

Gore Bay Public Library Dates Back to 1896

The Gore Bay Public Library Board is pleased to present a short history of the town's library, from its earliest struggles for existence up to the present time (1953). The board was assisted in this endeavour by Mrs. W.F. McRae, Miss Jessie Clarke, and a treasurer's record book which dated back to the year 1896.

At one time, libraries in all small centres consisted only of private collections until the "Mechanic's Institute" was formed in the Province of Ontario. These institutes gathered collections of books and this enterprise was supported by citizens of the centres and by small grants from the government.

A Mechanic's Institute was established in Gore Bay in 1891. By the end of 1892 a collection of books to the number of some 500 was being used by subscribers to the Mechanic's Institutes Library in the town.

Mr. Sam J. Keyes, who was High School Principal in Gore Bay at that time, was the first sponsor of the library, and the room used, was in the building owned by Mrs. J.H. Thorburn and Mr. John Fraser.

In 1895 an Act was passed by the Provincial government which superceded the Mechanic's Institute by Public Libraries. The citizens of a town could choose between a "free" library or a restricted one.

Gore Bay chose to have Free Public Library, which meant, books could be taken out by any responsible citizen without payment, just as is done at the present time. Provincial and Municipal grants supported the enterprise.

From 1896 to 1912, several people assisted in the library namely Mr. D. Beatty, Miss A. Needham, Mr. W.F. McRae, Miss L.A. Gilbert, Mr. H.B. Hunt and Miss Jessie Allan.

In 1912, the library was located in a small anteroom in the store of Mr. William Johnson, who also acted as librarian. When Mr. Johnson went overseas in 1916, the library was moved to the Agricultural office which was then housed on the ground floor of the building now occupied by Hester's Variety Store.

The Agricultural Representative at that time was a Mr. Metcalf, who very kindly offered space in his office for the library and the assistance of his secretary, Miss Bertha Smith, Miss Smith acted as librarian cut of office hours and was succeeded by Mrs. J. Langford who held the post for 35 years. When the library was discontinued in the Agricultural office, it moved into a large room on the upper floor of the post office and a regular librarian in the person of Mrs. James E. Smith was appointed.

During the time that the library was housed in the Agricultural Office, some thirty years and while it occupied the room in the post office, there were no running expenses, rent, heat and light were provided by the Provincial government.

This meant that more money was available for book purchases and the library slowly but steadily gained an excellent reputation among inspectors visiting librarians, tourists and among our own citizens. The Juvenile Section in particular received high praise as not being surpassed in quality by any library of comparable size in the province.

It was during this period that Mrs. W.F. McRae acted as chairman of the Board and it was due to her untiring efforts on behalf of the library that the quality and quantity of the book collection greatly improved and the grants from both municipality and province increased proportionately.

In 1953, the library moved into its present permanent quarters in the Municipal Building. This consists of a large room with excellent lighting, new oak shelving and furniture which is both pleasing and durable. Although a separate reading room is not yet available, a special reading table has been provided in the library room.

On Wednesday, June 16, the library is holding a Visitor's Day, when all interested citizens are invited to come and inspect the new room and the book collections. The Gore Bay Library is very proud of the new library and hopes that many will accept this invitation. The hours are from three to five in the afternoon and 7:30 to 9:30 in the evening.



**Jessie (Allen) Langford, Librarian
for 35 years.**