurance to back the determination for a library building but unfortunately spelling out that "none of . . . construction costs could be borne by the City of Bowdon." Since Federal Grant for construction (handled via the Public Library Division) **had to be matched** by the local government (not the Regional Board) this made use of federal LSCA funds impossible. As it turned out, we were delayed anyway, as there were no Federal Funds available for additional construction of public libraries in Georgia or in any state, for that matter, as funds were cut off in Washington. This state of affairs continued for two more years. When we were forced to table the plan for the time being, I alerted Lamar Plunkett, who had promised when we were ready, he would help via a Grant from the Sewell Foundation to be used as the necessary local matching funds.

The Federal Aid did not materialize; but meanwhile something exciting did, which altered the picture in Georgia. Lamar Plunkett talked personally with our new Governor, Jimmy Carter, about the great need for initiating a Public Library Construction Program partially financed by State Matching Grants. Other key Legislators agreed, working towards that end, including Speaker Pro Tem Tom Murphy and Jim (Sloppy) Floyd, the very powerful Chairman of the Appropriations Committee. The Grant program was passed by the legislature in the 1972 legislative session, and signed into law by Governor Carter. The first appropriations were available during the Fiscal 1973-74 year.

We immediately began a follow-up study of Bowdon, revised our program and then contacted the new mayor — Norman Padgett. I explained that though more than nearly two years before, I had received a written document signed by the preceding Mayor and all members of Council to support our building effort in behalf of the community, we were necessarily deterred because there were no Federal Funds under the Library Construction Act available nor any local funds forthcoming.

Then glory be! Our State Government, seeing the need, was beginning to allocate Grants for Public Library Construction on a matching basis. Norman was as excited as I about the possibility that Bowdon might finally succeed in getting a library building. I suggested to him that we contact Lamar Plunkett at once. Lamar and Frances Plunkett were vacationing at Jekyll; however, we reached him there and to our joy, he suggested that we not only go ahead with the plans, but at the same time, write a building program for Bremen. He felt positive that the Sewell Foundation, of which he was Director, would allocate an equal amount for each community to match the State Funds,

promising \$50,000 for each project. I also talked with Speaker Pro Tem Tom Murphy, and to Robert Richie, Mayor of Bremen, both of whom encouraged me to begin both projects immediately.

Later, I went back to Lamar, accompanied by Lila Rice the building consultant for the Georgia Public Library Division, and asked for \$64,000 for each project instead of \$50,000. He graciously agreed, promising to clear the matter at the next meeting of the Sewell Foundation. Later on, finding a hole in our Bowdon construction pocket, I went back to Lamar for needles and thread amounting to about \$2500. He came through with a Sewell Foundation check for \$3000!

The site chosen for the library in Bowdon was a strip of virgin forest donated by Emmett and Mary West (very public spirited citizens). The trees had to be cleared away and the tract graded and leveled. Midway of the library project the heavens opened and rains literally poured so often and so heavily that we were months delayed in getting the building underway. Eventually the Warren P. Sewell Memorial Library of Bowdon was a reality! Carol Brown, a college graduate with a few years of teaching experience, was elected Librarian. Immediately upon opening the library, an exciting program began to take shape under her capable administration. Meantime, as I have hinted earlier, I was hopping from that pillar to the other post.

Bremen was busy, too. Obstacles I once encountered were now being brushed aside like toothpicks. Several pieces of property came under consideration for the site. I rushed to look the situation over before asking a State Consultant to come over and pinpoint the choice plot. I loved the possibility of the old school grounds. The entire school system had been moved to another quadrant of the town. They had left the old red brick buildings standing; but we weren't interested in them. Instead, I was visualizing a lovely but functional library gracing a graded piece of land with depth and space for adequate parking and possibilities in the years ahead for expansion if needed. It was the most beautiful plot I had ever seen for a small library.

Lila Rice of the State Staff agreed with me. Here was a perfect lie of land for our purpose in a downtown location!

I must say that my hat is forever off to Mayor Robert Richie and the Council of Bremen. They did everything right, and all of them were eager for a fine library branch, appreciative and cooperative. In my estimation, no government authority in our Region has ever surpassed them. The first thing they did was to appoint a legally constituted Library Board, giving it THE AUTHORITY to work directly with us of the West Georgia Regional Library and with our

Board in the construction project. The Library Board named in Bremen was as fine as there was anywhere in the state. The members carried out all their commitments, including securing Edna Bermudez as their Librarian.

By the time our application for the State Grant for Bremen was processed, the balance in the State Budget for Public Library Construction was \$6000 short of our request. We were promised the \$6000 as soon as the new allotments were set up. I talked with the newly appointed Chairman of Bremen's Library Board, Harold Higgins, about this and he promptly took up the matter with Mayor Richie. The latter called me immediately to say Bremen would underwrite the \$6000 and to continue with our building plans.

Months before the twin projects were completed, Lamar Plunkett had been appointed to the State Transportation Board by Governor Jimmy Carter. In that capacity he was able expeditiously to secure the help of the Highway Department in getting entrances and parking areas for both libraries paved, working in cooperation with the county and city governments.

Well, after all, it was the year that was! Somehow we managed the creation of two branch buildings while carrying out the normal duties, obligations, and routines, together with a few exciting service projects in the five-county area. It was a busy 1974!

10

"A GEM"

"... a monument to the memory of one woman and to the dedication and tireless efforts of another."

(Carroll Times-Free Press)

Some time ago a friend said to me: "You either are the luckiest person in the world or the Good Lord has been looking over your shoulder;" I think it is both. All along the way from the rudimentary stages of the library system's development right on through to the last year of my tenure whenever dire problems confronted me, a solution was always found.

We had many a hand extended to help us across the rough places, but none was more firm nor more sure than that of Hubert Griffin. It was Hubert to whom I turned so often that I fear it was sometimes an imposition, especially in the early struggles of our Regional Library, when little glamour touched our work to attract the attention of the

average citizen. He never once faltered in his trust that the library program would survive and flourish.

Stanley Parkman wrote in Carroll County **Times-Free Press** "...without the help of people like him (Hubert Griffin) down through the years, the faith of Edith Foster would not have lasted . . . salute Hubert Griffin for this tremendous act of community service and his help over the years to the library program . . ."

He was to play a mighty big role once more as we began to set into motion a plan that ultimately would result in the construction of the Neva Lomason Memorial Library.

Immediately following the implementation of the Library Services and Construction Act in 1965, seven years after our move into the Little House and two years following the clearing of all debt on the re-converted duplex, I began to push for local support to design and build a library headquarters structure that would be worthy of our programs. I wrote the Building Program Analysis, presenting it to the Board, to the Mayor, and to the Georgia Public Library Division.

We were more fortunate than words can express to have the two men who had followed our efforts all the way, believing and standing by to help — both in strategic posts. Hubert Griffin as Chairman of our Official Library Board and John Robinson as Mayor of the City of Carrollton saved "the day".

I talked frequently with John about our goals and purposes and he understood what a great asset such a structure would be to our system-wide programs, as well as to Carrollton itself. He kept mulling over ways and means of matching Federal Dollars.

"I have your library proposal in mind," he assured me. "We will work something out. Would you have any objection to a Memorial Gift?" We assured him that any public spirited gift would be welcomed.

John understood, as did Hubert, that the majority of the local matching for the entire system would have to be met in some manner by Carrollton and Carroll County. We were writing programs for Branch Library Construction to take care of the basic library needs in other counties and each community was having to provide local funds to match the Federal monies for their library construction.

Our good luck held and the Good Lord kept looking over our shoulders, for just at that time Congress passed the Appalachian Bill and the President signed it into law! I called Congressman Flynt of our District to mail me a copy. Upon careful scrutiny, I rushed madly to Atlanta and bursting into the office of our Chief Library Consultant,

Lucile Nix, I almost shouted: "Have you seen a copy of this Appalachian Bill?"

She had not; so I proceeded to read out two pertinent sections hidden away in the thick report. The gist of these statements was: (1) If the Governor of any State located in Appalachia so chose (and Georgia was one) funds from the Appalachia allocations **could** go to public library construction (2) any Appalachia Funds allocated for public library construction **could match Library Services and Construction Grants — Title II** (the first time in history that Federal money could be used to match Federal money).

"Edith," Lucile said, "you have done it again! You just seem to pop up always at the right time. Governor Sanders called just **this morning** asking whether or not we would have any two regions ready to use Appalachia Funds right away. I told him we would. I feel this possibly may be the catalyst to stir your Board into immediate action, as Carrollton's matching requirement will now be only one-third of the total, not one-half.

"No problem," I assured her, "and since all five of my counties are in Appalachia, except for consideration of the larger towns, we can plead our cause almost totally!"

Lucile knew we had a suitable site for the library in mind, as we had drawn up a plan that we could activate. She and others of the State Staff had been to Carrollton to look over the site of the Little House and the one we wished to acquire. They had already approved the new site. It was Hubert Griffin again who made the lot possible! Local Trustees of the library had proposed that we do an outright swap, with no money involved, of the property where Hubert's old homeplace stood (for years rented out) and the site of the present library structure. The former, comprising two and a quarter acres in a section of town where expansion was underway would be adequate for the proposed library; the latter, in a traffic-congested area, was a good business investment, but with poor facilities for a library. Hubert offered to step aside as chairman of West Georgia Regional Library Board to avoid any possible adverse criticism. Mrs. W. T. Green was elected chairman; as the swap had already been arranged for consummation at the proper time.

I did not know it nor did Lucile Nix at the time, but Lamar Plunkett, then our own State Senator, had already spoken to Governor Sanders about the possibility of allocating some of Georgia's Appalachia Grant for public library construction. Our Governor was fair about the distribution of these Federal Funds, and library-minded, thank goodness! So was Lamar Plunkett!

On my urgent trip to Atlanta, the copy of the Appalachia Bill in hand, on Tuesday, I had asked, "When will the Governor need your definite reply and copies of our grant requests?"

Lucile replied: "Thursday. Can you do it?"

"I'll be back," I assured her. "I already have all the documentation typed and ready for official signatures anyway. I can get that done, because our Mayor has already promised me he'll work this matter out one way or another. Better to say yes now and assure ourselves of the LSCA and Appalachia Grants than to let the opportunity for the Appalachia Grant go by the Board; then if we do fail to secure the rest of the matching fund locally, we can always withdraw our application before the final deadline. I'll go back and modify what I have already written for submitting to the Appalachia Commission."

Well, I worked on it nearly all night. Newell Spangler, my Secretary, began on the typing for me very early the next morning; so I hit the trail for Atlanta by noon on Wednesday **with all the papers** filled out and ready for local signatures. Lucile was amazed. She said the Appalachia papers were in perfect order. "How did you do this so fast?" she wondered.

"We've pioneered all the way," I grinned; "so we just always have to be 'fustest with the mostest'."

John Robinson, our beloved Mayor, assured me the money would be in hand by the deadline — no matter what! He signed the documents without any hesitancy and so did Hubert Griffin.

Before and after signing our official applications, John Robinson and I talked frequently about a possible local Memorial Fund to assist the city with our local matching requirements. We had an idea which we had kept to ourselves; then an odd happening just put the idea to a test. Vince Cashen, Manager of the Carrollton Plant of Douglas and Lomason Company at the time (which makes chrome parts for Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors) approached John about the need for more recreational area (sports), to which John replied honestly, that he had a priority.

"What is it?" Vince asked.

"The library," John told him. "That lady has torn her heart out for us for many years. She's gone as far as she can now without a decent building. We need it and I have put that down as coming first in any city building plans. We've been thinking maybe Bill Lomason would be interested in a memorial for his wife (who had died six months earlier). Do you think he would consider a Neva Lomason Memorial Library project?"

"I don't know," Vince said, " but I'll ask him."

Two weeks later Bill Lomason came to see us. "I like your idea of a Memorial Library. How much do you need?"

Our application for an LSCA Grant called for \$125,000.00. So did the application for the Appalachia Fund. Our local matching part, therefore, was also \$125,000.00.

We were to exceed the local amount because Bill Lomason asked the noted sculptor, Julian Harris, a native of Carrollton, and personal friend of Bill's and mine to place his creative touch on the front of the building.

Actually there was a sizable amount added to the local expenditure because the City of Carrollton and Carroll County governments worked cohesively in getting the old buildings, two dwellings and a barn, removed and the lot landscaped appropriately. They then paved the large parking area and the four entrances to the building. The local allocation approximated \$165,000.

Several months prior to moving from the Little House, we did a self-study, evaluating our Regional programs, special projects, etc., as well as our available materials and equipment. We were determined to devise an over-all program to reach people from all walks of life. We planned to begin a Readers Advisory Program, a strong research department, and to develop a meaningful Children's Department to reach even the tiny tots. We also designed a meeting room with great character.

Julian Harris in describing his sculpture for Neva Lomason Memorial Library, said something quite significant:

"I wanted the cast aluminum sculpture to give character to the building as well as decoration; so I selected three figures: The German meistersinger, a folk singer who inspired an opera and represents Music; an Italian scientist who represents all fields of Science; and an English actor holding the masks of tragedy and comedy who represents Drama and Literature. Our American heritage owes much to the older cultures.

"This is not a conversation group since they are from cultures geographically separated. The composition is held together by the arrangement of the forms.

"I used High and Late Renaissance figures for two reasons: the clothing of this period was decorative, and no other period in history contributed more to the cultural development of our Western Civilization. These figures represent the wealth of knowledge deposited in this Library.

"Proper use of this store house of knowledge will enable our future generations to enjoy life more fully and to think more creatively, the two essentials for the flowering of a New Renaissance."

Beautifully stated — and so true! The completed structure including the Sculpture has simple but graceful lines. Outside features amber-cream brick trimmed in rich brown; inside Regency walnut with golden touches.

It was appropriately named for Neva Wigle Lomason, a true patroness of the arts. As Bill Lomason said to the public in his quiet way: "Neva understood the importance of libraries . . . If she had been able to have a choice in the matter, a library as a Memorial most certainly would have pleased her the most."

In considering an inscription for the memorial plaque in the Neva Lomason Memorial Library, we concluded that no words could possibly be more apropos than those from John Keats' **Ode Upon a Grecian Urn**: "A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

Referring to William Lomason, on December 7, 1967, Stanley Parkman editorialized in the **Carroll County Georgian**: "A hundred years from now — the history of this area will still have a chapter headed 'Bill and Neva Lomason — Friends of Carrollton'."

So many things about this building effort were unique. Our Board asked permission of the State Department of Education to set up an Affiliated Board of Carrollton and Carroll County men and women to be close by to help our architect, our builder, and our staff. Andrew McGukin, President of the Carrollton Federal Savings and Loan Association, served brilliantly as Chairman of the Building Committee. The resulting structure reflects the expertise and the devotion of these fine public-spirited citizens who comprised the Affiliate Board: Vince Cashen, Charlie Cook, Dudley Crosson, J. C. Daniel, Louise Green, Lonie Reese Harris, Madeline Newell, Alice Richards, John Robinson, Frank Rose, Dot Roush, Libby Thomasson, Bill Wiggins, and Bill Lomason (Honorary).

In my comments at the library's Open House on December 10, 1967, I spelled out my philosophy:

"The story of any institution is only as significant as is the purpose of the program and the success of its effort in implementing the purpose. A Public Library is an institutions; but infinitely greater, it is a service."

We were especially happy to have on our Open House Dedication Program the Honorable Joe W. Fleming, Federal Co-Chairman of

the Appalachian Regional Commission, who was introduced by Bill Wiggins, the State Representative from Carroll County.

As one would expect, Judge Robert Tisinger gave his usual brilliant address — this one of Dedication. We asked Bob to give the Dedicatory address and the Trustees agreed that we could make no better choice.

The Tisingers were a reading family. They cared about their neighbors in Victory settlement enough to open up their home to serve as a community library center. I guided the reading of the children, David and Dick, who were pretty good at pretending the **driver** of the Station Wagon or car was not important to them but the **books** were. All that laid aside — I must say again that Bob Tisinger has a talent for public speaking, as he ably proved on the day my heart nearly burst with joy.

Adding to the joy of the December Celebration was the one-man Art Exhibit of Derrill Maxwell, Assistant Professor of Art at West Georgia College, whose work has been shown in several states across the country and in Mexico.

Gettin greedy for Open House and a broader program, smacked of hard work! We moved from the Little House and King Street Library by ourselves. Barnes Freight Lines moved our equipment for us at no charge. In closing the Little House and the King Street Branch, our Staff moved some 85,000 books, organizing the collections in such an efficient manner that we had no damage and no loss — an amazing feat. Direct service was closed temporarily.

A few days following the Open House, Teallie and Jim Kent, my dear friends from Centralhatchee in Heard County, came by to see the new library and to visit with me. I wasn't there. This happened three times. The third time Teallie said to one of my Staff:

"Know why I want to see her so bad?"

"No, I don't," Evelyn Pope told her.

"I want to hug her neck so hard that she won't give out a book till tomorrow!"

Meanwhile Jim was wondering around. "Have you ever!" he'd say, "Look at that!"

On the way home — I was later told by Teallie — Jim said: "Teallie, I want to give Edith that ol' Blue Back Speller. That's just the thing we can do. She love's ol' folks. Let's give her that ol' Blue Back Speller."

Building a library to measure up to projected programs and anticipated changes in standards is truly a challenge! In my descriptive study of needs for our proposed Headquarters I had spelled out that we add a ramp to accommodate wheelchairs and that there be no step-up at the front entrance. The Reading Room was to be spacious. Space to house a maximum of 125,000 volumes was requested.

To assure that 25,000 additional volumes at some later date could be shelved, we planned for the eventual construction of a mezzanine of about 1360 square feet atop one floor-length segment of stacks. John Hall Jacobs, one of our country's best consultants in public library construction and then the Director of Atlanta Public Library System, did point out a possible weakness.

"You have a beautiful plan," he told Ray Roddenberry, our architect, and me; "but if there is any part that may one day be inadequate for your program, it is the Children's Room."

To be frank about it, I did not know what we could have done about the size of the Children's Room at the time we built Neva Lomason Memorial Library. I did not want the magnificent sweep of the total service area spoiled; neither did I want to extend the shelving in the Children's Room up the walls beyond standard heights; yet we knew we had to stay within our Building Budget. We proceeded therefore, according to plan, placing our faith once more in the hope of our "ever-present help in time of trouble."

I suppose people have a right to feel that the Good Lord has looked over our shoulders, for by the fall of 1976, before I retired as Director, we had found another "Good Angel" in a husband-and-wife team who became the patron saint benefactors of the Neva Lomason Memorial Library once more.

Back in the Sixties, before we had moved into our new headquarters, Bess Williamson, an artist, had talked with me on several occasions about the fact that she and her husband, Dr. L. J. C. Williamson, a popular Chiropractor, would like to add a Codicil to their Will, naming our library as a beneficiary, with the understanding that we would develop an art gallery as part of our facilities, to which she would give a number of her own paintings. During the years of those talks, we were operating the five-county program from the Little House, which in no wise was suitable for modern routine library services, much less for programs of great cultural value. We had no guarantee of such a structure at the time — only a dream.

In 1973 Bess approached me again about the codicil to the Williamsons' will — this time as we stood together in the lovely Neva

Lomason Memorial Library. I promised to take the offer to the Board at the up-coming meeting. The Board of Trustees unanimously approved the proposal; but I surprised the members with my request for permission to challenge the Williamsons with the idea of making a "living" Grant instead of spelling out a gift in their will.

"Bess is an artist," I said to them. "She is eager to share her life work with the people via the library. We can't have a Gallery per se; however, we can provide an alternate concept which should please everyone involved. If we build a **Cultural Art Center** we could provide an appropriate setting for many beautiful pieces of are including Mrs. Williamson's own.

"There is another possible addition aside from a Cultural Art Center, which I think would please the Williamsons; that is, we could use their Grant as the local matching fund — a requirement to draw State Public Library Building Funds to make needed additions, as well expansions of the Children's Department." The board approved the idea. The Williamsons, when approached took only a few hours to decide that they wanted to do it. We took our time in designing the Cultural Art Center, wanting so much for its motifs and accoutrements to provide a proper atmosphere for the exhibits and programs that would grace the library in the years to come. We called on Gudmund Vigtel, the Director of High's Museum of Art in Atlanta, for advise, to guide our thinking, both as to design and to the arrangement of the display area. The center is certainly a dream-come-true.

It was in July, 1976, that we held Open House, so it became a part of our sesquicentennial-Bicentennial celebration. We named the new area **The Bess Harman Williamson Cultural Art Center**. On display that Open House day was not only a large collection of her own paintings in various media as well as fifteen of her copies of Masterpieces, but also excellent groupings of Royal Doulton Figurines, Dresden Figures, wood pottery figurines from Africa and the Far East, along with copious artifacts from countries around the world collected by the Williamsons on their vacation trips together. All these collections were presented to the library as gifts to become a part of our Fine Arts Collection.

On the wall to the entrance of the Center we placed a plaque which best expressed the sense of understanding and gratitude deep in the hearts of all of us:

"In Honor Of

Bess Harman and L. J. C. Williamson
For sharing the product of their lives

so that the cultural aspect of the library might take on a new and beautiful dimension, whose love of the arts and our community are now a part of Heritage 1976."

You see, the Williamsons were not people of great wealth. What they gave to the library constituted a large portion of their life savings. Bess saw beauty, she created beauty, she shared beauty with others. Dr. Williamson — then in his last years, of frail health — gave of his substance for the happiness of those who would come after him while he was as yet with us in body as well as in spirit. He passed away shortly thereafter.

It is easy to see that the urgent determination to build libraries originated on the local scene. Passage of the Library Services and Construction Act — Title II, and to the lesser degree, other Federal Grants, gave Library Directors and their Boards an opportunity to translate this determination into action; however, the door for realization of the building program in Georgia was opened state-wide by progressive measures passed by our own Georgia Legislature in 1973. I am confident, however, that we earned official Federal, State, and Local respect and the permissiveness necessary for the tremendous new era of public library construction by virtue of the effectiveness of broad and exciting services based on sound programs, with persistent promotion through the cooperation of all news media — including person to person spreading of the word, such as: "Now at OUR Library . . ."