

Wilshire Libraries Serve as Community Centers and Boosters of Good Citizenship

Facts Are Basis of Life in Today's World, Dr. Warren Says in Extolling Work of "Book Depots"

By FAITH HOLMES HYERS

The public libraries of America have an increasingly important function in the life of the community, according to our city librarian, Dr. Althea Warren, who believes the libraries are natural centers of information and service to aid the interests of the community.

"Facts are the basis of today's activities in a practical world, and good citizenship is based on understanding facts about government and democracy," stated Dr. Warren. "Our libraries are striving to provide the needed facts and understanding through what has been written and recorded."

Three Large Libraries

"The Wilshire area, and especially the district served by the Wilshire Press, is fortunate in possessing three large branch

libraries which cooperate in service to the community, adapting book collections to the particular needs of the area—the Pio Pico Branch near Western and Olympic, the Wilshire Branch near Western and First and the Memorial Branch at Rimpau and Olympic.

"These branches offer free exchange of books at a patron's request for certain titles and all three branches draw upon the collection at the Central Library of more than half a million volumes. Each branch has a permanent collection exceeding 20,000 books.

000 books.

"It may be of interest in considering branch libraries as community centers to look back on the history and growth of the Los Angeles library system. Almost every one of the 40 branches came into existence in response to an urgent demand of community members, under the leadership of some community group such as the Chamber of Commerce, women's clubs, patriotic organizations or businessmen's clubs. Today these libraries, in buildings provided by the Library Board through funds secured by means of bonds voted by the people, constitute natural community centers, open for book service and for meetings of civic and cultural groups or classes.

Link with Community

"Every branch librarian is an important member of the library staff of more than 500 employees. She represents the library to her community, selecting books for purchase which will supply the needs of her branch patrons and adapting the service of the library to the particular requirements of the neighborhood. She attends book-order meetings twice monthly at the Central Library, conferring with Central Library department heads who are specialists in their fields of literature.

"To serve children and young people, each branch has a children's librarian, trained in a specialized study of children's literature from pre-school picture books to reading for those entering high school. The children's librarians attend a book-order meeting once a month to place their orders for new books with the head of the Work with Children Department.

"The story of the characteristic service of each branch will be told best by the branch librarian."

PIO PICO BRANCH 1025 S. Oxford

Mrs. Eunice Watkins, Librarian
Mrs. Lucia Harrison,
Children's Librarian

The Pio Pico Branch in its beginning as a delivery station in 1900 dates back almost to the start of branch library history in Los Angeles. It was the efforts of the Pico Heights Improvement Association that led to the establishment of a book delivery station in a small storeroom at Pico boulevard and what is now Kenmore. For years the Pico Heights Book Club held its

meetings in the library and interest developed rapidly in book service to the neighborhood.

When the Library Bond issue of 1921 made it possible to erect 11 branch buildings, the Pio Branch was one of those chosen to receive a suitable building. The site at Connecticut and Oxford was believed by the Library Board to fulfill the requirements of a quiet corner in easy distance from a busy shopping center. Elmer Gray, a distinguished architect, designed the attractive stucco building of Spanish design with simplicity and dignity. The inviting doorway and the arched windows form interesting features of the exterior design. Cost of the building and equipment totaled \$35,000.

Name Changed in 1925

In 1925 the original name of the branch, Pico Heights, was changed to Pio Pico, according to the Library Board's custom of naming new branches after memorable Californians.

Since the library attained the stature of a branch, three librarians have directed its development. Miss Nellie Guiwits from 1919 to 1929, Miss Marion Rood from 1929 to 1941 and the present librarian, Mrs. Eunice Watkins, since 1941.

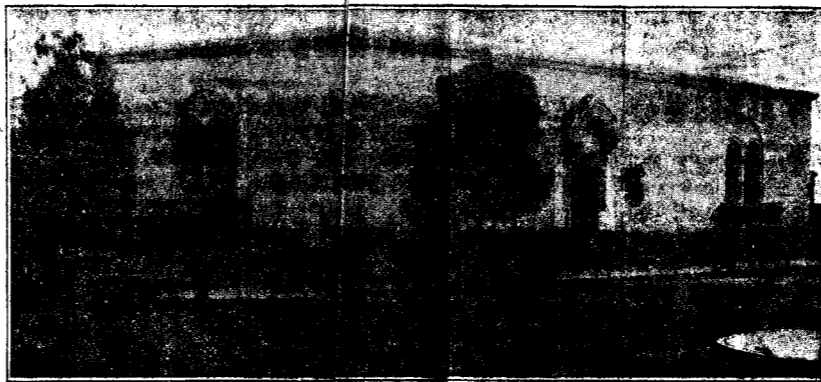
Friends of the library have made many gifts to the Pio Branch. Among these are three outstanding gifts: the library of the late George Fisher, donated by his heirs; a carefully selected collection of music, presented by John Tobias, and the flag pole for the library lawn, donated by the Parent-Teacher Association of the Hobart Boulevard School.

WILSHIRE BRANCH 149 N. St. Andrews

Miss Eleanor Smart, Librarian
Miss Doris Glosup,
Children's Librarian

The Wilshire Branch began service in 1920 in a very small

Wilshire Branch Library



From a small storeroom at Second and Hobart across the street from Cahuenga School, the Wilshire Branch Library grew until it was necessary to erect a \$56,000 Italian Renaissance building at Council and St. Andrews to house it. Outstanding feature of the structure is a carved doorway with an elaborate pattern of mythological animals copied from the Portal of Costanzo in the Cathedral of Perugia in Italy.

storeroom at Second and Hobart, across from the Cahuenga School. The book collection of 1000 volumes was administered by Mrs. Emilie Jackson, branch librarian, almost singlehanded.

In those early days, students from the universities liked to practice their storytelling art for the children who came to the Wilshire Branch. The book collection was augmented by frequent loans from the Hollywood Branch, and interest in the tiny library developed rapidly. Even with a prospect of a new building from the last of the 1925 bond funds, it became necessary in 1926 to find temporary larger quarters and two stores were rented on Western at Council.

Mrs. Jackson resigned because of ill health in 1924, and she was succeeded by Mrs. Anna Marie Hook who ushered in the new building with an open house held on August 1, 1927. There was great rejoicing and the reception was thronged with happy patrons. Punch was provided by the Western Avenue Business Men's Association, and the branch was off to a very good start.

Renaissance Architecture

The branch building designed by Architect Allen Ruoff at a cost of \$56,000 is Italian Renaissance in style, built of stone tile with a stone trimmings. Many observers ask about the design of the carved doorway with its elaborate pattern of mythological animals. This is copied from the Portal of Costanzo in the famous cathedral of Perugia, a province of Italy.

Ms. Hook transferred to the Cahuenga Branch in 1945 and Mrs. Lenore Work acted as librarian for a short period. In August, 1945, Miss Eleanor E. Smart became the Wilshire librarian. Miss Smart had worked as assistant department librarian at the Central Library and had developed the El Sereno Branch Library to its present stature be-

which began in a completed library building, and this came about through cooperative community efforts.

The Los Angeles High School student body and the Alumni Association purchased the site across from the high school and deeded it to the city as a memorial park dedicated to the alumni of the school who gave their lives in the first World War. In further remembrance of this sacrifice and as a service befitting this memory, permission was given the Library Board to erect a branch library in this park to be known as the Memorial Branch Library. The library was opened to the public on April 16, 1930, with Miss Nettie Guiwits as librarian.

Students of Los Angeles High School were granted their request to place a memorial window at the south end of the building, dedicated to the alumni who died in World War I. Under their names is the inscription: "May the sacrifice of these lives contribute to the establishment of peace among nations." The stained glass window, designed in heraldic style, is modeled on

the windows in the House of Parliament of London. The building follows the English manor style of the Tudor period and is designed to harmonize with the architecture of the high school.

Succeeded by Mrs. Blanchard

Miss Guiwits remained at the Memorial Branch until her retirement in 1942 when she was succeeded by Mrs. Elza Blanchard, present librarian.

The Memorial Branch today is serving many GI students as well as the students of the Los Angeles High School and the neighborhood readers. Two popular study courses on "Great Books" are being held in the clubroom and an enthusiastic audience takes part in lively discussions following presentation of the book of the evening by an authoritative speaker. The room is used also by the League of Women Voters and a number of other groups.

The children's librarian provides a picture-book hour for small children every Friday afternoon at 2:30 o'clock and once a month she gives a story hour for older children.

MEMORIAL BRANCH

4625 W. Olympic boulevard
Mrs. Elza Blanchard, Librarian
Miss Naomi Noyes,
Children's Librarian

An ideal example of community support and interest in library development, Memorial was one of the few branches