

## An American movement:

# Lofty ideas led by early library founders

by Julie Gibbs

Paging through old library board meeting notes and newspaper clippings from the Millbrook Round Table, one is immediately struck by the passion with which the early trustees believed in and promoted the function of the Millbrook Free Library in their community.

The entries date back to the founding of the library in 1901 when it was established in the Thorne Building just across the street from its current location.

One entry from July 7, 1903, names seven trustees elected: Board President Mr. Harry Harkness Flagler, Miss Smith, Miss Macomber, Dr. Mackenzie, Mr. W.F. Haight, Mr. Gordon Swift, and Mr. W.R. Anderson. Miss Alice Mastin was named librarian.

The trustees wrote, "These interested in the establishment of a Free Library in Millbrook met on the eleventh of November, 1901, at which time it was resolved that a Free Library Association should be formed, with the object of maintaining a circulating library and reading room, free for public use to the inhabitants of the town of Washington."

At that time, records show 1,175 books were given to the library by the Women's Christian



Temperance Union, "to whom Millbrook was indebted for all previous library privileges."

On Feb. 16, 1902, the library was opened to the public, "since which time we have distributed 5,815 books," an entry from July of 1903 reads. By July of 1924, a report shows inventory had grown to almost 8,000 volumes with a circulation of 19,100.

On Oct. 5, 1909, the library moved from the Thorne Building to the original brick building and current site of the library. The building, designed by architect Frank W.S. King of Springfield, Mass., was donated by Anna M. Hayes in memory of her late husband, Captain Richard S. Hayes, a Civil War veteran.

The following entries from the Millbrook Round Table exemplify the eloquence and conviction with which the trustees approached establishing this institution of reading and learning in the community.

Jan. 16, 1920

"Much is written about the joys of country life, but we all know

each year sees a stream of young people going to the city. The telephone, the automobile, rural mail delivery, all have helped to keep rural life in touch with world affairs. Good library service throughout all rural districts would be as vital a means. The farmer who wants a technical book for temporary use has as much right to a library book as the city man has."

Jan. 9, 1920

"Make your wants known and the Library will do the rest. Some requests recently filled have been: Surveying, Corporation accounting, Hair-deciding, Hot water heating, Book-keeping, Free hand drawing."

July 11, 1920

"Through the War Work, many thousands of new readers have been added to the rolls and many libraries especially in the smaller communities will be unable to respond to the needs of this increased reading public unless adequate aid from outside is forthcoming. Also it is felt that intelligent reading matter which through the libraries can be placed before the public will prove a corrective to the many Bolshevik theories and acts from which our country is unhappily suffering at the present time. Thus the call is a



**EARLY EDUCATION:** Children circa early 1900s gather to read at a table in the Mill Free Library. (Photo submitted.)

two-fold one - first as the ground of raising the general cultural level of our country - second because of the help which may thus be given in ridding our beloved land of the

pernicious influences which have caused such havoc elsewhere in the world. It is proposed to raise two million dollars for this purpose and

each Public Library throughout the country is being asked to invite readers and townsfolk in the American movement." - Trustees of the Millbrook Library.