

“**M**emories of the building that became a library; different front, a vanished door” was the headline of the Vinita Daily Journal article on October 10, 1975 showcasing the transformation of our library building. The article featured pictures of then librarian, Mrs. Ethleen Moss, in various areas of the empty building to help visualize what the new library would look like.

In October, the Vinita Public Library celebrates its 100th birthday and invites the public to an Open House on Saturday, Oct. 7th at 11 am. At the open house there will be coffee and lemonade from Eastside Coffee, birthday cupcakes, games in the courtyard and special displays featuring past Vinita Librarians, Scrapbooks, and the library building. Children’s activities will include face painting, a Library Scavenger Hunt, and guess the number of ‘bookworms in a jar’. There will also be a gift basket raffle.

The library’s staff collaborated to create a book bag design unique to Vinita and Oklahoma. The design will be printed on totes which will be featured in the raffle and will also be available for purchase.

The Vinita Public Library was established in 1923 through the efforts of the American Legion. Vinita’s city council agreed that the city would provide a budget of \$1,500 if it could be matched by donations. Legion members provided

shelving and library furnishings for a room in the Grand Auditorium upstairs in the Vinita City Hall.

The library opened in City Hall on October 4, 1923, with over 3,000 books which were donated by the citizens of Vinita. The grand opening featured a brief concert by the Vinita High School band atop City Hall’s first floor porch. The location for the library later changed temporarily to an upstairs room over the Fire Barn at 131 East Canadian. It remained there during construction of the Grand River Dam, as the library was used as office space by GRDA. The library then moved back to City Hall, this time on the first floor, an area remodeled from the stage area of the former auditorium.

The library was moved to its current location at 215 W Illinois Ave. in October 1975. The building was the former Coca Cola Bottling Company. Improvements were made to the building through a bequest from Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Haynes in the amount of \$100,000 for a library building. This building would also become home to the Eastern Trails Museum. The new library was dedicated on October 12, 1975 as a memorial for their son, Maurice Haynes, who was killed in World War II. The Haynes were long-time residents of the

community and operated a grocery store in White Oak for a half century.

Mrs. N. K. Warner was named the first librarian and served for more than 18 years. A newspaper article quoted her saying, “An efficient librarian and a pleasant reading room makes the library a congenial retreat for students and lovers of good literature.”

Mrs. Ethleen Moss served as librarian from 1948 to 1979. During her 31 years as librarian, the library depended largely on donations to purchase new books. The Vinita Lions Club donated funds and time to the building of additional shelves as the book collection grew. Mrs. Moss, members of the Vinita Library Board and an advisory committee helped with the various phases of planning, construction and transfer to the renovated library building. Books and materials were transferred by community members; among them were members of Vinita Lions Club and VHS football players from the class of '79.

Former head librarians in chronological order were N.K. Warner from 1923 – 1947; Mrs. Ethleen Moss from 1948 – 1979; Louise Tyler from 1979 – 1985; Annabelle Southern 1985 – 1993; Kathleen Gatlin 1993 – 2002; Gail Curley 1998 –

2002; Susan Walters 2002 – 2020; and Vanessa Burckhalter Hicks 2020 – present.

Today the library is home to nearly 30,000 cataloged materials, provides high-speed wireless internet available 24/7, 18 public computers, scanning, printing and faxing services, and access to the Oklahoma Virtual Library offering more than 85,000 downloadable E-books and audiobooks on the Libby app.

The library offers programs for all ages, including the very popular Summer Reading Program. The library is also part of the Inter-Library Loan program where it borrows books from neighboring libraries if requested by a library patron. The libraries' digital catalog offers electronic resources, which the library accesses free through the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. These materials include articles, journals, legal references, medical articles, small business resources and more. There is a meeting room in the library available for community use.

The library hosts The Bookmarkers, a local book club, which was established in 2018. The club meets on the second Thursday of each month at 5:30 pm.

The library offers a program called the “Birthday Book Club” which encourages youth book ownership and partnership with

the public library. Children from birth to age 17 receive a new book during their birthday month. This program was established through the K.C. Montana Randolph Foundation.

The library also partners with the Vinita Rotary Club as their affiliate for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Vinita's library is the on-site location for all of Craig County for the Imagination Library.

The future of the Vinita Public Library looks bright! The library was awarded \$300,000 through the Community Development Block Grant Program. This grant is to make improvements in the library toward disability compliance.

Improvements will include adding an accessible-compliant bathroom, new entrances, flooring, circulation desk and book shelving. Additional funding from the library's White Foundation and the Logan Library Family Fund, as well as donations from Mr. and Mrs. Jay Klein will go toward renovations.

Before receiving the grant, improvements were made to the library building using funds from the White Foundation. The library's roof was replaced in May of 2021. New heating and cooling systems were installed in 2021, as well as new windows on the north side of the

building, new sidewalks, and exterior lights on the east side of the building.

The library appreciates all donations from individuals, groups and organizations. Book lovers, library lovers and community members may follow the Vinita Public Library on Facebook and Instagram to stay up to date with the latest programs and news at the library. For more information, contact the library at 918-256-2115.

Top: This picture from the Vinita Daily Journal issue on October 10, 1975 shows former librarian Mrs. Moss entering the former Coca Cola Bottling Co. building. Bottom: The building is now home to the Vinita Public Library and Eastern Trails Museum.