

Feb. 27, 1991

Castleton's library turns 60

COLBORNE CHRONICLE

By Eileen Argyris

Sixty years ago in the hamlet of Castleton, township seat of Cramahe, a vital local institution had its humble but determined beginning.

The Cramahe Township Public Library opened its doors for the first time in 1931, sponsored jointly by the Castleton Women's Institute and the Dramatic Club. Its first home was a room in Castleton Public School, which had itself just opened in 1929.

The first librarian was Miss Nellie Pomeroy. The WI and Dramatic Club had raised the money to open the library by putting on plays, teas, bake sales, cards nights and other community endeavors. Donations of money and books aided the efforts and the board was able to launch its community venture in a downstairs room of the new school where school supplies were also stored.

Later, the library moved to a room in the Castleton hotel, at the four corners opposite to the town hall. The building

still stands, but has been a private home for the past several years.

In 1968, the library moved into the town hall, where it makes its home to this day.

In 1936, some of the sketchy records that survive, show the library had 37 members and 982 volumes. Today, it serves 200 households and boasts 7,040 volumes; 800 new titles were added only last year.

In 1971, the library went from private ownership to membership in the public libraries association.

A fire in the municipal building on March 20, 1978, completely destroyed the library. All its volumes and many records were lost. So, the determined township residents started again from scratch.

Donations of books and money again were gathered from service clubs and individuals and in October, after the town hall's renovations were completed, the library reopened. During the time that the library was closed, the Colborne Public

Library helped to fill the vacancy, recognizing a Castleton membership as one of its own.

Cramahe was determined to rebuild its stock of books. In 1981, 850 volumes, almost equal to the library's total original inventory, were added. A period of real growth had begun.

At present, the library is a member of the Southern Ontario Library System (SOLS). Librarian Sue LaBerge, who has been in the position since 1987, has expanded the hours by two extra hours per week. The library is now open from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. on Tuesdays, from 6:30 to 9 p.m. on Thursdays and from 1 to 4:30 p.m. on Saturdays.

The library board hosted an open house in the township hall last Saturday to give the public a chance to join their celebration of 60 years of service to the community. Coffee, tea and birthday cake were served and the library was open for business, as usual.



Congratulations -- Cramahe Township Reeve Lee Dekeyser, centre, was on hand at open house held for the township library's 60th anniversary in the town hall last Saturday. He offered his continued support and praise for the efforts of everyone connected with the library to library board member Roseanne Quinn, left, and librarian Sue LaBerge. Then, everybody enjoyed cake and coffee.

Photo by Eileen Argyris

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