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THE CHESLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY
A Brief History

By
Mrs. Jas. W. B. Thomson

Chesley library became a Free Public Library in 1899 but, prior to that date, foundations for it were laid in the formation of a Mechanics' Institute in 1888.

Librarians.

Early librarians were Miss Carrie Ritchie, Mrs. H. Carter, Mrs. H. E. Ferguson 1901 - 1932 and Mrs. Beattie who served in that capacity from 1932 until 1952. The present librarian, Mrs. Jas. W. B. Thomson came from Guelph Public Library in 1950, was hired to begin the cataloguing of the library - which had only a shelf-list index up to this time - and succeeded Mrs. Beattie on her retirement.

Trustees.

Chesley has been particularly fortunate in having public-spirited citizens who have been willing to devote time, talent and energy to the affairs of the library, in some cases for many years. As important as the length of time served, has been the calibre of the citizens that have acted as trustees. Through the years there have been literally dozens of outstanding men and women on the Library Board but space permits mention of only a few - C. J. Mickle K.C. 1899-1921; W. D. Bell 1900-1938; Joseph McNeel 1911-1942, Sec.-Treas. for years; Dr. J. A. Bannie 1911-1942, chairman for 23 years and responsible for the fact that our library was classified under the Dewey Decimal system 60 years ago; C. R. Ankenman, a trustee for 49 years, who as Chairman for many years contributed a great deal, not only to the success of the many functions sponsored by the library, but used his business acumen to see that library affairs were always in order. A member of our present library committee, Mrs. W. P. Krug, became a trustee in 1940. Prior to that date she was instrumental in the formation of the Ladies' Library Club - an auxiliary that, for many years, made best-sellers available cheaply or at no cost to the library as well as providing many extras such as flowers etc.

Items of Interest.

The library received consistently good reports from various Library Inspectors and, during Mrs. Beattie's term of office, was the subject of the leading article in a national educational periodical. Major Angus Mowat, then Director of Public Library Services for Ontario designated it "the best small-town library in the province." The present librarian has held various offices in the Ontario Library Association and has had articles published in library magazines.

Until schools in the surrounding area established libraries of their own, Chesley Public Library loaned blocks of books to rural schools.

Boxes of duplicates and discards were sent to armed forces camps during two wars and to rural libraries in the western provinces to aid in their establishment.