

Spring Issue 1996

MATAWAN-ABERDEEN
HOMETOWN SHOPPER™

Matawan-Aberdeen
Public Library



photo of library
taken prior to the two story addition completed in 1985
(see article on page 4)

MATAWAN-ABERDEEN
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SHOPPER™

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Matawan Aberdeen Public Library

By Susan Pike, Library Director

Libraries have a long tradition in the Matawan area. The Matawan Literary Society, founded in 1869, had a collection of 600 volumes housed at the home of its president William V. Simpson and the dental office of Dr. J.P. Geran. This group met regularly for programs of readings and discussions. At the same time, a debating club at Glenwood Institute operated a circulating library for students and teachers.



"First Public Library of Matawan, NJ"

In 1902 the New Jersey Public Library Law was passed establishing public support for libraries through property taxes. At the urging of F. Howard Lloyd, the Matawan Council voted to accept the new library law and the Matawan Free Public Library was begun. The Glenwood Institute and Matawan Literary Society collections were combined with nearly 3,000 books donated by Benjamin F.

S. Brown, editor of the Matawan Journal, to form the nucleus of the new library. Space was rented in the commercial block for \$1.00 per year.

When this property was sold in 1918, the library took up temporary quarters in an express office near where the current post office is located. Realizing the library needed a permanent home, the Library Board of Trustees began fundraising. In 1921, the Board purchased the property at the corner of Main and Park Streets from H.H. Longstreet who sold it with the provision that the grounds always be used for library purposes.

Long time residents will remember the little white cottage known as the "Smock House". This building with its rough hewn timbers, Dutch divided doors, and wooden pegs served as the library until 1966. May Bergen Dominick was hired as librarian in 1922, a position she held for 41 years. Mrs. Dominick and J. Mabel Brown, who served on the Board, worked tirelessly to promote library service in Matawan.



"The Smock House"

In 1934, the Matawan Township Council began an informal agreement to support the library by appropriating \$420 for the library budget. This agreement was formalized by the voters of the towns in 1963 and the Matawan Joint Free Public Library became the second joint library in New Jersey.

As the population grew, so did the library. The little white cottage was torn down in 1966 to make way for a one story brick building. In 1971, the J. Mabel Brown Children's Room was added. The library grew to its current size with the completion of the two story addition in 1985.

The larger library provides a full range of services for residents of all ages. Parents can pick up a schedule of children's craft programs and storytimes. Large print books and books on tape are available for those with vision problems. Also available are best sellers for rent as well as video rentals. If the library does not have a book you want, it may be possible to borrow it through inter-library loan. Requests for information may be made in person or by telephone. During tax season, the library has tax forms and volunteers to help prepare returns on Mondays from 1-4 pm. and Thursdays 1-4 and 6-9 p.m.

Whether you want to recycle your old batteries or do historical research in the MATAWAN JOURNAL, the library is the place to visit.

Hours are: Mon., Wed., Thurs., 9 am. - 9 p.m. • Tues., Fri., 9 am. - 6 pm. • Sat., 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Photos and historical postcards courtesy of Susan Pike, Library Director, Louise Martin, Matawan Resident, and Les Horner, Freelance Photographer, Hazlet, NJ.