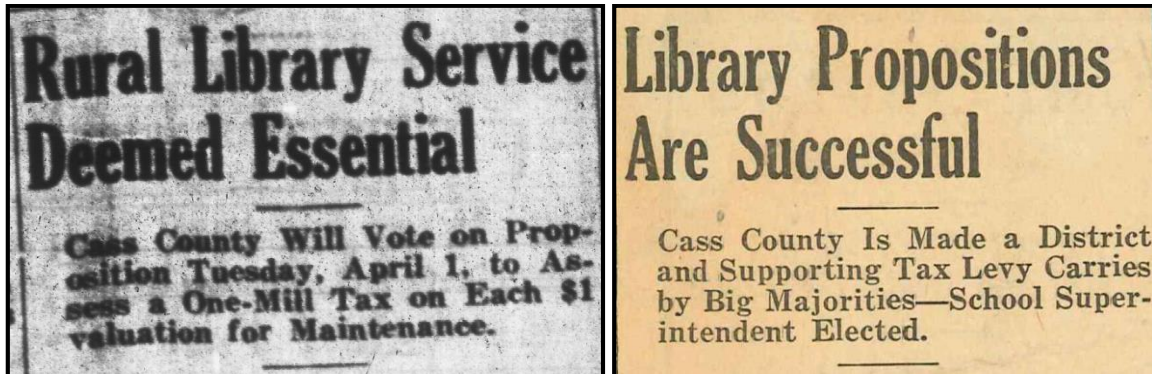


History of the Cass County Public Library

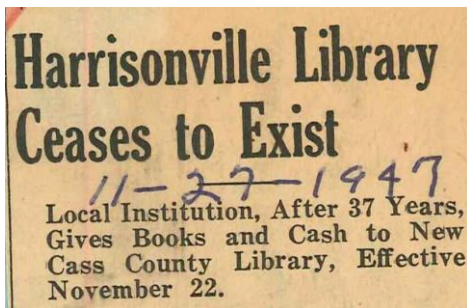
1947 – 1950



March 27, 1947; April 9, 1947, Cass County Democrat

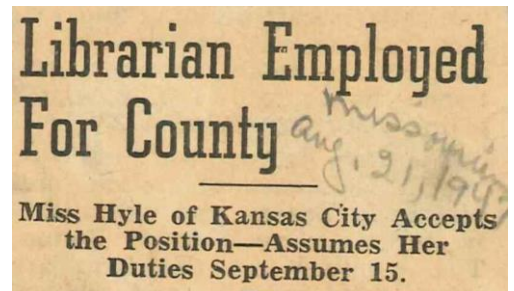
The Cass County Public Library found its beginning in the school election of 1947. It was out of consideration for the rural schools of Cass County that a measure was put on the ballot in April of that year to establish a library district and its tax levy. The adoption of a new Constitution in 1945 by the State of Missouri allowed for the establishment of county libraries that were supported by direct taxation. Billed as an “essential” service for the education of school children in rural areas of the county, the proposition passed with a significant majority.

The newly minted library district was to be well-funded by a “One-Mill” tax on property that amounted to \$1 of tax for every \$1,000 of property value. The funds required to support the library before the tax went into effect came from a variety of sources including a \$2,500 loan, assistance from the State of Missouri, and an Establishment Grant. By the next year, the library was so well-funded that the Kansas City Star ranked Cass County third behind Jackson and St. Louis counties in most available funds.



Prior to the election, Harrisonville was already served by its own library. After nearly four decades of dedicated service, the Harrisonville Library closed just a month before the new library was set to open, donating about 2,000 books and \$40 in the process. The money was used to purchase venetian blinds for the new library. (Photo: November 27, 1947, Cass County Democrat)

The Library Board of Trustees was composed of Mrs. C.W. Coolbaugh, Pleasant Hill, President; Mrs. Reece Gross, Archie, Secretary Pro tem; Harry L. Neunschwander, Garden City; Orville Bliss, Raymore; and W. Donald Stewart, Superintendent of Schools, Exofficio member. In September of 1947, the Library Board unanimously selected Dorothea F. Hyle, former head of circulation at the Kansas City Public Library, to be the new County Librarian. Hyle was given a salary of \$3,600 and had the gargantuan task of getting the new library off the ground. Once the library had secured the vote, the funds, and a County Librarian the next hurdle to clear was finding a location. (Photo: August 21, 1947, Cass County Missourian)



Library Headquarters, Hotel Harrisonville

Two Rooms on First Floor Are
Being Remodeled to Accomodate
Books, With Entrance on East
—4,000 Volumes Arrive.

Harrisonville was the obvious choice for the library's flagship branch – it was the county seat and centrally located. Mrs. Martha Stuart Johnson, then owner of Hotel Harrisonville, was credited with solving the library's problem. Johnson spoke with the Foster sisters, who leased the building at the time, and suggested the hotel's kitchen and butler's pantry, which had fallen into disuse as anything other than storage. A two-year lease was signed from the end of 1947 to January 1950 – rent was \$50 per month and included lights and heat. (Photo: September 23, 1947, Cass County Democrat)

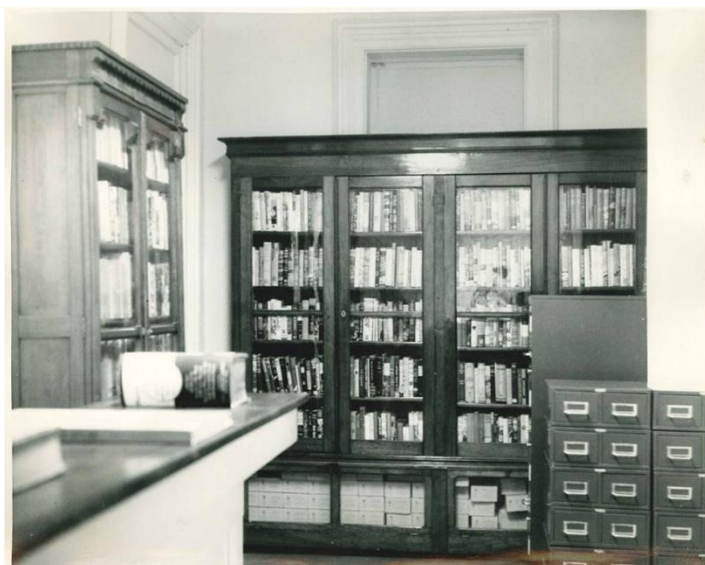


Renovation was quickly underway at the library's new headquarters on the lower levels of the hotel located on the northeast corner of the Harrisonville Square. The main library would be located in the two rooms provided on the first floor and a Hobby Lounge, Auditorium, and Children's Corner were located in the hotel's basement. Because they had been primarily used for hotel storage, both rooms had to be emptied and cleaned before the shelves and furniture could be moved in.



Rather than having patrons traipse through the hotel all day, the library was given its own entrance in the back of the building. The old hotel bar was repurposed into the library's circulation desk, several items of furniture were donated by members of the community, and new shelving was built. Most of the work was done by Elmer Leimkuhler and Henry Beck, volunteer carpenters with the Carpenters Council of

Kansas City, AFL Local No. 777. The Carpenters Council also donated \$100 towards the completion of the Hobby Lounge and the wall shelving project.



In September 1947, library staff began the process of cataloging the library's 4,000 books. By the next month, the total number of books was up to 6,000 with more still on the way. By November, the library had already distributed books to 46 of the 67 schools in the county with Hyle planning on getting the other 21 by the time the library finally opened in mid-December. Library staff had also circulated more than 500 books due to interlibrary loans from the State Library, and Kansas City and St. Louis Public Libraries. On November 1st, Library Assistant Dena Lingle, formerly of the Kansas City Public Library system, joined the staff which consisted of Jean Yoder, a full-time clerical assistant, and three part-time high school students. By the beginning of December, Hyle had already shored up plans for a new library bookmobile to be delivered at the beginning of 1948.

Library Opens Here With a Flourish

12-18-47

In a Holiday Setting, Guests Throng Rooms Saturday Afternoon—131 Persons Become Institution's Charter Members.

An Opening Tea was held on Saturday, December 13, 1947. The brand new Cass County Public Library welcomed nearly 500 Cass Countians, 131 of which became the charter members of the library.

Uniformed Boy Scouts were on hand to act as guides and Girl Scouts helped prepare the hospitality for the event. Among those in attendance were County Judge L. P. Hodges of Archie, May Bowlin, former Superintendent of Schools, and W. Donald Stewart, the current Superintendent at the time. There did seem to be some confusion about how a public library worked – Dorothea Hyle had to explain that library cards were free and that the taxes had already paid for access to all the library's resources. (Photo: December 18, 1947, Cass County Democrat)



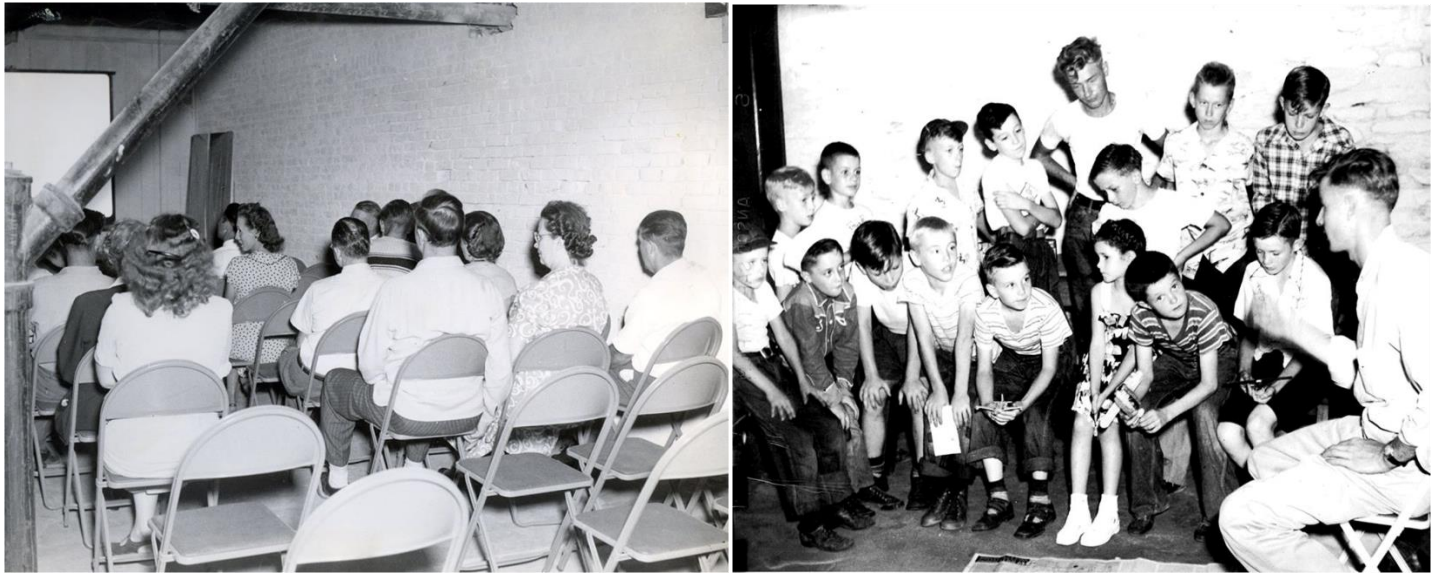
The very first Children's Story Hour was held the following Saturday on December 20, 1947; Hyle read stories to local children in the hotel's banquet room. Throughout the library's tenure at Hotel Harrisonville, the banquet room was used for a variety of popular library programs. Films were regularly screened in there on a projector operated by Lawrence Graves, who would go on to drive the library's Bookmobile. After the Bookmobile was acquired in May 1948, the projector traveled on the Bookmobile and film screenings also took place in rural school districts.



The first years of the library saw the advent of a variety of clubs and classes. The Hobby Lounge, located on the lower level of the library's quarters, was home to the Camera Club, the Model Airplane Club or "The Thunder Bugs" (led by Robert Morris, who later became the Bookmobile driver), and the Fly-Tying Club (led by Ernest Dunkin). The library also sponsored Spanish classes, held at both the Harrisonville and Pleasant Hill branches, led by Martha de la Calle, a Harrisonville native who married and moved to Cuba. Later, the class would be held at the American Legion Home in Harrisonville, led by Mrs. James Idol with Dorothea Hyle present to operate the

transcription player and linguaphone. The player was donated to the library by the Harrisonville Lioness Club and the linguaphone was donated by the American Legion Axillary of Harrisonville, Peculiar, and Freeman.

There was also a very popular Square Dance Class, which regularly drew as many as fifty people. One of the most notable clubs was the Hooked Rug Club that met at the Drexel Branch. It was very popular among women in the county, drawing 61 women to the first meeting. The Department of State's office commented that the popularity and production level of this club was so remarkable that it was comparable to the cottages industries in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and India.



(Photos: left, Fly-Tying Club watching a instructional film in the library's auditorium, located in the basement; right, Model Airplane Club in the Hobby Lounge, led by Robert Morris, picture on right)



(Photos: left, Spanish Class at Harrisonville Branch in Hotel Harrisonville, led by Martha de la Calle, picture on left; right, Spanish Class held at Pleasant Hill Branch in Eden Booth Library, de la Calle pictured standing center.)



(Photos: left, Camera Club, members are looking at infra-red photos taken by one of the club members; right, CCPL Square Dance Class float in the Harrisonville Centennial Parade, 1949, Dorothea Hyle pictured bottom right)



(Photo: Hooked Rug Club, Drexel, standing at the front (from left to right) Mrs. Clarence Bundy, librarian; Mrs. Franklin, responsible for art work; Margaret Hunt, Instructor; September 20, 1949)

Want to Kill The County Library

Petitions Filed and Court Orders Proposition on School Ballot.

County Missourian; right, April 1948, Cass County Democrat)

The abolishment movement was not nearly as vocal as the individuals in support of the library. Each week, a new article was published from the point of view of an individual making an argument for keeping the library, but very little if anything was heard from the anti-library camp. Local newspapers all over the county like the Drexel Star and the Pleasant Hill Times, ran articles in support of

When asked why there was such animosity towards the library, there was no reason given. The Cass County Democrat surmised that the movement for the library's abolishment came down to complaints about the materials the library held, namely "cheap, sexy" books. The library had the support of the Democrat at the time and it published a series of questions and answers regarding the library – one of them being a question on the possibly dubious nature of library materials. When asked, "Are any of the books vulgar, indecent, or 'trashy?'" the paper responded, "Certainly not, but if one's mind has that trend it is easy for the reader to discover that for which he is looking. That pertains to any book, including the Bible."

Here is the unofficial vote from the county's towns, recorded as "for" and "against" the library:

	For	Against
Pleasant Hill	306	109
Harrisonville	559	83
Drexel	122	16
Freeman	48	31
Creighton	51	7
Strasburg	21	36
East Lynne	22	62
Raymore	39	44
Archie	135	65
Cleveland	54	45
Garden City	125	34
Peculiar	45	48

Miss Dorothea Hyle, the county's capable librarian, says the library staff will pitch in with renewed enthusiasm now that the election is past, to give increasingly better book service to every part of Cass County.

separate Bookmobiles – the first during the first week in March, the second a few weeks later. It was reported that during the first week, the loaned Bookmobile covered over 500 miles and delivered 1,300 books to rural schools.

It was already well into May when the Cass County Library's Bookmobile finally arrived and was ready to start service. The style and specifications of the vehicle were mostly decided by the State Library. Hyle was quoted, "I take no credit for the design of the bookmobile; this is the type worked out by our Missouri State Library. We are using it because we feel that it is desirable for our purposes." The finished Bookmobile weighed over one ton and

The library had been open less than four months when it was blindsided by a petition for its abolishment in March 1948. This petition had roughly 500 signatures, enough to have the proposition placed on the school election ballot in April. The very election that had given the library life not one year before, was set to destroy it. Although the Missouri Attorney General's office made an unofficial statement questioning the legality of the petition, there was no effort made to keep it from the ballot. (Photos: above, March 1948, Cass

THE COUNTY LIBRARY THANKS THE NEWSPAPERS OF CASS COUNTY

THE NEWSPAPERS OF CASS COUNTY HAVE PRESENTED THE FACTS ABOUT YOUR COUNTY LIBRARY. YOU MAY DEPEND ON THESE FACTS. EVERY NEWSPAPER IN CASS COUNTY HAS SUPPORTED THE COUNTY LIBRARY. YOU MAY DEPEND ON THEIR JUDGMENT.

KEEP THE LIBRARY

MARK YOUR BALLOT CAREFULLY

SPECIAL ELECTION

OFFICIAL BALLOT

Annual School Election

April 6, 1948

Shall the following be adopted:

The proposition to abolish the

Cass County Library District

YES ☐

NO ☒

To cast a ballot to abolish the Cass County Library District, place (X) opposite the word "YES".

To vote against the proposition and to continue the Cass County Library District, place (X) opposite the word "NO".

MAKE

A

CROSS

HERE

TO

KEEP THE

LIBRARY

MARK YOUR BALLOT CAREFULLY

VOTE

NO ☒

TO KEEP THE LIBRARY

CASS COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD
SIGNED MRS. C. W. COOLBAUGH, PRESIDENT
MRS. REECE GROSS,
HARRY L. NEUENSCHWANDER.

Library Stays by a Majority of 792

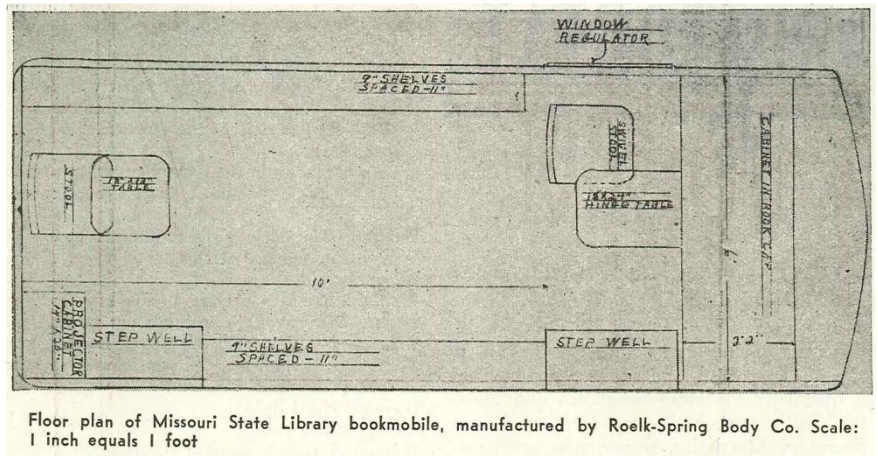
County Court Canvassed Returns Monday, Showing a Total of 1,341 Voted Against and 2,133 for Keeping District.

a physical branch location (Strasburg, East Lynne) or were already serviced by a separate library in the area (Raymore, Peculiar). (Photo: April 15, 1948, Cass County Democrat)

The plan for a county Bookmobile had already been in the works at the end of 1947, but the library suffered one setback after another. Originally scheduled to arrive in early January, the Bookmobile was delayed for several months. In the meantime, the Missouri State Library loaned Cass County two

cost the Library just shy of \$3,000. The public announcement system that was added to the roof after delivery was an additional \$100.

Now that the library finally had its long awaited Bookmobile, a parade was in order. On May 15, 1948, the Bookmobile Dedication Parade was held on the Harrisonville Square. The week before, it was announced that children from all over the county were urged to come and participate in the parade and festivities planned afterwards. Starting at the American Legion Home on East Pearl Street, the parade wound its way around the square before disbursing after it reached the northeast corner again.



The procession featured school marching bands from Harrisonville, Archie, Pleasant Hill and Kingsville. Local Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts were also present as well as students from Drexel and Lone Tree; students from Hutchinson School District 62 rode a float titled "The Bookworms." Children from all across the county rode their bikes in support of Story Hour. Also participating in the parade were members of local organizations including the American Legion, Lions and Lioness Clubs, American War Dads, Kiwanis Club, Saddle Club, and Veterans of Foreign Wars.



(Photos: left, Kingsville school marching band; right, Pleasant Hill school marching band)



(Photos: left, local children riding their bikes in support of Harrisonville Story Hour; right, Hutchinson School District 62 float, students dressed as "The Bookworms")



(Photo: left to right: Joel R. Ewing, Harrisonville Mayor; Kathryn P. Mier, Missouri State Librarian; Caroline Ellis, KMBC Kansas City; Dorothea Hyle, Cass County Librarian; unknown child from Garden City; Hettie Coolbaugh, President of Cass County Library Board)

The parade concluded in a ceremony wherein speakers addressed the gathered crowd through the new Bookmobile's built-in public announcement system. Speakers included Harrisonville Mayor, Joel R. Ewing, Missouri State Librarian, Kathryn P. Mier, Caroline Ellis of KMBC radio, and Hettie Coolbaugh, President of the Cass County Library Board. The week before, Troop 1 of the local Cub Scouts were given a ride on the Bookmobile as a reward

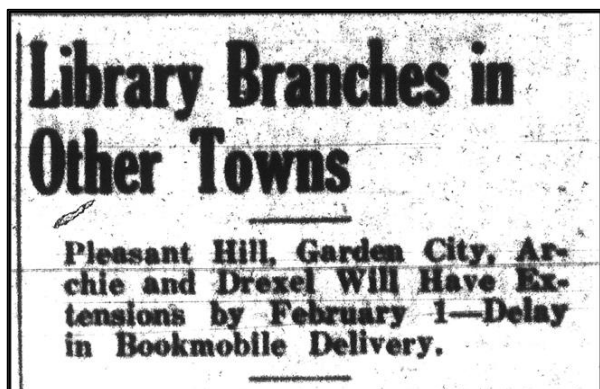
for cleaning up the library's front lawn for the Dedication Parade activities. It was reported that the Scouts sang their Scout song over the Bookmobile's loud speaker as they drove around the square. Once the parade and ceremony were finished, the library held a free showing of a film in the Harrisonville High School auditorium for all the children who participated in the parade. The library was given permission by the school board to use the high school's auditorium for film showings throughout the entire summer of 1948.

The next year, in 1949, the Cass County Public Library's float for Harrisonville's Centennial Parade won first place. The float was modeled after the interior of an old log cabin with a banner celebrating the benefits of a county bookmobile:

"1849 - YOU WALKED MILES FOR BOOKS
1949 - BOOKS ARE BROUGHT TO YOUR DOOR."



The Bookmobile, just barely one-year-old at the time, followed the float in the Centennial Parade. Prize money earned from the winning float was used to purchase a small radio for the library.

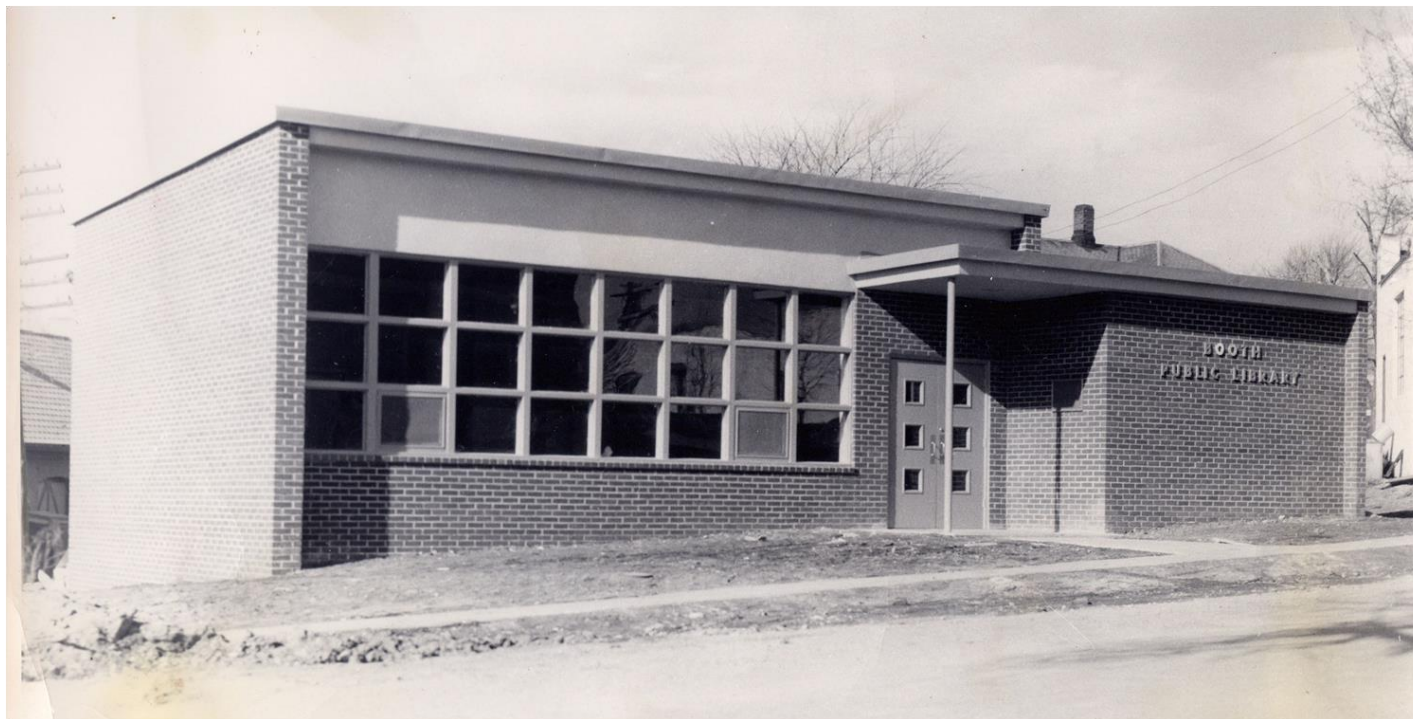


January of 1948 also brought the advent of the first branch locations: Archie, Drexel, Garden City and Pleasant Hill. Although Pleasant Hill was the first to open its doors on January 20, 1948, at the time it was still located in a women's rest room it was renting for \$5 a month. Booth Public Library, its eventual home at 125 Lake Street across from the post office, had not yet finished construction.

Prior to the opening of a library maintained and operated by the Cass County Library, Pleasant Hill already had a library that began as a Works Progress Administration project, but was not supported by taxes. In May 1948, the deed for the land upon

which it was built was acquired by the Civic Improvement Association from the American Legion, American War Dads, and Veterans of Foreign Wars in exchange for a site on Paul Street there in Pleasant Hill.

The construction of this library was made possible by a \$15,000 trust fund given by Eden C. Booth. The City Council appointed Everett L. Peterson to be the project's architect; his preliminary plans detailed "a one-story brick building containing a children's reading room in addition to the main reading room, lavatories and utility room" (Pleasant Hill Times, May 13, 1948). Inez Wilson was chosen to be the first supervisor of the Pleasant Hill Branch. The final cost of the Eden Booth Memorial Library came to \$16,271, and wasn't finished until January 1949.



(Photo: Eden C. Booth Memorial Library, located at 125 Lake Street in Pleasant Hill)

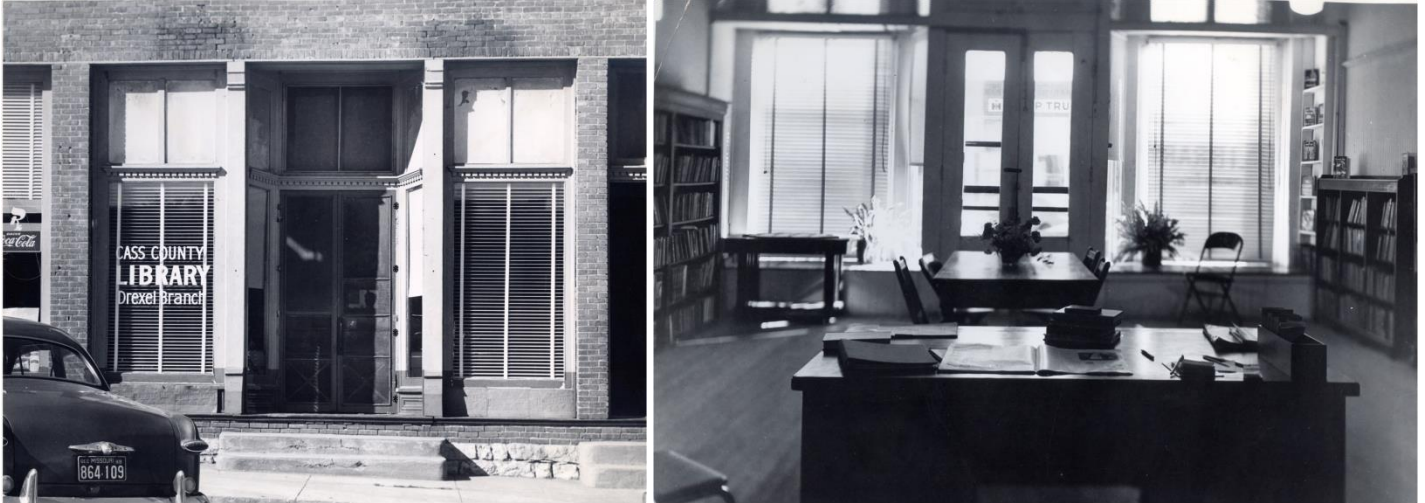


(Photos: left, main reading room of Booth Library, pictured from left to right: Mary Shultz, Hettie Coolbaugh, Cass County Library Board President, unknown, Riva Cloyd, and Edith Wilson; right, children's reading room)

The Archie Branch opened on January 24, 1948, located in a new storeroom leased from Earnest Bell with white walls, red cement floors and new rustic books stacks made of wood. The shelves were constructed by Bell according to the library's specifications. With furniture, venetian blinds, and an oil burner supplied, the rent for the Archie Branch came to \$18 a month. Dorothy Bell of Austin was the first Branch Manager. At its opening, Mrs. Forrest Ott and Dorothea Hyle were both on hand to tell stories to the children in attendance. The Cass County Democrat stated that the Archie Branch was going to be one of the library's "most attractive" branches.

The mayor of Drexel, C. E. Rapp donated his implement store for use as the branch location there in Drexel. Mayor Rapp also provided the library with free heat and light for its first year of service. Jewell Bundy was put in

charge of the Drexel Branch and continued to serve in that position for over 14 years. Once again, Dorothea Hyle was in attendance to read stories to area children.



(Photos: left, Drexel Branch at Mayor C. E. Rapp's store, exterior, 1949; right, Drexel Branch, interior, 1949)

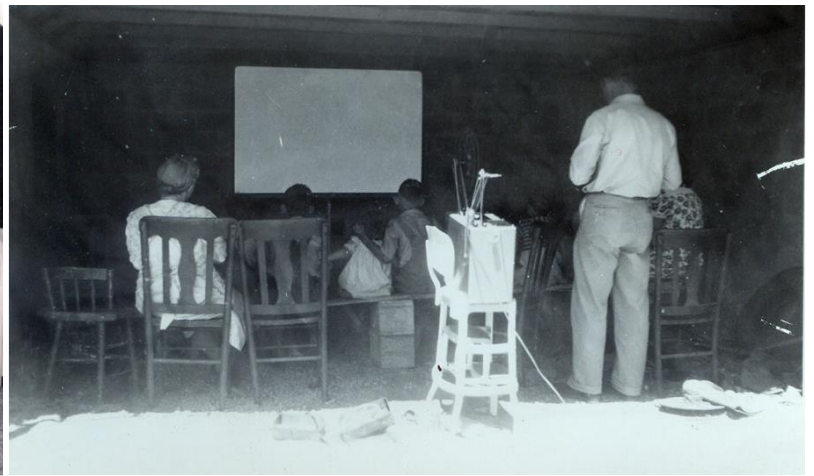
Garden City, located in the southwest corner of the county, opened two months later on March 13, 1948 under the purview of Dena McCray Dyar. The office of the local newspaper, the *Garden City Views*, was the be the home of the fifth branch of the library. Renovations had to be completed before it could open to the public, which explains the delay. The *Views* was housed in a building situated on the "south side of Main Street and Third Street," where rent was \$10 a month.

On February 10, 1948, three locations referred to as "deposit collections" opened in areas of the county not served by a branch, but had a large enough population to warrant a distribution center to handle book requests. These collections were kept at Creighton, Raymore, and Peculiar. Creighton was supervised by a Mrs. Gibson and was largely staffed by volunteer high school students. The small collection was held on bookshelves at Kropf's store and post cards pre-addressed to the Harrisonville Branch allowed patrons to send requests for books. The books would be shipped by mail to the deposit collection in Creighton and were mailed back to the main branch once the patron was finished. Raymore's collection was kept at the house of Reverend Edward D. Auchard to be supervised by the reverend and his wife, Elizabeth. In Peculiar, the deposit collection, mostly consisting of books for adults, was housed in the high school library to be supervised by the staff there with the assistance of students. The Cass County Library also regularly showed films at the high school for the community.

During this time, Cass County also saw the start of the "booketeria," which was a self-charging station with adult books located in restaurants and supervised by the owners. The first of these opened January 27, 1948, in a restaurant in Freeman owned by Andrew Whitsitt and his wife, Stella Brooke Willett Whitsett. The second booketeria opened later on March 9, 1948 in Creighton at Gibson Cafe under the care of Christie Gibson. Though novel, the idea of the booketeria did not last long.

By this time, the library had over 14,000 books and most of its \$27,000 budget was going towards purchasing more. Despite this, it was reported in the Democrat that there still weren't enough books to meet the library's ever-increasing demand. Dorothea Hyle was quoted as saying, "The success of a public library is judged by its empty shelves." The combined 7,500 books donated by the pre-existing Harrisonville and Pleasant Hill libraries were in the process of being cataloged in March 1948, and their addition to the library was hoped to alleviate some of the problem.

Starting in 1948, during the summer and fall the Bookmobile was busier than ever. It traveled around the country delivering books to rural areas and school districts, but also transported the projector, which was used frequently to show outdoor films. This program was sponsored by local Parent Teacher Associations and Farm Extension clubs. Because his farm was the only in the Steen School district with electricity, Joe Hess of Archie often hosted these films in a building on his property.



(Photos: left, film shown on projector at Joe Hess' farm near Archie, Missouri; right, film shown during the day at Hess farm.)



(Photo: outdoor film being shown to local community on Bookmobile's projector, sponsored by local PTA and Farm Extension.)

In August of 1948, the Bookmobile traveled to Sedalia, Missouri for the Missouri State Fair. The library went to participate in a state-wide exhibit of Bookmobiles. Representative bookmobiles were present from St. Louis, Cole, Morgan, Ray, Lawrence, Crawford, and Iron counties, among others. Because our Bookmobile had been designed

according to specifications set by the Missouri State Library, there were five other libraries with nearly identical bookmobiles. It is worth noting, however, that ours was the only of its kind with a built-in public announcement system.



(Photo: Missouri State Fair, Sedalia, Missouri, the Cass County Library Bookmobile is fifth from the left.)

At the end of 1940s, collections held at rural school districts were handled by the school teachers who served them. Harrisonville schools, however, were served directly by the Harrisonville Branch. Thanks to the library's dedicated outreach and the Bookmobile's efforts around the county, by the spring of 1948, 2,500 books were being used by students attending all 67 of the schools located in Cass County. During this time, the Bookmobile continued to make 86 stops each month all across the county, providing access to educational materials and library resources in rural areas not served by physical branches.