

Library

Overview

1896-1900

- The Georgia Public Library (GPL) was established in 1896, when the State of Vermont offered each town a gift of \$100 for the formation of a library, with the condition that each town appropriate an additional \$25.00.
- The Library was first located over the Post and Bliss Store (now Center Market). Abner Bliss served as librarian until his death in 1909. At that time, his widow, Effie Bliss, took the position and served for 1 year.

1900-1910

- In 1900, the Georgia Society Reading Club was formed.
- There were around 30 members, who spent afternoons reading aloud in the Library.
- Membership was \$15.00 for 2 years.

1910-1920

- In 1910, Cora Webster became a librarian. The Library moved into the home of Mr. and Mrs. Newell Coburn (Cora's aunt and uncle), located directly across the road from the small white frame house that would later serve as the Library for 73 years.
- At this time, the Library contained 659 books. Cora Webster served as a librarian from 1910 to 1920.

1920-1957

- In 1920, the Library moved to the Congregational parsonage, occupied by Carrie "Grandma" Ladd, who served as librarian from 1920 to 1955.
- On May 9, 1924, Carrie bought a small colonial revival frame house on Route 7 for \$1,000.
- The house had previously been owned by Jane and Emma Boyden.
- Carrie lived in the house and operated the Library out of it.
- In 1941, the Town of Georgia voted to purchase the house for \$100 per year for 8 years and to allow Carrie to continue living in it for the rest of her life
- In 1937, Carrie earned \$52 a year, and like many librarians, gave "over and above" service by opening during "off" hours when anyone needed a book. The Library advertised no specific hours, and due to Carrie's constant presence, it was unofficially open from daylight

to bedtime.

- “Grandma” Ladd welcomed anyone and everyone to the Library, and under her care, it quickly grew into a social center as well. Croquet set on the front lawn lured many locals to frequent contests. To the south were aged apple trees begging to be climbed. During the summer, wild strawberries ripened in the back meadow. A wicker rocker on the porch no doubt often held someone or another, resting and watching passing traffic.
- The Library’s first bookcase was built by Elliott Darling, and the second by Charles Janes. Later on, a third was added by Alice Sunderland. A telephone was installed at the Library in 1938.
- The Library closed in 1955 due to Carrie’s poor health (she died on March 21, 1959).

1955-1967

- The Library reopened in May 1957.
- Frances Mallett served as librarian, working 2 afternoons a week, with additional unpaid hours staffed by the trustees.
- Frances received \$2.00 for 1 afternoon’s work.
- By 1959, the Library held approximately 1,000 books, with additional materials provided by frequent visits of the St. Albans book wagon, which was driven by Christine Saunders.
- Frances served as a librarian until 1967.

1967--A Year of Uncertainty

- Under the pressure of standards outlined by the Vermont Library Association (VLA), the Library almost closed permanently in 1967. However, the trustees concluded that so long as the people of Georgia continued to use the Library, it was their responsibility to keep it open.
- Although the Library’s collection of 2,500 volumes was 100 over the VLA requirements, many of the other standards were not being met. The VLA suggested (among other things) that libraries should be open for 10 hours per week (the GPL was open only 3); that \$5.00 should be spent per capita on library services (the Library spent only \$1.00 per capita); and that 65% of the library budget should be spent on salaries (the Library spent only 10%).
- The trustees decided to increase hours per week from 3 to 6 and compensated the additional cost in salaries by cutting the portion of the acquisition by \$300.00. Members of the trustees staffed the Library on Friday nights in order to save money.
- Although the trustees had to make some tough decisions in 1967, the people of Georgia came through and helped the Library continue its services. The Grange provided money for the purchase of 2 fine books (1 on gardening and 1 on cooking). The Georgia Elementary School 8th grade, under the guidance of Edith Pattee, compiled an index for the Library’s collection of Vermont History Magazines.

1967-1996

- Following Frances, the position of librarian was filled by Mrs. Paul Wells from 1967 to 1979; Carolyn Pattee from 1979 to 1994; Sue Webster from 1994 to 2016, and is now held by Bridget Stone-Allard.

1996-2015

- In 1996, the Vermont Department of Libraries, faced with cuts in funding, decided to close the Northwest Regional Library (NWRL) branch in Georgia. This decision created another problem for the State: the NWRL had been built with 50% federal funds, and the Library Services and Construction Act Title II regulations stated that the building must remain a library for 50 years (until 2023). In order to avoid having to return the federal money, the Department of Libraries had to find some way to see the agreement through. The solution settled upon was to deed the building to the Town of Georgia for use as a library.
- The former NWRL building was purchased by the Town of Georgia on November 12, 1997, for the price of \$1.00. Conditions of the transfer stated that the Town must use at least 50% of the building (3,500 square feet) for library facilities until the year 2023. In line with the LCSA Title II regulations, the Georgia Public Library had to meet the minimum standards for Vermont public libraries from day 1 of operations in the new facility.
- Throughout 1996 and 1997, the librarian and trustees worked to meet minimum standards and prepared for the move. Due to the departure of the Northwest Regional Library, residents of Georgia began seeking the services of the town library in increasing numbers. A librarian's assistant was hired to help meet the growing need for services. The Library closed on December 15 for a month to allow staff and trustees time to move to the new location.

2016 - Celebrating Over 120 Years!

- Since its formation over 120 years ago, the Library has been staffed by 9 Head Librarians (including Bridget).
- The Library now has 21,071 items in circulation, including but not limited to books, audiobooks, DVDs, puzzles, games, and snowshoes.

Thank you, Georgia residents, for 120 years of supporting your local library!

Compiled by Mae Shell, December 1997.

Edited by Lara Bessette, January 2016.

Edited by Sara Walker, May 2020.

Note: Every effort has been made to present only factual information in this history.

Mission Statement

The Georgia Public Library will foster a sense of community by bringing people together in a comfortable and friendly atmosphere for self-education, leisure reading, and research. The Library will be a year-round center of information and activities, appealing to patrons of all ages pursuing a wide variety of interests.

Hours

Monday: Closed

Tuesday: 9:00 am - 7:00 pm

Wednesday: 9:00 am - 7:00 pm

Thursday: 9:00 am - 7:00 pm

Friday: 9:00 am -12:00 pm and 1:30 pm - 5:00 pm

(Closed 1:00-2:30 pm on Fridays for Staff Meetings)

Saturday: 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Sunday: Closed