

Celebrating Brighton's Library

Brighton Memorial Library, in the town hall building on Elmwood Avenue, is seventy years old this year! The town's first and only public library, its establishment was the result of a campaign by community members to add a library to the new town hall on Elmwood Avenue.

From 1922 until 1964, residents of Brighton borrowed books from the Brighton Branch Library on Winton Road near East Avenue. Housed in the former Brighton #2 school building, the old brick structure was originally called the Thomas Blossom Library, honoring a longtime resident of Brighton Village who died in 1922. After the annexation of Brighton Village in 1905, the Rochester city school district took over the operation of the village school but in 1922 it closed the building and constructed Martin B. Anderson School #1 on Hillside Avenue, making the old school available for a branch of the Rochester Public Library system. In 1964, the Winton Road branch library opened near Atlantic Avenue in the city and the old school-turned-library up the road closed.

Dorothy Cumpston of Council Rock Avenue is credited with the founding of the Brighton Memorial Library, stating her mission to Town Supervisor Roy Draper in 1950. Brighton had no library services after 1939 when state law changed and non-city residents were required to pay an annual fee of \$3.00. And even though the Monroe County Traveling Library received taxpayer funds from Brighton, it never operated within the town limits. Mrs. Cumpston's two-page letter to Mr. Draper caused him to appoint a committee with Mrs. Cumpston as chair to investigate the establishment of a town library within the new town hall building. The library opened in 1953 when the town hall was completed. In addition to her library advocacy, Mrs. Cumpston took on the position of town historian from 1950 to 1953. In 1952 she authored the booklet "*The Building of Brighton: A town with an interesting past and a promising future*" and in 1954 she was elected chairman of the board of the Monroe County Library System.

The little library that began in the town hall basement thrived! Soliciting the donation of books from the community, volunteers sorted and organized the collection of 1300 books and an encyclopedia set. At the end of its second year of operation, the library's circulation had reached 41,000 patrons. In 1954 Onnalee Vaughn became the first librarian, in charge of a collection of 8937 books. By 1963 the original fifteen by 32-foot space was too small so an enlargement of the town hall enabled the library to expand to 3,500 square feet. Another addition in 1979 brought the square footage to 12,000 and in 1999 the library grew to its present size of 24,000 square feet.

Today Brighton Memorial Library is one of the busiest libraries in Monroe County.

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