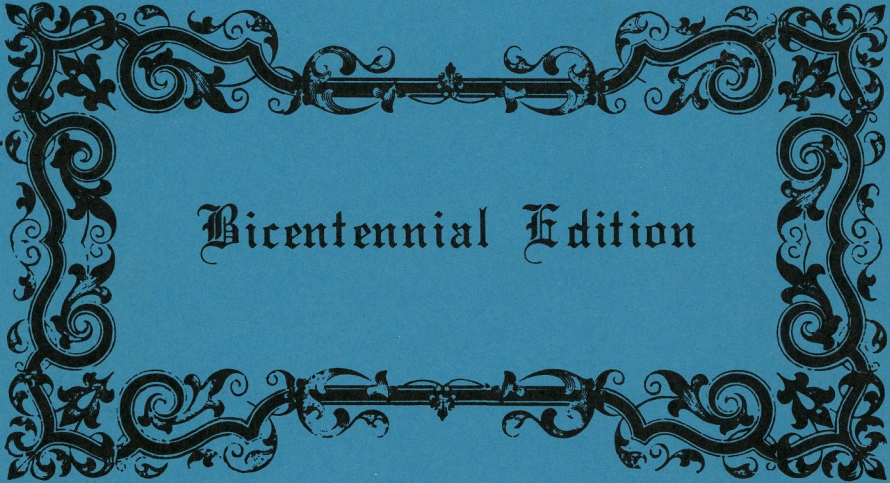


The Gulfport Public Library

*Marie E. Bryan Memorial
history of*

1935

1976



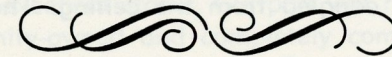
Bicentennial Edition

Published By

The Friends of the Gulfport Library

The Gulfport Public Library

MARIE E. BRYAN MEMORIAL



THEN — 1935-1969

NOW — 1970-1976

THEN Way back in 1935 Gulfport was little more than a fishing village with a population of about 1000. The late Andrew Potter was Mayor. That year a library was born.

NOW Forty-one years later you have a spacious building, modern in every respect and the grounds beautifully landscaped. Your city numbers 12,500 and your Mayor is Jay P. Clymer. You've come a long way, Library.

THEN Three civic-minded ladies, Mrs. Bryan, Mrs. Potter, and Mrs. Thorne decided Gulfport needed a library. They were weary of borrowing books from one another. Some years before Mrs. Julia Lucky had tried to start one but it ended in disaster when her home burned and she left Gulfport. The three ladies started from scratch . . . no money . . . no building . . . just unbounded enthusiasm. The first order of business was to find a spot to house their yet-to-be-collected books.

NOW Your shelves are bulging with fiction, non-fiction, reference, large print and children's books. There are records,

magazines and art exhibits by local artists. Funds are supplied by the City Council, Gulfport clubs, and generous citizens.

THEN A disillusioned real estate man had abandoned a one-room office building when he returned to his native Massachusetts. In reply to Mrs. Bryan's letter he wrote, "Dear Lady: You may use the building. I am through with it."

NOW Your City Council, Gulfport clubs and generous citizens provide funds for your building and its upkeep. Not ONE cent of Federal, State or County money has ever been used.

THEN Elated by the acquisition of a building, despite the fact that it left much to be desired, the ladies rolled up their collective sleeves and really went to work. The floor was scrubbed, the walls washed and the windows polished until they sparkled in the brilliant Florida sunshine. A lone light bulb dangled from the ceiling. There was no heat or water.

NOW Your modern, electrically-equipped building is cared for by a salaried maintenance man, Frank Petrik. Your library has excellent lighting and modern restrooms.

THEN The donated equipment consisted of a battered desk that barely supported the temperamental typewriter, an odd chair or two, but the windows had gay curtains. Husbands and men friends were pressed into service and presto! shelves for the 1641 books that had been collected. From as far away as Roselle, New Jersey, came a box of surplus books from their library. A library became a reality and Mayor Potter took out card number one.

NOW Your library has wall-to-wall carpeting, reading tables with comfortable chairs, conference room, kitchen-lounge for the librarians, electronic entrance and exit doors, and other modern equipment. Your library has 51,011 books, a monthly circulation of 9,000 and rentals of 500 per month. Husbands and men friends still help with the used book sales. The last card issued was 21,504. You HAVE come a long way, Library.

THEN Growth was the order of the day and soon there were 3,000 books. The Village Council realized what an asset the library was to the community and with Mayor H. G. Ham presiding created the first Library Board.

NOW City Manager Harry Perkins, with suggestions from the Library Board lay down the ground rules for the smooth operation of the library. All matters of finance are decided by the City Council. Your present board members are: Kay Baker, Bart Bryan, Eve Jopson, William J. Kearney and Edith Meltzer.

THEN The appalling news came that the Massachusetts gentleman had not paid the taxes and the building was about to be taken over by the County. Town Council came to the rescue and the taxes were paid. Heaving sighs of relief the workers got on with the business of running their library.

NOW News came that Pinellas County would like to take over and run all the libraries in the County. After the long, hard struggle to get your library off the ground to its present excellent status, Gulfport was not about to let the community-owned and completely community-paid-for library be turned over to the County. City Council, Gulfport clubs and Gulfport citizens went to work. By diligence and long hours they were able to save your library as YOUR library. It may have to be done again. We did it before . . . we'll do it again!

THEN Gulfport was growing and so was the library and rapidly outgrowing its quarters. Mayor Weld made an amazing offer to the Council. He wished smaller quarters for his business and said if money could be raised for switching the buildings he would exchange with the library. Out went the workers to raise the \$50. It wasn't too difficult as Gulfport residents realized how much the library meant to them. So the library moved into a new home at Beach Boulevard and Delett. Library, you're moving on.

NOW Imagine what it would cost to move two buildings today!

THEN The cottage was cleaned and, with a few donated dollars and some willing men helpers, a chimney was built and a porch added. The porch became a gathering place for Gulfport youngsters.

NOW Your library has facilities for educating and entertaining the children with stories and puppet shows. It is a real pleasure to watch the animated little faces as they listen to stories or giggle at the antics of the puppets.

THEN As Gulfport grew, so did the library. Permanent residents and winter guests found it a source of pleasure. The library was fast outgrowing its quarters. Many workers had been added to the original three and a series of fund-raising events were begun. Gulfport responded and the fund-raising activities were successful. A new wing was added and some reading tables and chairs.

NOW As Gulfport grows, so does your library. In our crystal ball we see more space to accommodate groups for book reviews and travelogues. Our crystal ball also sees the library as a cultural center with all Gulfport solidly behind the vision.

THEN More growing pains for the little library. There scarcely was room for one more book or magazine. Mrs. Bart Bryan, librarian, Miss Marion Hodgson, assistant librarian, and Mrs. June DeGear were literally bumping elbows with the reading public.

NOW Library Director Norma Lamb's assistant is Doris Kevin, and her staff consists of Margaret Carlton, Lois Cordasco, Alethea Lipscomb, Mary Merritt, Elaine Sampson, Elizabeth Moeckel and Marianne Broski. They are not exactly bumping elbows YET but as the population increases and the appreciation of the library grows that may very well happen.

THEN More space was a must. All Gulfport pitched in and there were dinners, dances, card parties, teas and tag days . . . you name it . . . Gulfport did it. Some funds came from the Council and a new wing was added.

NOW Walter Fuller owned the last remaining parcel of railroad land. He turned over a quit-claim deed to his friend Bart Bryan, the land to be used as a site for the proposed library. The Gulfport City Council approved a budget of \$135,000 for the building and generous citizen provided \$6,100 for the furnishings. Ground was broken on January 2nd, 1970.

THEN On February 10th, 1956 the new wing was dedicated, with Mayor A. L. Anderson doing the ribbon cutting.

NOW The big day arrived and on March 21st, 1971 the beautiful new building was dedicated. Gulfport came en masse and friends from as far away as Maine. They came to

admire the building, the furnishings, hear the welcoming address by Mayor E. S. "Bud" Markham, enjoy the program and the refreshments served by Girl Scout Cadet Troops 266 and 672. From that day on, 5501 - 28th Avenue South became an address of which all Gulfport could be proud.

THEN There were many willing workers but no organized group. Everyone did their own thing, but all concentrated on helping the library in every way possible.

NOW The following may sound like a commercial. Well, it is. The Friends of the Gulfport Library came into being on December 30th, 1970. We are sponsoring this history and we want you to know who we are and what we do. Our purpose is to help develop and improve the facilities of the library, to promote cultural activities and encourage gifts and endowments. We have a dedicated board, each with a definite assignment. We hold monthly meetings for the members devoted to book reviews and travelogues. We have speakers on subjects of community interest. The meetings are followed by a social hour and light refreshments are served. The high spot of the year is the annual dinner, featuring an outstanding speaker. The new officers and board members are introduced. Did you know that for a mere two dollars a year you could join 272 of your friends and neighbors?

THEN It was a small community and no problem to thank people individually for what they had contributed in time and money.

NOW We hope you have enjoyed the story of the little library that just wouldn't stop growing, and still won't. Here is a word from our president:

"We are happy in this Bicentennial year to compile all the facts we could locate regarding the history of your library. We are grateful to Mr. Bart Bryan, Mrs. Lillian T. Rockow and Mrs. K. F. Thorne for furnishing much of the material used. We are proud of our library staff and the people who support it. We are grateful to Sue Johnston for sharing her ideas and putting together this history. Who would have thought in the short time the new library has been open that we would be needing more space, especially for the children's programs? Our space is in-

adequate for the story hours, the puppet shows and other youth programs. We also need more space for the art exhibits and the crafts displayed by our talented members. My heartfelt thanks to everyone who has helped in the past and will in the future. Some day, with your continued support, we hope to see our dream realized. Let's all think POSITIVE!

KAY BAKER, President

Friends of the Gulfport Public Library

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