



~ **Part 5** ~

**Reflections on a Common Theme
Libraries in the Solomon Valley**

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This is the fifth in the series featuring information about the six counties in the SV24 Alliance.

Libraries in the Solomon Valley

MITCHELL COUNTY

Beloit Library

by Linda Clover

In December 1870 twenty members organized and received a charter for Beloit Library and Historical Association. Dexter Ruggles was the first librarian in a room at the corner of Main and Mill streets and by 1883 they had 800 volumes. In 1898 a room was provided at 2nd and Hersey streets in the City Hall. No funds were provided by the city other than electricity and fuel. By 1911 there were 7,000 books and the city began providing financial assistance with a 1/10th mill levy. George Port was a wealthy early-day clothing merchant and investor in Beloit. His wife, Emma, was very conscious of her limited education and was determined to make use of every opportunity to develop and broaden herself in every way. After arriving in Beloit in 1879 she joined Reading Circles with yearly dues of \$1.00, which purchased books and passed them around to each other to read. In 1914 Mrs. Port built her eighteen-room home at 311 W. Main. Many people wondered why the walls were a foot thick, the arches so wide, and the closets so roomy, but Mrs. Port told no one of her intentions for its future. Shortly before her death in 1931, she called Mayor Edward James to come to her and then told him of her desire to give her home as a living trust to the city of Beloit as its library. At this time, the mystery was solved and the public understood that she had the home constructed to support the enormous weight of books. Little renovation was needed to turn her home into the Port Library, which opened February 1, 1932.

After years of planning, the Port Library is projected to be replaced with a new city library in one of the buildings which was a part of the former Beloit Juvenile Correctional Facility in the north part of Beloit. This move will take place after renovations in the building so all the books can be transferred. Also, the library is now in the process of becoming automated., which is quite a task for an estimated 35,000 books.

Librarians at Port Library have been Miss Vera Pearson, Olive Sanders, Mrs. Henrietta Boyd, Mrs. Rosemary Morris, Mrs. Pat Heidrick, and, currently, Mrs. Rachel Malay.

Cawker City Library Celebrates 125 Years

[Steve Richardson wrote this article for Preservation News, newsletter of Kansas Preservation Alliance. It is a timely addition to the library theme of this issue.]

On July 4, 2010, residents of Cawker City celebrated the 125th anniversary of the Cawker City public library building. Currently being rehabilitated to serve as a city museum, the building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the first building built by a Woman's Club. The Hesperian Historical Society hosted a reception for the community to view the progress of the work and to learn the early history of the building.

In 1874 Dr. A. Patten, pioneer dentist of Cawker City, circulated a petition for the creation of a "Library Club." Sixteen local businessmen signed the letter and paid \$5 for a lifetime membership in the organization. Periodicals, magazines, and books purchased with the dues were held at Dr. Patten's home. When the dentist decided to relocate to Beloit in 1878, Clark A. Smith called a meeting to reorganize the club. Annual dues of just \$1 and limiting membership to a range between ten and twenty members were a few of the changes made. Smith also suggested the new name of "Hesperian Literary Society." The group planned a series of six lectures to raise money for the purchase of new books.

By 1883 the collection had grown to 300 books for which \$225 had been invested. At the time, a group of seven ladies saw the need of a public reading room to make the library more accessible to the community and approached the men of the literary society with their idea. With their support, the women organized "The Women's Club of Cawker City" and set about finding a temporary room for the library. Dr. G. W. Chapman offered a room at his residence rent-free for a year and committed to donate his collection of geological specimens to the Women's Club, provided they build a suitable structure to house them and the library by the first of January 1885.

Members of the Woman's Club accepted the challenge and laid the cornerstone on Thanksgiving Day, November 27, 1884, for a \$950 limestone building. Although they missed the specified completion date, the books and the geological cabinet were moved into their new home by the end of April 1885. Members decided to dedicate the library in grand style as part of the day-long community celebration of the 4th of July in 1885.

When Cawker City celebrated its centennial in May 1971, the library collection moved to new quarters in the renovated City Auditorium, and the old library building was donated to a newly-formed historical society for a museum. But not until the Arthur and Elsie Vesco Estate donated \$18,429.68 to the society in 2002, in memory of the George Lutz family, could residents contemplate a thorough rehabilitation of the building. By that time, replacing the original roofing was the first item needed to stabilize the structure and prevent further water damage.

In 2006 library supporters were awarded a Heritage Trust Fund Grant of \$50,232 for repairing the foundation and exterior walls. Work continues on both the interior and exterior of the building. When completed, visitors to the museum will be able to view over 500 volumes of books from the earliest inventories of the library, as well as other items of historical significance to the amazing community of Cawker City.

CLOUD COUNTY

Glasco Grows

The history of a city library in Glasco is a story of the actions of volunteers and concern for children. The first library was organized 95 years ago, in 1916, by the Sunflower Study Club. Donated books were placed in the First National Bank basement and checked out by volunteers. By 1925 the book inventory was augmented by the book trunks from the Kansas Traveling Library.

In 1929, the Sunflower Study Club purchased a clubhouse across the street from the City Park and used it as a community library. Mrs. L. H. Cool administered the library program, assisted by high school girls. Donated books and the book trunks were the collection source. This continued until 1940, at which time the Sunflower Study Club sold their clubhouse. The youth of the community had to rely on their classrooms for their source of books.

The P.T.A. took up the cause for a library in 1946. Lillian Horn offered her back porch, her own books, and her services as librarian as the next phase of the library in Glasco. By 1950 Mrs. Horn designated a spare bedroom, with a door to the outside, for the library. Donated books, traveling trunks, and interlibrary loan enriched the source of books. The Glasco Sun printed reviews on the books available.

When Lillian Horn became ill in 1952, Elizabeth Severe began her service as librarian. The P.T.A. moved the library to a vacant office in the back of the bank in 1961, with Elizabeth Severe as librarian. The school district recognized the importance of the library to students, and in 1962 began paying Mrs. Severe for six hours work each week.

The Sunflower Study Club Library Committee remained active in library development. In 1964 it corresponded with State Librarian Leroy Fox about the Library Services Act and attended

organizational meetings for the Systems Plan. It received \$1,300 for the purchase of books, including the Americana Encyclopedia.

Two years later, Glasco built a new City Hall and included the City Library. It now had a permanent, municipally-supported facility, although it was the P.T.A. that raised funds to furnish the new library.

In 1967 Glasco City Library became a member of the new Central Kansas Library System (CKLS). Reading programs for youth was one of its ongoing services.

The City of Glasco responded to crowded conditions in the library by reorganizing City Hall, moving the fire station to another location on Main Street, and expanding the library into the City Council Room in 1985.

The Glasco City Library librarians through the years are June McDonald, Rita Adams, Douglas Newland, Edell Ernsbarger, and Patricia Horn.

GRAHAM COUNTY

Graham County Library

by Lowell Beecher

[Note: Information for this chronology of Graham County Public Library history was provided by Bob Hooper and Mary Allen, past and present library directors.]

Even though Hill City's early history is rife with accounts of north side vs. south side struggles, one facet of the city's—and county's—development remained inexplicably immune to the town's strife: the development of public library services.

The earliest library in Graham county had its inception in the home of Millbrooks's Ellen Louisa Tillotson, grandmother of Kansas State Senator J. C. Tillotson. Mrs. Tillotson, wife of a Millbrook hardware and general merchandise entrepreneur, provided a private book rental service from the family home as early as 1894: the New York-born and well-bred Mrs. Tillotson possessed one of the finest personal libraries in the area.

Then, Mrs. Tillotson's Aurora Club, a women's organization devoted as early as 1902 to book study and frequently known as "the magazine club," undertook sponsorship of a reading room in the office of a Hill City dentist, Dr. Gupton, on the south side of the 200 block of Hill City's Main Street. By 1908, the effort was chartered as a private library with the group's members, including Mrs. Tillotson, acting as librarians.

In 1910, the library moved across Main Street to a building owned by W. H. Hill, son of Hill City's founder. Within two decades, however, and without noticeable protest, the library—a generous term for a small collection of bound volumes—was moved to Mike Creighton's north side book store on the 200 block of North Pomeroy Avenue. Then by 1932, the library had been moved a block closer to the center of town and Hill City's aging frame city hall: George Munson's previous office and store immediately south of the "the Kackley building" became the wandering library's home.

Permanent status came to the library in 1939 when one of Hill City's several WPA projects was finalized: the construction of Hill City's locally-quarried Ogallala quartzite city hall. "The library" had lobbied, beginning in 1937, for a 15' x 30' room on the ground level of the planned building, but the city council specified that the library group acquire "at least 350 additional volumes" before being granted space. Thus began one of the most remarkable personal enterprises in the history of the Hill City library.

Mrs. Lucille Bundy, wife of Hill City physician Dr. John Bundy, wrote, over a period of little more than two years, countless letters to authors, publishers, and celebrities—the famous and the near-famous—requesting books. By the date of the opening of the new city hall, Mrs. Lucille Bundy's home had become the temporary repository for nearly 3,400 books; Mrs. Bundy's collection was supplemented by many additional books collected by other library club members. Then, on March 23, 1939, a city-wide vote declared the club collection to be "a city library." Appropriately, Lucille Bundy was named the city's first official librarian.

The earliest available official library report (1943) submitted to the state's library association noted that the library was open 10 hours weekly and housed 6,200 books, two newspapers and three magazines; most noteworthy, 3,359 books had been checked out in 1942. Then, by 1953, the library was open 16.5 hours each week, and the number of check-outs had increased to 8,000 during the previous year.

By 1959—and in response to persistent requests for additional space from library promoters—the city library was granted two upstairs city hall rooms, one for the library proper and a second small room for storage. With this additional space, the library’s holdings rapidly grew to approximately 10,000 volumes; the facility expanded its hours to 23 per week, and the number of books checked out rose to more than 20,000 per year.

In 1966, seven hundred library supporters petitioned for the construction of a new public library; however, as the result of a special election on May 17, the proposal was denied. Nevertheless, the library continued to grow: by 1968 the library had catalogued over 14,000 volumes, and the city council granted the expanding facility the final remaining upstairs city hall room.

Just five years later, the county commissioners voted to purchase a decade-old bookmobile, a rolling library which extended book availability to Bogue and Morland. Library benefactor Margaret Moore was named to chair the library’s board of trustees, and the library’s many volumes were transferred to Graham county supervision.

Over the next three years, the county library’s offering expanded to 20,000 volumes; in 1972 alone, the bookmobile circulated 18,000 books, and the library grew its availability to 33 hours each week.

Finally, on April 8, 1974, footings were poured for Graham county’s state-of-the-art library on the 400 block of North West Street. A grant from the D. G. Hansen Foundation of Logan, Kansas, provided ample funding to landscape the entire city-block area before, in February 1977, the library moved into its new facility. In the new library’s first year, 39,000 check-outs were recorded, and some 15,000 visitors came to admire—and utilize—the modern structure.

In the years following the facility’s opening, the Graham County Public Library, under the direction of Bob Hooper and, currently, Mary Allen, has expanded to offer features unimagined when the first spadeful of dirt was turned: a totally-automated system for processing and tracking library activity; exhaustive microfilm collections of in-county publications; public access computers; copying, laminating and FAX services; audiobooks and DVD’s; genealogy files; and access to the Kansas State Library’s multi-faceted services.

Countless other offerings have been incorporated into the facility: over 25,000 bound volumes and 37 magazine subscriptions; a special Kansas history section; a designated AARP tax preparation location; plus a site for monthly writers’ group meetings, book discussions and author signings. All are parts of a constantly-expanding Graham County Public Library offering.

From a few books available for rental over 100 years ago, Graham county library services have grown to the point that the most traditional library responsibility—book check-outs—is one of many available and invaluable library features.

SHERIDAN COUNTY

Hoxie/Sheridan County Library

by Cindy Eller, Library Director

The first officially-established Sheridan County Public Library was established in 1917, in the newly-erected Sheridan County Courthouse. Eventually, as space was required for county offices, the books were moved to the jail building on the courthouse grounds. Sheridan County was subjected to considerable publicity throughout the state for housing a library in a county jail. The community gave support in various ways. One example of this was in the mid or late 1930s, benefit card parties were held in the Legion Hall, proceeds going toward the purchase of books.

In 1953 the library was moved to a small room in the City Building. There the library was maintained until February 1973. A new era in library services began with a Cultus Club program consulting with the State Librarian. The outcome of this resulted in a van load of 4000 books arriving on March 7, 1964. The Sheridan County Library was designated by the state library as a Demonstration Library. The cataloging and shelving of all books was done with volunteer labor.

In 1965 the Sheridan County Public Library of Hoxie and the Pioneer Memorial Library of Colby initiated a pilot project. This began the first bookmobile service for rural western Kansas. This two-county pilot system in July 1966 joined with seven other counties to form the Northwest Kansas Library System.

The Sheridan County Library has retained its historical name even though it is legally a “city” library, under the jurisdiction of the city of Hoxie City Commission, with the mayor serving as an ex-

officio member of the Library Board of Trustees. The library receives partial funding from the City of Hoxie and Sheridan County. This provides about 70% of the general operating budget with the remainder met through fundraising activities, memorial contributions, monetary gifts, and funding through grants.

OSBORNE COUNTY

Osborne's Two Libraries

by Eileen Wilson

Carnegie Research Library

Located at 307 West Main Street just west of the historic downtown district in Osborne, the Carnegie Research Library offers a full range of services to those interested in gathering information concerning their ancestors who lived in Osborne County and adjacent areas. The Classic-style Osborne Carnegie Public Library was based on plans for the Carnegie Library in Stockton, Kansas, which in turn was built according to plans for the Carnegie Library in DeWitt, Iowa.

The stone and brick structure built in 1912 was funded by both a local tax and a \$5,000 grant from the Carnegie Foundation. From 1912 through 1995 it served the community as the Osborne Carnegie Library. In 1987 the building was placed on both the National and Kansas Registers of Historic Places.

In the early 1990s the library was slated to be torn down, but in 1995 the Osborne County Genealogical & Historical Society accepted the challenge of raising the nearly \$100,000. needed to save and renovate the building. This difficult renovation project was completed largely with private donations. Dedication ceremonies celebrating the library's reopening were held in May 2001.

There were 16 different librarians at the Carnegie during its years as the Osborne Carnegie Library. Many people helped make the transition to its current status. Mildred Morgan, Brad Bradley, and Joe Hubbard attended city council meetings. Frank Muck was hired to stabilize the exterior of the building. Joe Hubbard did many fix-it jobs inside the building. Eileen Wilson did the interior painting and refinished the floor. Joe and Eileen insulated the ceiling.

Currently the building serves as the headquarters of the Osborne County Genealogical & Historical Society and serves as a regional genealogical/ historical research center. The Osborne County Genealogical & Historical Society is the official custodian of all county records as decreed by the Osborne County Commissioners. To date a variety of county records dating from 1871 to 1925 have been transferred from various storerooms in the Osborne County Courthouse to the stacks in the lower level of the Carnegie Research Library. The monumental task of scanning all documents and photographs now housed in the Library is the Library's primary ongoing project.

The Carnegie also serves as a repository for printed, projected, and electronic documentation. Families and organizations with no other space to store their photographs, official records, and other material are encouraged to deposit their important material with the Carnegie for future safekeeping.

The library staff is ready to help one and all conduct research, copy records, provide maps, give directions, and share tourist information on the area. Current hours are Monday, Thursday, and Friday, 1:00 to 4:00 pm.

Osborne Public Library

The Osborne Public Library opened in 1995. Mr. and Mrs. O. C. McFadden started the process with a large monetary gift. No tax money was used for the building. Donation containers were placed around Osborne and several people donated \$100 or more.

Sharon Conway was the librarian at this time. When the new building was ready the high school sent students over and they formed a line from the Carnegie to the new building. Books were taken from the shelves in the Carnegie one at a time and passed from student to student until they reached the librarian and were placed in order on the shelves. In doing the moving in this way, no books were out of order and no sorting had to be done.

The Osborne Public Library has much more space than the Carnegie. There is adequate room for the stacks and a nice area for the children, including books and games. Many children enjoy the summer story time. There is a nice sized meeting room at the west end of the library and also a computer room.

The librarian and her helpers are friendly and helpful. They will greet you with a smile and help you in any way they can. Library hours are: Monday and Thursday-1:00-8:00 pm; Tuesday-1:00-5:00 pm; Wednesday and Friday-10:00 am-5:00 pm; and Saturday-10:00 am -2:00 pm.

ROOKS COUNTY

Stockton Public Library (Centennial, 2011)

The background of the Stockton Public Library began in 1898 when the women of the Twentieth Century Club opened a reading room in the home of Mrs. Dewey Dunaway. This club had been receiving books through the Kansas Traveling Libraries Commission for some time and was convinced there was a need for a circulating library in Stockton. The first books for the new reading room were donated by club members, and the members volunteered time to have the room open. This library proved so popular that the women called a town meeting to establish a public library. In November 1900 the Stockton Library Association was formed with 78 shareholders. It was a step toward a public library.

The library was welcomed by the community and additional books were soon needed. In 1901 the president of the Century Club wrote Miss Helen Gould, daughter of Jay Gould, and asked if she would donate books to the Stockton Library. Miss Gould donated 500 books and \$50 to provide shelves for the books. In 1902 the Library Association and Century Club acquired a vacant house, where the present library is located, and converted it to a library.

This small library became so popular that space again became a problem. In 1909, W. L. Chambers, president of the Library Association, wrote to Andrew Carnegie soliciting funds for a new building. Carnegie granted \$5000, with the stipulation that the city agree to guarantee 10% of that amount (\$500 per year) toward operating expenses. The Library Association donated its property to the city for the new public library. The mayor appointed a board of directors. Miss Belle Higgins was the librarian.

The library board selected the plan of the Carnegie Library built in DeWitt, Iowa, in 1908. The new Stockton Public Library was dedicated in January 1911.

The library served the community well, but in time additional space was needed. Frank and Marvel Walker, who benefited financially from the oil boom in Stockton in the early 1980s, gave more than \$250,000 for a major addition to the library. The addition, completed in 1985, increased the size of the library from 1,400 to 5,600 square feet.

The Walker addition is used for the book, periodical, and audiovisual collections. The Carnegie building has been renovated and is used for reading room, special programs, children's story hour, and art displays. The Stockton Public Library is a member of the Central Kansas Library System. It continues to serve the needs of its patrons. The centennial of the Carnegie Library was celebrated in January 2011.

After the Stockton Correctional Facility (minimum security) was established by the Kansas Department of Corrections in 1988, a special arrangement was made by the KDOC with the Stockton Public Library which permits inmates to visit the library at certain times to use the library and check out materials. The Stockton Public Library is the only public library in the state which provides this service, giving inmates additional opportunities to educate themselves.