

Brookhaven Free Library
Celebrating 80 Years of Growth at
273 Beaver Dam Road,
Brookhaven Hamlet
1926-2006



The building that houses the Brookhaven Free Library is 80 years old this year, but the Library's roots go back almost 100 years, to May 18, 1912. That's when a small group of women met at Mrs. Thomas Morrow's home, 285 Beaver Dam Road, to discuss the subject of some kind of club for the women in Brookhaven Village, as our Hamlet was then known.

A Suffrage Club was proposed, but most of the women felt that a Library Club would meet the needs of a greater number. After several more meetings in private homes, the group decided to use the social room of the Methodist Church, today a private residence at 224 Beaver Dam Road. There, on June 5, 1912, the 22 charter members voted to name the club the *Fire Place Library Club*, drawing on the original name of the area we call Brookhaven Hamlet. They elected the following board of directors:

Mrs. Martha Howland, President
Mrs. Nettie F. Valentine, 1st Vice President
Mrs. Mabel L. Hotchkin, 2nd Vice President
Miss Emma Kost, Recording Secretary
Mrs. Lilly Reeves, Treasurer
Miss Louise Carmen, Auditor

*Watercolor on front cover created by
Brookhaven Hamlet artist Raymond Perry, in 1941.*



By July of 1912, the club's members had donated some 500 books and received permission to keep them in the schoolhouse on Fireplace Neck Road, where meetings of the Fire Place Library Club were then being held.

The first librarians, both volunteers, were Anne Weeks and Emma Kost. Afterward, various teachers became the first paid librarians.

*Brookhaven School House
circa 1912*

By the end of 1912, the club had 63 members who each paid \$1, entitling them to borrow books from the library and to attend all club meetings.

The following year, 1913, the club drew up its first constitution and incorporated under a new name – the *Fire Place Literary Club*. During the following years, the club considered building a library on land along South Country Road offered by Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Nelson, but by 1917, all plans were shelved as World War I had begun, and the Fire Place Literary Club used all of its energies and resources to support that effort.

During the war, the books were moved out of the school building into Mrs. Katharine Fraser's home at 249 Beaver Dam Road, which was also the studio of her husband artist Malcolm Fraser.



The Fraser home and studio, 249 Beaver Dam Road

Then, in 1919, the club moved a few houses down the road, into the home of Florence Gwynne, who was the librarian at the time. There they remained until the library building was constructed in 1926.



The Gwynne home, 255 Beaver Dam Road

During the early 1920s, Mr. and Mrs. James Post offered to donate a plot of land and erect a library building with the necessary furniture for the Fire Place Literary Club if the club would undertake the responsibility of operating it. The club members were eagerly looking forward to doing this and readily agreed.

Thus, on June 3, 1926, the literary club held its first meeting in the new building at 273 Beaver Dam Road. Since its inception in 1912, the Fire Place Literary Club had been a private membership organization, but the group felt that the library and building should be available to all residents of the village.

The new Brookhaven Free Library building, 1926



INTERIOR VIEW, BROOKHAVEN LIBRARY

In the Spring of 1929, the Brookhaven Free Library was incorporated and at a public meeting on June 19, 1930, was granted a provisional charter from the State of New York. The Fire Place Literary Club handed over the books and a \$1,000 bond to the new public library, and Mr. Post turned over the deed to the property to the trustees of the Brookhaven Free Library.

The first trustees were:

- Mary Ford
- Thomas Morrow, Jr.
- Matilda Nelson
- James Post
- Nettie Valentine



Two of the first Trustees, Nettie Valentine and Thomas Morrow, Jr.



Posting a Legacy



James Howell Post was one of Brookhaven Hamlet's greatest benefactors. Not only did he donate the land and building for our Library, but he also donated the land for the Oaklawn Cemetery and purchased Squassux Landing with the intent of its being used by the community. As a founding member and three-time president of the Brookhaven Village Association, he helped guide the BVA through its first 30 years.

***A Wellspring
Of Generosity***



C. Oliver Wellington, former Library president and long-term member of the Board of Trustees, devoted a great deal of time to the Library's operations, and it was through his benefactions that an appreciable amount of the library's endowment was derived. In 1957, the first children's room addition was made possible, in large part, by his generosity.

Since then, the Brookhaven Free Library has grown in many ways, including physical size, staff, budget, and, of course, numbers and types of books and materials residents can access. The Library now serves the entire South Country Central School District with a collection of over 30,000 books, DVDs, music CDs, audiobooks on cassette and CD, large print books, magazines, computer software and more.

In 1957, the east wing addition of a children's room was completed, having been privately financed, in part by Charles Oliver Wellington. In 1969, property was purchased adjacent to the library for possible use as a parking lot, and, in 1970, a second addition was built on the north side of the library, again financed by private contributions.



1970 addition under construction

By 1989, our community's needs had once again outgrown the building's capability, and an addition was added to the north end of the existing 1970 building nearly doubling the library's size.



Exterior view of the 1989 addition to the Library



The 1970 addition made more room for programs.

The latest addition came in 2005, when a small community meeting room was added to the west side of the 1989 addition, giving us the 5,000 square feet we enjoy today.



The Fire Place History Club makes good use of the library's popular new meeting room, as John Deitz shares some insights into local history with the enthusiastic group.

Since it was built 80 years ago, the Library building has proved to be versatile and immensely adaptable to the changing needs of our vibrant community. For that we thank those who had the foresight and generosity to make the original building a reality, as well as those who, over the years, have helped this vital resource grow, by supporting it with energy, enthusiasm and personal commitment.

Brookhaven Free Library Trustees:

Linda Majowka, President
William Smith, Vice-President
Maya Young, Treasurer
Kathleen Dupointe, Secretary
Carol Eugenia Burns
Margot Palermo
Barry Rockwell

Library Director:

Matthew Bollerman

*This commemoration was researched and written
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Brookhaven Free Library

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Hours:

Monday to Thursday: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Friday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Saturday: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sunday (September to June): noon to 4 p.m.



Brookhaven Free Library with new shrubbery planted in summer 2006.