

"Davis Library Dedicated Fifty Years Ago"
Carroll County Times Article for 10 June 2001
by Jay A. Graybeal

Fifty years ago the Davis Library building was dedicated in Westminster, a generous gift to the community from Mr. and Mrs. Walter H. Davis. The dedication ceremony was described in the June 1, 1951 issue of the Westminster Democratic Advocate newspaper:

"The Davis Library was formally dedicated Friday afternoon, a dream realized by the donor and the culmination of desire for many years by the citizens of this community. The Library was made possible by the generous gifts of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Hyatt Davis. Mr. Davis failed to see the ultimate achievement of his dream as he passed away three weeks ago. Mrs. Davis was present for the dedicatory ceremonies.

The dedicatory program began at 3 o'clock, with K. Ray Hollinger, president of the Davis Library, Inc. presiding. In speaking on behalf of the board of directors, he said that they were all honored by having been chosen by Mr. Davis. He named the other board members. They are John A. Bankert, Norman B. Boyle, Carroll L. Crawford, Ralph G. Hoffman, Samuel M. Jenness, George K. Mather and Gerald E. Richter.

Tribute to Walter Hyatt Davis was made by Dr. Lowell S. Ensor, president of Western Maryland College.

George K. Mather spoke relative to the former Westminster Public Library Association. He said a goal has been reached which had been in the hearts of many and only made possible by the magnificent gift of which all are justly proud.

At the close of his talk Mr. Mather presented a gift to Mrs. Martha Shaw, who served as librarian for 25 years, as a token of her tireless efforts and service.

The response for the city was made by Mayor Joseph L. Mathias. He said it was a day that the community had long waited for, the completion of the Davis Library and here there would be services for all, through the generosity of this great gift. The citizens, he said, joined in expressing their thanks and appreciation.

Walter V. Bennett, chairman of the Commissioners of Carroll County, likened the generous gift as to furthering the ideals of brotherhood so that all may have the benefit of receiving knowledge, and to enhance the Four Freedoms in that all may study and learn of this great country and protect it.

In a few well chosen words, Mrs. Davis presented the keys of the library to the librarian, Miss Helen Rex. In accepting the keys, Miss Rex said they would be used not to lock the doors of the library but to open them for all to share its treasures. She presented Miss Helen Clarke, division of Library Extension, and Miss Great Smith, of the Enoch Pratt Library. Miss Evelyn Mather, assistant librarian, and Miss Anna Belle Robb, helper also were presented.

The presentation of the bronze tablet, a gift from the Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions Clubs was made by Russell Benson, president of the Rotary Club of which Mr. Davis was a member and by which club he had only recently been presented with a plaque for honorary membership for his outstanding work in the

community. The unveiling was done by F. Kale Mathias, president of the Kiwanis Club, and Scott S. Bair, a life member of the Lions Club.

The tablet sets forth that 'This library and equipment are the generous gifts of Walther H. and Elizabeth R. Davis as a tribute of their gratitude to this community.' The date of dedication and the names of the directors are listed.

Dr. Ensor pronounced the benediction which closed the dedication program.

The library remained open for visitors until 10 o'clock.

The library has been reconstructed from the former Methodist Protestant church. The outside makes a handsome appearance in its design with Georgian marble front and aluminum trimmed tall doors and small windows, flanked on the sides with the colonial brick to blend with the original building. R. E. Starr, Harrisburg, architect, was recognized during the program.

Dr. Ensor's address playing tribute to the late Mr. Davis is as follows: 'It is a very humbling experience to be asked to speak on an occasion like this, because in a library I always have a feeling that I am standing in the midst of greatness. A library is a meeting place of the great minds of the ages. We are not here this afternoon by ourselves merely in the presence of each other; we are in the presence of men and women of all generations who have passed on to posterity, through the medium of the printed page, something of their life and thought. As we are in the presence of great minds whose writings fill these shelves, so are we in the presence of Walter Hyatt Davis whose magnanimous spirit, unselfish devotion and far-seeing vision will forever abide as a benediction within these walls.

A grateful community joins me in expressing to Mrs. Davis an appreciation that cannot be limited to the narrow confine of mere words. The constant use of the Davis Library will demonstrate for decades to come a grateful community's living appreciation to a great man and his gracious wife.'"

By the mid- 1950s the Davis Library was serving a significant number of patrons from outside of Westminster and there was interest in creating a county wide library system. The Commissioners of Carroll County accepted the Davis Library and created the Carroll County Public Library in 1958. The Westminster branch remained in the former church building until the construction of a new building on the site of the former St. John's Catholic church complex in 1980.



The Davis Library was dedicated on May 27, 1951 in the former Westminster Methodist Protestant Church building. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of John Byers.