

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The Library in Brighton (Part 1)

Residents of the Brighton area have proven, many times, their appreciation of the useful benefits gained by the acquisition of knowledge. This translates largely into achieving the ability to read. For that, suitable facilities, teachers and literary materials had to be available.

Upon arriving in the area, c. 1830-35, after providing shelter and provisions, these pioneers' thoughts turned to the means for their children's education. School districts were organized, school houses built and teachers, desks, seating, slates, etc., were provided. In addition, local organizations evolved to which books were donated and a library of sorts eventually emerged.

A January 18, 1928 clipping indicates the presence of a library in town c. 1912. At that time the Village Council had voted to start a library in the Village Hall, 202 W. Main, books to be lent at no charge. The council annually voted to buy books (or not). This policy was discontinued in 1922, and the books were 'locked up' at the hall.

In November 1927, the Brighton PTA, Mrs. Andrew Davis, President "...voted to sponsor a library". The Secretary, Mrs. Donald G. Dearing, requested information on the proper procedure to organize a library from the Detroit Public Library. The PTA believed it was vital to the community to provide an opportunity for adults and students to have such a facility available.

These members approached the Village Council, requesting support in this endeavor. The Council approved, appropriated \$200 and the same site of the earlier library used. This was a small front room upstairs, where the Village Council met, overlooking the mill pond. This room was cleaned and redecorated in 1928. Books were retrieved from the 'locked' storage. The earlier library had hosted the Russell Foundation Library, plus "...more modern authors." Miss Alma E. Sharpe, County Superintendent of Schools,

donated travelogues and a magazine subscription to the American Magazine. Residents answered the call with more donations. A Library Commission, two women, one man, under Council authority, was appointed and a librarian selected. The library would be open Tuesdays and Saturdays for about three hours. Membership cards were free; if lost, one paid a fee of 5-cents for a replacement. The April 4, 1928 issue of the Brighton Argus announced the grand opening for April 7 with "...over 400 books are on the shelves ready for use." Soon 84 memberships had been issued.

City finances in 1934, the Great Depression period, dictated the probable closing of the library. Per Council minutes, 1934, the council, "Moved by Pipp and supported by Kourt that we allow the library fund ten dollars per month, when funds are available. Carried."

The PTA again came to the rescue. Students and friends of the PTA held a Tag Day which furnished additional funds. A petition to the city, from the President of the Library Board, Mrs. Louise Pinney, proposed a vote of the people for a 1/5 mil tax for the library, be placed on the September ballot. This passed in 1935. The PTA was at that time, advised by the State Library to relinquish their sponsorship of the library to the people.

By 1950, that little library upstairs outgrew its location. The City Council and the Library Board were faced with a dilemma as would often be repeated in the future.

To be continued...

(Compiled by Marieanna Bair from: Newspaper clippings, Brighton Area Historical Society archives.)