

Title: A Short History of the Alliston Public [Memorial] Library. Page 1/3

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Description: A short history of the Alliston Memorial Library. Document covers a detailed history from the Library's beginnings in 1918 up to the the mid 1970's. Document also includes a listing of past and present librarians and board members.

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A Short History of the Alliston Public Library

At the end of the First Great War, in 1918, the Women's Institute of Alliston decided to erect a library. This was to be a Memorial to the many young men of the district who had given their lives in the war. The ladies held a number of meetings with the Board of Trade, and, after much discussion and negotiations, on April, 1921, a lot was purchased from Hutchinson and Foster on which to build the library. This group of ladies worked very hard indeed in order to raise enough money to build. They canvassed door to door, held card parties, benefits, moving picture shows, and many other affairs, in order to finance their venture. Finally, on June 8th, 1923, the corner stone was laid by Lieutenant Governor Cockshutt. A luncheon, with Dr. J. D. Cunningham as toastmaster, was held afterwards to celebrate the laying of the corner stone.

In February, 1924, the Alliston Memorial Library was officially opened by Dr. Fred Banting (Sir Frederick), who later lost his life in a plane crash in World War II.

The basement of the library was used as a club room for veterans, while the library occupied the upstairs room.

In 1939, the library was made a Public Library, with the Town of Alliston, aided by the small government grant, assuming the responsibility of operating and financing it.

This was the method by which the library was financed up until late in 1971. At that time, the province instituted a grant scheme whereby township library boards were formed, and received a per capita allowance to assist in the support of libraries used by their citizens. Prior to this time, a membership fee was charged, but with this provincial township support, all membership fees were abolished.

With increased financing, and subsequent improvement of service, the library Board began to plan for expansion. As Alliston and area grew, so did the number of persons using the library, until it became urgent that more space become available. Consequently, in March, 1972, the Women's Institute offered to change quarters with the library. They would use the upstairs room, and the library would move to the larger quarters in the basement. For the use of this increased space, the Library Board was to assume all costs of upkeep and maintenance, and the insurance on the building. After discussion, this was agreed upon, and the move took place early in March of 1973. The Service Clubs of Alliston made possible the extensive renovation necessary to restyle the area for efficient library use. The Kinsmen Club was the first to give financial aid, followed by a donation from the Lions Club, and then the Rotary Club. The Township of Essa also helped with a generous donation toward improvements, and a sum was left to the library by the late Mrs. T. P. Foster, to buy children's books. Mr. John Gray has also donated a large number of Canadian books to the library. The Library Board, and the Library Staff, are very grateful to all of these persons, and to the Women's Institute for their assistance and their support.

During 1972, 1706 persons used the Alliston Public Library on a regular basis. 32,474 books were circulated during the year. Of these, 21,695 were adult. 10,779 were children's books.

During the last few years, the Interlibrary Loan plan has been greatly extended. Books requested, which the library does not have can usually be supplied by the Simcoe County Co-Operative Library in Barrie. If they cannot fill the request, they refer it to the Georgian Bay Regional Library System which has a Telex connection with all other libraries in Canada.

The Simcoe County Co-Operative Library provides a wonderful Bookmobile Service to smaller libraries in Simcoe County. Every three months, approximately 1,000 books are borrowed from the Simcoe County Co-Operative Library, to aid in giving our patrons a constant change in fiction, non-fiction and juvenile books.

The Georgian Bay Regional Library System has a large film service readily available to smaller libraries in Simcoe County. Recently, C. B. R. L. S. has become affiliated with the National Film Board, and now almost any 16 M.M. film is available, free of charge, to persons or groups, requesting films. Georgian Bay Regional Library System has also begun distributing 8 M.M. entertainment films to smaller libraries. These may be borrowed by adults, like books, and are also free.

Early in May, a Story Time for children 4 - 7 years was begun on a trial basis, with plans to continue in the fall if this event proves popular. Also in the fall, the Library Board is considering extending the hours of opening in the library, in order to give better service to the public.

There have been many persons, both in the present and in the past, who have labored long and hard to make this library what it is today. Many thanks to them for all their efforts. We hope that today's improvements will be but one step in the direction of giving and maintaining a good library service for Alliston and district, and that this service will continue to improve in the years to come.

Librarians who have served Alliston Public Library

Mrs. J. Graham - 1919 - November, 1936.
Miss Christine Mackeracher - November, 1936 - May, 1937.
Miss Jean Banting - May, 1937 - June, 1938.
Miss Elsie Ney - June, 1938 - Dec., 1968.
Mrs. Jean Owens - 1969 -

Members of the present Library Board are:

Mr. C. Fitzgerald - Chairman
Mr. J. Hanna - Vice Chairman
Mr. A. Abbott - Treasurer
Mrs. P. Anderson - Recording Secretary
Mr. P. Cochrane - Corresponding Secretary
Mrs. C. Coulter
Mrs. J. Cameron
Mr. O. Gray - Reeve