



Friends of the Chatham Community Library

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Abbreviated History of the Friends of the Pittsboro Memorial Library

(Below is an edited excerpt from a pamphlet written by Joyce Jackson in October 1986.)

During the 19th Century, books were located in home collections and small libraries in academies and schools. A Literary Society of Pittsboro was active in 1835. In 1883, the North Carolina General Assembly passed an act to incorporate the Farmer's Library Association in Chatham County. While there was an interest in books, public funds were not used to buy books until Chatham County became a participant in the Rural School Library Program in 1905.

The first real library service began in the 1930s under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) with a bookmobile. The books were carried on the outside of a truck behind sliding panels. The schedule for stops was published in *The Chatham Record*. For the first time, books were available to all Chatham County citizens to borrow and read.

On January 28, 1928, the McNeill Book Club was begun with 12 charter members. One of the original members, Margaret Horne, became Pittsboro's first librarian 14 years later.

On June 16, 1941, the first public library in Chatham County in a public building was started in a basement room of the Town Hall in Siler City. An active group of citizens funded this library with help from the WPA and the Town Board. Plans were made to start a Pittsboro "station" as soon as a place, and a person who would be librarian for \$1 per hour, could be found.

Miss Maggie Horne provided both as she graciously opened her home to the reading public. Space was found in her living room for a desk and a bookcase that held about 100 books. A sign in her front yard declared that here was our first "Pittsboro Public Library." The formal opening of the library was on November 27, 1942, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

From 1942 to 1968, the Pittsboro Library was located variously in the Pittsboro Jaycees Community House, opened on October 1, 1952, and then the basement of the County Agricultural Building, opened on May 3, 1957. All this time, there was an informal group of supporters, or "friends of the library" who met occasionally to discuss ways of improving the library's structure and services.

On October 3, 1968, an organizational committee meeting was held to start a new revitalized Friends of the Library group.

A larger library was needed, one larger than "any extra, any size, one room in any existing building anywhere in Pittsboro." Mr. Marvin Reeves, perhaps influenced by his wife Myrtle, a McNeill Book Club member since 1947, saw this need, and he did something to meet it. Mr. Reeves, in his 1969 will, left \$20,000 for a new library building. This bequest was the spark that inspired the superb interest and effort preceding the building of the Pittsboro Memorial Library.

