

## JEFFERSON BRANCH LIBRARY

### H I S T O R Y

1912-13

Jefferson Branch had its beginnings as a deposit station established late in 1912 or early in 1913. It was born out of community need and was housed in the Soffel Drug Store at 2100 W. Jefferson St. Circulation of books was good until 1915 when the drug store changed hands and the little library deposit suffered neglect.

Mr. Fred E. Strong, a community-minded local realtor, realizing the lack of library facilities, laid the situation before the library board and asked for more adequate service.

1915

As a result a sub-branch was opened in November, 1915 with Miss Caryl Coman in charge. This was placed in a rented store in a new building at 2065 W. Jefferson St. In spite of a most unprepossessing physical aspect this was the library home for the next eight years. A long dark room with display window and entrance door at the front and two windows and door in the back made up a typical rented store. A small space was partitioned off in the rear for work room and covered one of the windows. The concrete floor had one long fibre strip running the length of the room. An old flat-top desk with a black oil-cloth covered table adjoining it made up the charging desk and librarian's "office" as well. Two long pine tables with sixteen bent wood chairs, one large round oak table in the children's corner and ten dingy kindergarten chairs completed the furnishings.

The library was open to the public every week day from 3:00 to 5:00 P.M. and from 7:00 to 9:00 P.M. As Miss Coman divided her time between three such branches, volunteers were called in to take charge of the library in her absence. These were neighborhood women, untrained in library methods and generally lacking in literary background. They were paid twenty-five cents an hour.

Mrs. Strong, whose husband had been instrumental in establishing the branch, was the most faithful of these workers giving freely of her time and service for over three years. She not only took charge of the library during open hours but did janitor work as well.

1915-16

At the close of the fiscal year 1915-16 the branch had been open eight months, had circulated 18,929 books and had a registration of 1,009 card holders. There were 1,209 books in the library, 458 of which belonged to the branch, the rest of which were loans.

1916-17

At the end of its first complete year, 1916-17, the circulation was 30,403, card holders numbered 1,598 and the book stock was 1,453. 1001 of these books belonged to the branch.

In December, 1917, Miss Coman left the Los Angeles Public Library and Miss Helen Spotts was given charge of the Jefferson and Santa Monica Boulevard branches. Two mornings, two evenings and four afternoons were covered by Miss Spotts, one afternoon and three evenings by Mrs. Strong and the balance of the time by other volunteers.

At this time the community was made up of middle class American families. The principal of the Sixth Avenue School made the statement that there was not one foreign child enrolled. One half mile west of the library the city ended abruptly in Japanese truck gardens. To the south there was a scattering of population for an equal distance with vineyards and unsubdivided acreage beyond. To the north and west it was solidly built up, but the ridge with West Adams Street at its crest made a geographical barrier on the north and the district, one mile east, overlapped University Branch territory.

1918

On January 1, 1918 Miss Spotts was assigned to Jefferson for her full time, making only one untrained helper necessary. Mrs. Strong dropped the work the following fall and was succeeded by a series of high school, college and business girls, including Mollie Pollock, Lenna Hathaway, Marion Josslyn, Marjorie Mills and Emma Rhea.

1919-20

At the close of the fiscal year 1919-20 the branch was promoted from the sub-branch to the group commonly referred to as "rented branches." On September 1, 1920, Mrs. Hazel Russel was added to the staff as half-time children's librarian and when she resigned in March, 1921 owing to ill health Mrs. Anna-Marie Hook took her place. The following September, Miss Alpha Perkins came as full time children's librarian and the branch was finally relieved of the untrained helpers who for six years had been a necessary part of the staff.

1921

In 1921 the hours of service to the public were increased. The library was open from 1:00 to 6:00 P.M. and 7:00 to 9:00 P.M. daily. The book stock numbered 3,873 and was no longer supplemented by loans from the Central Library.

A pay fiction collection started this year brought returns of \$151.65.

1922

In the fall of 1922 Miss Leora Griffin took Miss Perkins' place as children's librarian.

The West Jefferson Woman's Club which had been organized the year before, met in the mornings in the library.

1922-23

The year 1922-23 was the last year the branch was quartered in a rented store. Statistics for that year show: circulation, 62,376; book stock, 4,175; card holders, 3,812.

In 1922 the Library Board secured a lot at 2211 West Jefferson Street just one block west of the rented store location. This was on the corner of Prescott Court, a pedestrian walk, with only a fifty foot frontage on the business street. With the money provided by the Bond fund of 1921 (out of which ten branches had already been erected) building was begun. Mr. C. E. Noerenberg, architect, erected a building of modified Spanish style with stucco exterior. It has wooden shutters, casement windows and a mission tile roof. It is L shaped with entrance in the angle facing Prescott Court. It is set far enough back on the lot to

insure lawn space on three sides and the double row of palm trees bordering the Court adds interest to the setting. The building dimensions are 90' by 40', floor space 1,966 square feet and volume capacity 11,000. The cost was \$14,104 including equipment and furniture.

Inside, in the section just before the entrance door is the charging desk and through broad square arches to the right and left, adult and juvenile reading rooms. There is a simple fireplace in the latter and window seats were built in on either side of it. A small work room and kitchen open out from the children's room. Because of insufficient funds and the small lot purchased neither club room nor adequate staff quarters could be provided, though the need for both was soon felt.

By the time the building was completed the money was utterly exhausted and proper furnishings had to be postponed. Discarded furniture from other branches, including a small desk and bent wood chairs had to be used. Book shelves were all but empty. In the children's room two out of five shelves were occupied and whole sections stood vacant.

The formal opening took place the first week of November, 1923. Mrs. J. Wells-Smith, representing the Library Commissioners presented the new building to the community. Dr. William A. Mills, Pastor of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church spoke in behalf of the community. Miss Helen Kennedy representing the Library Administration, responded and the program was enlarged by contributions from the local Scout troop and Camp Fire Girls' group. Flowers sent by the P.T.A. & the West Jefferson Business Men's Association and West Jefferson Woman's Club and many individuals filled the building.

1923-24

The move into the new building brought increased business to the branch and the year 1923-24 showed a gain of 21.5% over last year, a total of 75,794 books circulated. The number of borrowers grew to 4,484 and the book stock, due to a slight increase in book budget, was 5,002. The only staff increase was the extension of part-time to half-time page service. Staff changes were as follows: On the first of November Miss Griffin resigned and Miss Rena Walker of Omaha, Nebraska, became children's librarian, to remain one month. She was followed by Miss Ida M. Orendorff. The addition to the staff of a junior attendant, Mrs. Nellie H. Smith, in the fall of 1924 was most welcome. Her coming released the professional staff of clerical duties and made it possible for the children's librarian to conduct class lessons and story hours. These, of necessity, were held in the reading room. During Book Week the library was honored by having a guest author, Mr. Hugh Lofting, who read to the children from his "Voyages of Dr. Doolittle."

The West Jefferson Woman's Club continued to meet in the new library and the librarian was asked to plan programs and provide regular speakers.

An increase in book funds, which was urgently needed, contributed to a material increase in book circulation.

Development of the neighborhood and the building of new schools brought new borrowers into the community and added to opportunities for service.

1925

While furnishings, as originally planned by Miss Foye and Mrs. Case were not to come for several years, specially needed equipment arrived periodically. The vertical file came first and gave opportunity for the beginning of an orderly pamphlet and picture collection. Then came glass cases used to house valuable art books and in November, 1925 a new charging desk specially designed by the Weber Show Case and Fixture co. was installed. This was followed by Library Bureau catalog cases and cupboards for registration files which completed desk arrangements.

1926

Miss Orendorff resigned and on January 2, 1926 Miss Nina King English of St. Louis Missouri, was appointed children's librarian in her place. In March the staff was enlarged by the addition of a half-time senior, Mrs. Minnie G. Miller who was formerly in charge of the Central Avenue Branch.

In the spring of 1926 a series of book talks by Miss Gertrude Darlow was instituted which was called Third Thursday Book Talks. This was held in the confusion of the open reading room since the branch lacked a club room or auditorium of any kind, but was nevertheless well attended. Later, when branch routine grew too disturbing, the series was dropped.

A survey of the neighborhood and house to house canvas within a half mile radius was made to acquaint residents of the locality and facilities of the library.

1925-26

At the end of the fiscal year 1925-26 the circulation of books was 120,010. This was sufficient to allow Jefferson to be included in the first group of branches of which there were then fifteen. From the beginning of this period it ranked eighth or ninth in branch circulation, exceeding that of older established branches with larger book collections and book appropriations. This new ranking allowed the branch two privileges; first, that of increasing hours of service to twelve hours daily, from 9:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. and second, that of increasing the staff to include a second junior attendant, Miss Gertrude Derr who came on October 1, 1926.

At this time book stock was 7,815 and in spite of increasing circulation, filled all available shelves, especially in the adult room and need for stacks which was felt even at the end of the first year in new quarters became urgent.

1927

On March first Mrs. Miller was transferred to full-time work at Vermont Square Branch and Mrs. Veva H. Powell took her place. Next month Miss Derr was transferred to the catalog department and Miss Luceal Carter of the current Library School class was appointed in her place.

The summer of 1927 saw the branch completely outfitted. The new dark oak Library furniture had come four years after the completion of the building and gave the interior dignity and a feeling of newness again. In September two double floor stacks of two sections each were installed in the adult reading room. In one more year these were increased to three double stacks of three sections each.

Two staff changes occurred in the early fall of 1927. Miss Louise Bischoff came to Jefferson as full time senior attendant, making a half-time addition to the branch force and Mrs. Irene Swenson came as junior attendant in the place of Mrs. Smith who was transferred to Palms. Mrs. Swenson left on October 1, 1928 and was succeeded by Miss Oralea Hely, a member of the recent junior training class.

1928-29

At the close of the fiscal year 1928-29 the twelve years' administration of Miss Helen Spotts came to an end. She had helped stimulate the growth of the branch from a sub-branch with the minimum in book stock and equipment, manned with volunteer help, to a first group branch giving maximum service; staffed with three professional librarians and two clerical aids; and housed in a building of its own. The book collection now numbered more than 12,000 and was well rounded and substantial in its "minimum essentials." Circulation had grown to 168,557 for the year 1928-29. The community had changed from the bourgeoisie American type to a cosmopolitan one which included many nationalities. Those represented by the greatest numbers were Jewish, Russian, Armenian and Mexican. There was more than a sprinkling of German, French and Italians. Japanese and Negroes were beginning to appear in considerable numbers.

The summer of 1929 brought the upheaval of an entire change of staff in a period of two months. Miss Bess Markson succeeded Miss Spotts as Branch Librarian, coming from Vermont Square where she was principal attendant. Miss Bischoff tendered her resignation and Mrs. Britt, formerly Miss English, and Miss Carter were transferred to other branches. In their places came Mrs. Erma Enke, Senior Attendant; Mrs. Hazel Francisco, Children's librarian, both graduates of the Library School for the current year; and Miss Dorothy Little who had just completed the junior course.

The rapid growth of the branch was not anticipated when the building was planned. In 1929 after only five years' occupation the book stock had increased by almost 150% and exceeded the planned book capacity. From this time until 1931 the greatest ingenuity was required to house the still growing collection. Six double-faced stacks were placed in the adult reading room in a space which would ordinarily accommodate three. All furniture occupying wall space, such as magazine racks and display cases, was moved to other positions, so that shelves could be built in their place. In the children's room shelving was increased to the height of six shelves, window seats were removed and glass cases returned to Central Library. By 1931 every possible inch of wall space was used for shelving.

1929-31

In the two years from 1929 to 1931 the book budget was highest in the branch history and allowed a purchase of

books and magazines which somewhat met the demands of the neighborhood and left a balance to build up and strengthen those places in which the collection was weak. Circulation responded with gains. Month after month, a graph of circulation figures showed high points reached.

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1930

The summer of 1930 brought the first signs of the depression to the library when it was necessary to close the branches at one o'clock Saturdays during July and August.

In October Mrs. Enke was transferred to San Pedro Branch and Miss Olga Miropol, who had just completed the Library School course, was appointed in her place. The staff had its final increase when Miss Gladys Potts was added as half-time page to serve as desk attendant in lieu of clerical aid.

The Detroit charging system was started in December before it was universally adopted in the system. It proved to be an immediate success, relieving the pressure at the charging desk and doing away with long lines.

1931

In 1931, Saturday closing was again put in effect as an economy measure for the summer months and because of the continued necessity, became an established thing.

1932-33

1932-33 was characterized by mounting circulation. Conditions of the country at large resulting from the depression, unemployment and financial losses, brought numbers of people to the library who had never made full use of it before. Record days, weeks, months were noted until August, 1932, when 20,186 books were circulated, with a 26% gain and the year showed a total of 223,036. The book budget had already been cut and purchases curtailed but the book collection was doing maximum duty. In order to make the best use of books in demand, many popular titles were made seven-day.

At the beginning of the fiscal year, Mrs. Francisco was transferred to Hollywood and Miss Ruby Hayes came from the children's room of Vermont Square to take her place.

In July, 1933, when still further retrenchments were necessary the hours of service were reduced. The branch was closed mornings and open to the public only from one until nine o'clock every week day except Saturday, when it was open from nine A.M. until one P.M.

1933-34

In August new registration rules went into effect, limiting new borrowers to the use of one book until permanent cards were issued and demanding full identifications. These restrictions, coupled with shorter hours of service and increasingly drastic reduction of book funds, brought about losses in circulation. The year 1933-34 showed the first annual loss in the history of the branch, although the position among branches was retained.

1935

To cooperate with Miss Guerrier of the Boston Public Library in a reference questionnaire, a tally was made of all questions asked in the branch in a stated week in October, 1935. When results were published it was found that Jefferson stood third in the list of branches of this system although the book stock ranked eighteenth. Reference work

as a branch service had always been emphasized but this was the first time it was possible to evaluate it and the first time any means of comparison was available.

1935-36

The close of the year 1935-36 finds the branch with a book stock of 17,069. Because comparatively few books have been purchased in the last five years due to the curtailed budget; because discards have been heavy; because books which were no longer "live" have been transferred; the housing situation is just about the same as it was in 1931. Shelving barely accomodates the book collection and books require constant shifting in normal times and overflow onto trucks and tables in crowded vacation periods.

Following the trend of libraries throughout the country the volume of circulation has dropped to a pre-depression level. Losses for three years in succession have eaten up all that was gained in the boom period of library circulation. The future may find that this is close to the natural level for this branch. The period of rapid adolescent growth has passed and many avenues for expansion have been closed. within a radius of two miles are seven other branch libraries, four of which were started after the Jefferson branch building was opened. These shut in the branch and confine it to a very restricted area, leaving no territory for new development. The neighborhood is deteriorating; the population constantly fluctuating and the numbers of Negroes and Japanese looming large. Though many of the children in these two groups are card holders, theybare not essentially readers and the proportion of adult borrowers is small.

Though the function of the branch in the future may not be to serve great numbers there will always be a need for its service in a more limited field. It will continue for some time to come to be the heart of a busy community and serve as recreational, educational and cultural center.