

History of the Margate Library

1961 The Beginning

As a result of a Margate PTA Child Study Group meeting held in January, 1961 at the home of Mrs. Fred Weber, the Margate branch of the Atlantic County Library at Mays Landing was formed. Present at this meeting, in addition to Mrs. Weber, were Mrs. Samuel Hoffman, Mrs. Manual Bernson, Mrs. E.C. Reed, and Mrs. O.K. Mote.

At the Charter meeting of the group, Mrs. Samuel Hoffman was elected chairman of the library committee. Sub chairman selected were Mrs. Joseph Dougherty and Mrs. Manual Bernson, headquarters, Mrs. Gil Halpern, Mrs. O.K. Mote and Mrs. Edwin Shoop, correspondence, and Mrs. Fred Weber and Mrs. Arthur Henry publicity. Mr. Roland Scott, head librarian of the Atlantic County Library was guest speaker at the meeting which was held in the Jewish Community Center. He assured the large, interested audience present, that he was in favor of the branch library, since it would relieve the burden from the bookmobile presently used to service Margate. He promised the services of a paid librarian who would be available four hours a week. She would instruct volunteers in library operations. Mr. Scott promised the county would supply all the books. It was the obligation of the Committee to provide the headquarters, shelving for the books and a staff of volunteers. Commissioner William H. Ross, speaking on behalf of Mayor Eugene Tighe and Commissioner Martin Bloom, advised the assemblage that the City Commission was in complete accord with a public library. They deemed it a project of great importance and a necessary addition to civic progress.

Letters were written to several large corporations including DuPont and Gulf Oil asking for money. Every company answered politely, but declined saying that Foundation funds were available for education only. Since money was not readily available, the committee decided to institute a local fund drive. Mr. Rodney Williams, a local architect, accepted appointment as Fund Drive Chairman, and recruited a group of 150 volunteers, including several local Boy Scout Troops, who distributed flyers and collected money. Approximately \$2,500 was collected, and with this reserve, operations for at least one year, were assured. Mr. Williams leased office space for the committee at 9 South Granville, at a reduced rate which included heat and light.

The Library Committee applied for a State Charter and formed an association, with the following officers: President Mrs. Samuel Hoffman, Vice President, Mrs. Joseph Dougherty, Second Vice President, Mrs. Arthur Henry, Secretary Mrs. O.K. Mote, Treasurer Dr. Samuel Hoffman and Mrs. Alan Angelo, Longport Representative. Board Members included: Mrs. Manuel Bernson, Mr. Rodney Williams, and Commissioner William Ross, and Mrs. Fred Weber. Lumber for the shelving was purchased with library funds. Mr. Budd Thomas, a Longport builder contributed his services in building the shelves. The shelf finishing was done by Dr. and Mrs. Samuel Hoffman. The Margate Schools contributed a desk.

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Over fifty three people offered their services as volunteers. The library opened its doors on October 2, 1961 with daily hours of 2:30 to 4:30, and Monday and Thursday evenings 7:00 to 9:00. Mrs. Gladys Krauss, Atlantic County Librarian, instructed the volunteers and was personally in attendance each Wednesday from noon to 4:00 PM. Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Getz worked the evening hours, alternating with two Margate school teachers, Mr. Lewis Maul and Mr. Fred Needham. One volunteer from Ventnor offered her services one day each week to help support the project in which she was vitally interested.

Approximately 3000 books lined the shelves, and at the end of the month a tally made of the circulation data revealed that 1057 books had circulated. Following is a list of the active volunteers who gave their services at least two days each month: Lois Shoop, Louise Novros, Catherine Lennig, Anne Friedlander, Harold Feyl, Fay Schuler, Peggy Cambell, Thelma Giberson, Lewis Maul, Fred Needham, Cecelia Sudduth, Sally Heyman, A.J. Crawford, L. Kimmelman, Sibby Slotoroff, Sylvia Rosenberg, Katherine Moore, Claire Weinstein, Madeline Mote, Betty Bernson, Tillie Getz, Donna Dillon, Debie Rose, Ruth Angelo, V. Reale, Janet Greenberg, Goldie Lichten, Lois Rosenberg, Ida Seigal, Ann Dougherty, Florence DiOrio, Olga Amole, Ruth Hoffman, Ruth McCool, Edythe Henry, Bea Weiner, and Shirley Weber.

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1962 - The Early Years

In January 1962, a paid worker, Mrs. Dorothy Hults, was hired to work in the Library. The volunteer help however, continued to assist shelving and helping school children find information. Mrs. Hults donated one half hour of her own time so that the library could remain open until 5:00 PM due to popular demand. Later hours were increased again to include Saturday mornings from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

Mr. Fred Weber became the first chairman of the newly organized "Friends of the Margate Library" with Mrs. Edwin Schoop and Mrs. Murray Friedlander, as her co-chairmen. These women were in charge of all volunteer activities. The library board membership was increased to include Mrs. Morton Greenberg, Mrs. Howard Ziegler, and Mrs. Raymond Hurter. Mr. Lawrence Winchell, Superintendent of Margate Schools was also a new member.

Mrs. Herman Schuler, fund drive chairman, announced a new fund drive was being instituted during the month of June. The library was still functioning on donations from the community and other interested parties. For National Library Week in April, 1962, Catherine Smith, Christine Reed and Kathleen Devine won the initial poster contest depicting slogans for the National Library Contest. Mrs. Hults resigned as librarian, due to relocation elsewhere, and Mrs. Joseph Dougherty, Jr. replaced her in May, 1962. Mrs. Dougherty was able to run the library with little assistance, although circulation in May, 1962 remained at steady at 1065 items.

Book donations began to fill the shelves, and a book sale was initiated. Books were sold for five cents each and buyers from as far away as Port Republic made purchases. Each subsequent book sale was a "sell out." All book sale money and fine money was used to purchase new books for the library. The library sponsored a summer reading contest from July 9 through August 24 to stimulate library usage and circulation jumped in July to 2,676 and in August to 2,344. Winners in this contest were Carol Singer, Raymond Gordon, Andy Fetter, Mary Fetter, Eileen Carazzoni, Debby Silverman, and Linda Goldberg. Each child was asked to read a book and then make a summary of what was read.

Mrs. Gladys DuPuy was appointed as librarian in October 1962, as Mrs. Dougherty resigned to return to her job as a Social Service Case Worker. The County Library conducted a book exchange every few months and new titles were constantly appearing on the shelves. The Margate City Fathers had now decided that the library was a "going" concern and donated \$1,000 to its support. Longport contributed \$100. Fund drives were continued, and donations were never refused. In 1963, the donation from the City of Margate increased to \$2,800, Longport increased to \$200.

The most popular books in grades one to three were Dr. Seuss and animal stories, in grades four to six, horse stories and mysteries, and teens preferred biography or romance. The adults re-read the classics along with best sellers and non-

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fiction. Circulation in July, 1963 now soared to 2,912 items and so too did the need for larger quarters.

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1963 – New Home for the Library

After investigation, a new location was rented at 5A North Jerome Avenue, across from the Blessed Sacrament Church. The building which now housed the library was a single floor stucco type structure with two rooms, one room was used for the adult collection and held a research table donated by the Christian Science Church. The larger front room was used for the children's room and the librarian's station. Mrs. DuPuy now had a paid assistant, Miss Kathleen McCool a student at the Blessed Sacrament School.

In June, 1963 a Story Hour program was instituted on Saturday mornings during the summer months. Mrs. Simon Justman served as chairman, with a large group of volunteers. During the first year 240 children attended the story hour program proving it to be a success.

At the annual meeting in October, 1963, a new slate of officers were installed by Mayor Martin Bloom including: President, Mrs. Arthur Henry, Vice President, Mrs. Howard Ziegler, Secretaries Mrs. Morton Greenburg and Mrs. John Forbes, Treasurer Dr. Samuel Hoffman. Members of the Board of Directors were: Mrs. Samuel Hoffman, outgoing association president, Mrs. Manuel Bernson, Mrs. Harold Lichten, Mrs. Thomas Sudduth, Mrs. Fred Weber, Mr. Rodney Williams, Commissioner William H. Ross III, and Mr. Lawrence Winchell. The largest single donation of usable books was made by Mrs. Glenn Tongue, who contributed a 75 book collection on the Civil War which belonged to her late husband.

Mrs. Samuel Segal organized a Great Books group which began to meet in the library on alternate Thursday evenings. The group met for two hours each session to discuss a great book. The first year reading list included the *Declaration of Independence*, Plato's *Apology*, Sophocles' *Antigone*, Aristotle's *Politics* and Machavelli's *The Prince*, Shakspeare's *Macbeth*, Marx and Engel's *Communist Inferno* and other classics.

The library has always been decorated at Christmas time with outside lights furnished by the city. An outside door wreath was supplied by the Island Garden Club and festive indoor decorations were donated and put up by the Library Friends and the standing decoration committee, Mrs. Morton Greenberg, and Mrs. Samuel Hoffman. The City also donated an outdoor light stand on a timer which showered the library with brightness during the evening hours.

The library now maintained daily hours Monday through Saturday from 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM. and Monday and Thursday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30. Mrs. Andrew Theodore was Miss DuPuy's assistant for two years. Mrs. Howard Ziegler, in addition to being public school teacher librarian now became president of the association. She and Mrs. Arthur Henry were instrumental in securing an increase from \$5,000 to \$7400 in the municipal budget. Longport's contribution remained at \$300.

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The Margate library now had about 5,000 members, 3,448 were active borrowers in 1966. The library owned approximately 3,500 books which were purchased with budget money and fines collected. Donations as Honorariums and Memorials to a loved one served as another source revenue. The Atlantic County Library had on loan to the Margate branch about 4,000 books, boosting the total holdings to 7,500 items.

Statistically in the 1960's, 55% of the English population were regular library readers, 33% was the total in Canada, and only 17% were regular readers in the United States. The Margate library reader percentage however showed a reading population of 50%.

Under federal regulation, the Margate schools were authorized 400 books under the Title Two ruling. Mr. Lawrence Winchell, Superintendent of Schools, made these books available to all Margate School children by "loaning" them to the Margate Library. These were non-fiction reference materials of great value to the students for research and study.

The Margate City master plan held a provision not only for a library but for a senior citizens room as well, which was to be housed in the same building. Mayor Martin Bloom explored the possibility of obtaining federal and state aid to help finance the construction of a "sorely needed" public library building. Mayor Bloom said on April 18, 1967, "If a library building is constructed, a portion of it would be set aside for organizational meetings and other civic endeavors."

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1971 - Construction Again

As of October 1971 Mrs Gladys DuPuy was still serving as the librarian and Mrs. Joan Kauffman was the library clerk. Circulation had reached 5,000 items per month during the summer season. It was only dropping off slightly during the winter months. Story Hour was continuing on Saturday mornings with an average of 25 attendees for each session. The Great Books discussion club was now in its ninth year and averaged 20 adults per session. A book sale was conducted every August and it was still a complete "sellout." Many buyers would stand on line an hour before opening in order to get the first crack at purchasing the materials. All book sale proceeds went to purchase new books.

The need for larger quarters became desperate since the community demands became greater and greater. Many readers and researchers were having difficulty finding the information they sought. Cramped quarters significantly hampered the retrieval of materials. Plans for an expanded library were now in the works. The plans called for the construction of a new building on the corner of Granville and Atlantic avenues on the same lot as the Senior Citizens Pavilion. The new library plans included a children's room, an adult section, a reference room, a librarians technical work space and additionally a small meeting room to be made available for public use. Larger facilities would clearly enable increased services to the community and would support more professional development for the staff.

Officers serving on the library board during the reconstruction were Mrs. Samule Hoffman, President, Mrs. Thomas Sudduth, Vice-President, Mrs. Howsrd Ziegler, Secretary, and Dr. Samuel Hoffman, Treasurer. Board members included Mrs. Arthur Henry, Mrs. John Forbes, and Mr. H. Francis Rosen, Superintendent of Schools.

The construction of the new library in 1973 at 8100 Atlantic Avenue cost \$180,000. An additional amount of \$25,000 was spent on furnishings, floor covering and shelving. The Margate City Fire Department volunteered their time and energy to box and transport all the materials.

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1978 & Beyond – Modern Times

In 1978 the Margate Public Library withdrew its association with the Atlantic County library system. The library tax levy had increased from \$35,000 to \$70,000. The city commissioners felt that the money could be better spent locally. By 1992 the county library tax had escalated to \$250,000.

After 10 years of dedicated service Mrs. DuPuy retired, Phylis Hefner, MA replaced her, she moved on after only one year to a larger library. She was replaced by Mary Ann Trail, MA. Mary Ann headed the library for four years and moved on to a college reference position. She was followed by Barbara Shapiro, MA. Barbara stayed for six years and moved on to another directorship. Currently, James J. Cahill, MA. is the library's director.