

North Douglas Library District, Mildred Whipple Branch is Drains' Pride and Legacy

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Story by Rusty Savage

There is a legacy, in Drain, of the perseverance of its citizens to establish and maintain a Library for the community. In 1931 Lydia Eccleston returned to Drain from Missouri with her husband Fred. Lydia, being an avid reader since kindergarten, missed having a local library and was soon borrowing books from all over town.

Through the Methodist Church she met the Whipple family and in a prophetic turn of events was invited to use their extensive family library. It was in 1932 that Lydia and her Sunday school classmates, including Maude Cowles and Gladys DeMerrit took on the project of starting the first Library.

After writing to Harriet Long, the Oregon State Librarian, the books started coming in on loan and some donated. According to Lydia, "Some of the men from the Church built a nice, big bookcase with doors that could lock, and we were 'Open for Business'". The library was open two afternoons a week with 2 checkers at a time. The new library was popular and lots of books were lent out as the library settled into its Church home.

Some years went by before the librarians were able to secure a small room behind the Community Hall at the Fairgrounds. Then in March of 1934 the Drain Public Library was established there by the City of Drain. The first Library Board members were appointed by the City Council. Winifred E G Whipple, Mrs. Lyle Kolford, Mrs Edna Kenny, Jim Whipple and C Robert Miller were on the first Board and Dorothy Gerould and Edna Bowman were added to the library staff.

Drain's Library went from being open a few hours a month to a few hours a week and as the City became more involved they decided to move to the City Records office on C street. in the old Drain Creamery Station. The City Records became the book checkers. Eventually the City of Drain needed the building torn down for a new City Hall and the Library moved again, across the street and upstairs, above the H A Store building. The new City Hall was finished in 1954 and dedicated on September 18th of that year.

Then in 1956 The Drain City Library became a branch of the Douglas County Library System. Under an agreement with the City, the D.C Library system provided books and materials along with salaries and supplies, then the City provided the housing and utilities. Policy and hiring responsibilities were under the cooperative purview of a Douglas County Board and a local Drain Citizen Board.

The Library grew and made many improvements under the guidance of Edna Tranburg and Lois Strickland until 1958. Hazel Lamberson and others also worked towards expansion and increased hours, including Carol Henderson who steered the Library from 1959 to 1974. In the 1970's, in addition to books and periodicals, recordings and paperback books were added to the curriculum. Over these years of expansion and increased hours, many Drain citizens occupied the Library Board seats and contributed to its success.



Patricia Aldous became the Librarian in 1974 and continued to modernize the Library with Movie Projector, Screen and Cassette recordings and increasing the hours even further. In 1989 the Branch Librarians were Candy Vickery and Marlene Lee. The Librarians had many assistants from the community during all of those years.

It was the final move of the library to the Civic Center that established the location we all know and love today. The dream of the Civic Center and the Library is intertwined and surely grown from the same seeds. The reality started in 1983 with a Grant of \$260,000 from Mildred Whipple, a former 5th grade teacher in Drain from 1932 to 1938. As a community leader, it was a dream of Mildreds for a long time, and she said at the time that a library was one of the greatest advantages a city can have.

"It is a place for everybody, regardless of color, creed or age."

This is the same Whipple family that had been involved with the library for many years and whose family library was really the beginning of Lydia Eccleston's library aspirations. After the generous donation from Mildred, the State Library Board donated another \$201,000, leaving a total of \$900,870 to be raised by the citizens and fundraisers.

To say the community rallied is an understatement, spear headed by City officers, local businesses and tireless local supporters the dream was reached and the ground was broken. Along the way the old Drain Community Hall was burned down in a live fire training with 5 Fire Departments from the area. Finally a celebration and grand opening ceremony was conducted in January of 1985 with Mayor Grant Levins and Finance Manager Bill Lockyear and senator Mark Hatfield attending.

"It is a place for everybody, regardless of color, creed or age."

-Mildred Whipple

The library is truly a place where everyone belongs"

-Miriam Sisson

In March of 2017 the Library was struck with a devastating blow when Douglas County closed the county wide library system. The doors were closed with books on the shelves. But when the going gets tough, the tough get going. Concerned and determined Drain residents like Valerie Johns and many others, some already mentioned, went to work and forged a new path and breath of life in the old library. In spite of the odds, a ballot measure was put up and passed with a 75% majority. A special tax district was established which allowed permanent stable funding for the new North Douglas Library District, Mildred Whipple Branch. The Grand reopening was on November 10th 2018.

The Mildred Whipple Library is still a buzzing center for all ages and interests today. current Library Director, Miriam Sisson, says, "The library is truly a place where everyone belongs". It is a rich resource and environment for the community, which is well utilized and valued by many patrons. The Civic Center and Library are cohabiting just fine, a kind of synergy with community activities. The City established a Civic Center Committee in 1985 to assist and advise the City in the operation of the Civic Center.

So now there is a stable library, still growing and still relevant and still community supported.

