



Development of the
Hillside Public Library
Prepared by the Staff of
The Hillside National Bank

For many of us, dreams are realized quickly; for others, it takes many years. For those interested in the development of a library, it has taken more than thirty years.

Monday, November 8, will mark the thirty-second anniversary of the Hillside Library.

It also will be the final anniversary of the library in four makeshift facilities and the end of a search for a permanent building.

Before the thirty-third anniversary is observed, the library will be located in its new, modern, and first permanent facilities in the new municipal building in Hillside Avenue at Liberty Avenue.

The library like the Hillside Fire Department was preceded by a volunteer group of residents who organized it for the public good.

Formed just nine years after the township separated from Union Township in 1913, the group was called the "Hillside Library Association," and was spearheaded by the late Harry C. La Force, who served for many years as its president.

Other charter members included Mrs. Harold D. Steward, Mrs. Alvin E. Graff and Mrs. Samuel McClure, also all former presidents, Mrs. J. Gould Spofford, and Arthur G. Woodfield, former superintendent of schools.

Others also active in the association were Fred Sinzinger, Mrs. Alfred Harding, Miss Eleanor Maurer, and Mrs. Charles Estabrook, Hillside High School librarian until her retirement in June, 1947, and also a past president of the group and professional advisor.

The group's first funds were raised by public subscription in 1922 and 1923. The first quarters for the new project were in a single room over 1424 North Broad Street. Miss Ruth La Bar, now Mrs. Frank Davis, offered her services without charge to the group. An appeal was issued for books and many residents donated their home libraries.

By 1924, township records show, the library was allotted \$1,200 by the Township Committee, and the late Mrs. John Cormack became the first paid librarian. She continued in that capacity until May 16, 1943, when she died.

The limited funds limited the number of books which could be purchased and the number of hours the library could be staffed and opened to the public.

Despite these many difficulties, the private institution grew. It moved to the offices of today's Board of Assessors in the Masonic Hall when it was about six years old and a few years later it transferred to still larger quarters at 1448 North Broad Street, where it remained until June 19, 1947, when it moved to two classrooms on the second floor of the Hillside Avenue School.

Today a third classroom at the side of the building is used as an office, general cataloguing, workroom and a storage room. The stacks are overcrowded and jammed closely together in the adult room forming narrow aisles. Classroom lighting is inadequate for library use and crowded conditions limit the seating area to 12 seats.

Mrs. Mabel Rhodes joined the staff in 1929, acting as assistant librarian. After Mrs. Cormack's death, she became librarian. She was assisted by her daughter, Mrs. Philip J. Schaub and Mrs. Davis, until the library became a public institution in 1948. Mrs. Rhodes retired in February, 1949.

Over the years, the Township Committee gradually enlarged the appropriations to the library. In 1936, it was increased to \$1,800; in 1937, to \$2,200; in 1941, to \$2,400; and by 1942, to \$3,000. The library's only other source of revenue was from the collection of fines, estimated to be about \$300 to \$400 annually.

The Hillside Library Association began to lobby for its own end. They pointed out to the Town-

ship Committee and the public that Hillside was one of the few communities in the State without a regular public library.

Finally on January 13, 1947, the association adopted a resolution urging that the institution be taken over by the municipal government under the direction of the Township Committee.

State statutes provided that one-third of a mill on every dollar of assessed property should be levied for library support. The library would gain nearly \$8,000 annual support under these laws, it was estimated.

The request was indorsed by the Township Committee February 19, 1947, and approved in public referendum November 4, 1947.

On January 14, 1948, the first group of "Trustees of the Free Public Library of the Township of Hillside" was appointed by the Township Committee.

Five persons named were Mrs. Graff, Mrs. Steward and Mrs. McClure, all members of the Hillside Library Association, Dr. H. Irving Dunn and Paul K. Owen.

Mayor Raymond R. King and Dr. Wayne T. Branom, superintendent of schools, also were appointed in accordance with the law.

Township operation of the library increased the appropriation to \$9,000 for 1948, and in September of that year, the appointment for the first time of a college trained librarian, Mrs. Ford Meyer, was made. She was replaced on September 10, 1951, by Miss Lottie Smolenski, present library director.

Plans were discussed both by the Township Committee and the Library Board for permanent quarters for the library. Residents attended township meetings urging the library be housed in a store site or special building.

The process of classification of material, cataloguing of books and survey of material to fill in the many gaps was begun by Mrs. Meyer and is being continued by Miss Smolenski. Also still in process is the rebinding and repair of all books which need it, increasing the collection of reference books and vertical file pamphlets and of 150 magazines.

The library staff grew from one librarian and a part-time assistant in 1948 to include five full-time employes and two part-time students throughout the year and college students during the summer.

In addition to Miss Smolenski, the present staff includes Mrs. Robert K. Bloy, Jr., who joined the library as part-time assistant in 1948 and was made full-time senior library assistant in September, 1952, and has charge of the circulation desk; Miss Edith Hermann, in 1952, senior librarian, in charge of cataloguing and reference work; Mrs. Walter Stump, last year as junior library assistant, who acts as secretary for the library, and Miss Madeline Sloboda, junior librarian assistant, last February, who also helps at the circulation desk.

Besides the regular staff members, the two high school girls who work part-time are Miss Joan Stancheff, a senior, and Miss Ruth Bergman, a junior.

With the additional help and funds, now nearly \$25,000 annually, the library has been able to expand its hours to four days a week Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 3 to 5 P. M. and 7 to 9 P. M. Staff members are on duty daily from 9 A. M. to 9 P. M. five days a week.

Special story hours for primary age children are conducted each Thursday at 3:30 P. M. in the children's room. Classroom visitations are arranged by teachers for other hours. Special exhibits are either displayed in the library or prepared for classrooms. Librarians are available to speak to local groups on new books.

Monthly new book lists are mimeographed and distributed according to subjects, listing all new fiction and non-fiction books purchased by the library.

A sufficient number of books is available now to permit summer circulation until October 1, of up to 10 books a subscriber. The number listed at 9,200 in 1948 has increased to 15,424 by the end of 1953. Circulation has increased from 13,577 in 1948 to a total of 55,865 in 1953. There are 5,000 active registrations in the library now.

Last year, the library was opened a total of 169 days. The average daily circulation was 288 books. March, 1953, was the top month with a total of

6,252 books. The heaviest day was reported January 6, 1953, with 820 books.

The new facilities which will be at ground level for the first time in the library's history will provide much needed room for an expanding library.

The main room will feature one large open area with several large picture windows fronting on Hillside Avenue. The room will have a roomy circulation desk near the entrance. It will have areas for leisure reading with easy chairs by the windows, a juvenile area with low stacks, early 'teens and young adult sections and an adult section near the bulk of the stacks. Tables will be provided for reference work. Magazines and newspapers will be displayed in their areas. A record collection and collection of history of the Township of Hillside will be started.

Also included in the plans are a special room to be used as a workroom for cataloguing and repair of books and a storage room.

The second floor above the library in the new building will contain an all purpose room to seat 50 persons for book reviews, lectures and discussions. The second floor also has library office and staff room and rest rooms. All will be in colorful modern decor.

A survey is presently underway by the staff of local businesses and industries to determine the type of services they will seek in the new library and to make them available.

Mrs. Graff and Mrs. Steward retired from the board. Mrs. Henry G. Nulton and Mrs. Bernard Senner were named to the board February 3, 1953, and today serve with Dr. Dunn, presently president and chairman of the housing committee. Mr. Owen, secretary, Mrs. McClure, Dr. Branom and Mayor John M. Malone.

When the library is settled in the new quarters next Spring, the staff hopes to provide daily library service from 9 A. M. to 9. P. M.

The library is grateful to its subscribers who have continued to patronize it during its difficult years. Most of all it hopes to continue to provide good service to the public and to maintain friendly cooperative relations between the staff and the patrons.