

Frankfort City Library History

The Frankfort Library came into existence in 1886 in the home of Mrs. Anna Brawley. Those who met to organize a ladies library group were Mrs. S. Reed, Mrs. Holtham, Mrs. Warden, Mrs. T. F. Rhodes, Mrs. Shumate, Mrs. Weston, May Reed, Carrie Brown and Carrie Warden. A charter was formed and books purchased. The first library was located in a small room of Mr. Shumate's real estate office (located over the Kansas Power and Light office, 119 North Kansas Avenue). The membership fee was \$1.00 per year and a life membership was \$5.00. For the next 25 years, so many life memberships were sold that funds did not accumulate and the ladies struggled to keep the library open one day a week.

In 1911 the Tuesday Club purchased the charter from the Ladies Library and moved into the rent-free and utilities paid city building at 107 N. Kansas Avenue, which was the library's home until March 2001. It was operated by a board of directors and staffed by the Tuesday Club volunteers on Saturday afternoons and one weekday.

Operating funds came from one-half the club's membership dues, 25-cent book fee for three months, overdue book fines, donations from organizations, memorial gifts and help from the city for library furnishings.

There was a loss of books from water damage in the 1959 flood, but despite adversities and meager budget the library continued to grow under aegis of the Tuesday Club.

After maintaining the library for more than a half-century the Club offered the library to the city in the fall of 1968. It was accepted and presented to the city in a formal ceremony on April 26, 1969. It became the Frankfort City Library supported with a 2-mill tax levy, state aid and donations. An Open House was held to acquaint the people of the community with the Library and the Librarian, Ivan Lewis.

The library ended its first century in November 1986 with 5,000 volumes and 400 card patrons. Also available for the readers were rotating books from the book van every other month, large print books and books through interlibrary loan.

It was learned in the mid-1980's that Miss Anna Brawley, daughter of the founder of the library, had left the Brawley home to the city for a library. The city governing body weighed the advantages and disadvantages of moving the library. Considering converting the old house into a library to be an extremely costly project, the city declined the offer.

The library received a state grant in 1989 for 40 percent of a \$16,000 renovation project in the section of the city building used by the library. The room was extended to the east to make room for a handicap accessible restroom and a new heating and air-conditioning system. New carpeting was installed, walls were painted, new shelving purchased and a handicap accessible ramp was built at the front entry. The library took on a new look with a microfilm reader and printer with reels of Frankfort newspapers dating back to the 1880's and several reels of census reports.

Volumes grew in number, but the room did not grow and the library began having growing pains. In the mid-1990's the library received \$5,000 from the will of Ruth Konz. This was an incentive to start thinking about a new home for the library.

A big surprise came in the fall of 1998 when the library was informed it would receive a \$40,000 bequest from the estate of Marie Risdon, a retired school teacher.

Now, the time had come to stir up interest in a new home for the library. The city owned a vacant building on Main Street that had once been an IGA store owned and operated by the Glynn family for many years and then later by Jerry and Ruth Vaughn. City employees became carpenters for the renovation, gutting the interior and starting from scratch.

More money had to be raised, and the board asked the Helvering Trust for help. The trust agreed to give \$1 for every \$2 that the board would raise in the next 90 days through other contributions, up to \$5,000.

The Frankfort community responded with donations from social, civic, and fraternal organizations, 4-H clubs, Boy Scouts, church groups, businesses, many generous individuals and memorials; as well as, fund raisers – library book sale, food sale and tailgate party at a football game.

In three months the library, with the help from a wide area, raised \$11,649 and the Helvering Trust added its \$5,000.

While the city employees were rebuilding, repairing and redecorating, Mark Pippia, Axtell, was building the golden oak furniture. Using library supply catalogs as a pattern book, Pippia hand-crafted a new circulation desk, bookshelves, storage cabinet, vanity for the restroom with an oak frame for the mirror.

The new attractive front on the building has a handicap accessible entry and the restroom doors are also accessible for wheelchairs.

On March 16 and 17, the collection was moved to the new location, and again the townsfolk came out to help with the one-half block move north.

On Saturday morning, March 24, 2001 the library was ready for its open house. More than 100 guests were surprised and impressed with the furnishings, décor and arrangements. The main part of the room has the long rows of shelves with most of the library's 8,080 volumes.

The primary area for children has a jungle theme beginning with a background of wallpaper patterned with lush jungle greenery and creatures that dwell there. Pillows are covered with a matching material. A realistic artificial palm tree adds to the theme. The furniture is child-size.

The junior area has a gray and black blocked area rug with four backjack chairs covered in black for reading a good book.

The genealogy area has a microfilm viewer for reading reels of Frankfort newspapers dating back to the 1880's. On the shelves are a few family histories that have been given to the library by families who compiled them.

For the researchers, there are chairs and an oak library table that belonged to the late W. F. Kennedy, a Frankfort banker.

The reading area in a quiet corner in the rear of the room has a magazine rack with monthly periodicals and weekly and daily newspapers. There are three wing chairs, lamps, and a table.

It is impossible to thank all the people who had a part in making the new library a reality. One of Abraham Lincoln's quotes says it well, "It's amazing what can be accomplished if no one cares who gets the credit."