

March 2022

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Recommended Citation

Unknown, "Tingley Memorial Library" (2022). *Florida Library History Project*. 32.
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Florida Library History Project

Tingley Memorial Library

Tingley Memorial Library had an inauspicious beginning in 1959 when it was first formed and incorporated as the Bradenton Beach Public Library - a private nonprofit organization. In 1960, there were 159 registered patrons and 2340 books available for lending. At that time there were 7 volunteers staffing the Library.

The Library was first housed in the Harvey Memorial Church and later in a narrow storefront on Bridge Street, Bradenton Beach's main street. In 1967 it was moved to a room in the City Hall and subsequently relocated to a small one story beach cottage located behind City Hall on land owned by the City. As of December 1961, there were 4775 volumes available for lending. The volunteers noted that in the prior 6 months there were 473 registered members who had borrowed 3559 books.

During the early years, 1959 - 1980, the Library was financially dependent upon small donations from a local Community Municipal Fund and from a few private citizens. Donated books were all gratefully accepted.

In 1986, this bleak picture changed when Mrs. Tingley, a long time devotee of the Library, passed away, leaving a substantial estate to the City with the provision that the funds be used only to expand and operate the Library. The newly renamed Tingley Memorial Library was officially accepted by the City in Resolution 436. this document acknowledges the bequeath from Mrs. Tingley's estate and sets forth the City's agreement to comply with the terms of her will. The most pertinent term requires the establishment and maintenance of a separate, designated financial account for the Library. At this time, the library accepts no tax monies from City, state or federal bodies.

Formal supervision of the Library rests in the hands of The Library Board, headed up by Chairperson, John Sandberg. Sandberg oversaw the planning and building of the new facility in 1992 - 1994. Its forward design acknowledges the role computers will play in the "library of the future" by allowing for numerous additional work stations. Its light, airy spaces, community meeting room and

modern collection are strong elements. The new Library opened its doors in February of 1994.

The Tingley Memorial Library is housed in a 4 year old building located behind the Bradenton Beach City Hall. The building encompasses an area of about 2800 square feet, of which almost 1900 square feet are dedicated to the shelf storage of about 5500 books and three computers. Two of these computers are dedicated to learning programs for children. The third is available to adults for word processing and CD-ROM programs. Eventually, the Library will hold about 20,000 books and 13 computers.

There is no residency requirement for becoming a member of the Library but there is an annual membership fee of one dollar and members must have a local telephone number and address-- thus ensuring the capability to track down overdue books. Membership now totals about 2000 patrons and during 1997 there were 10,650 books borrowed for an average of 888 per month. Local patrons come from the 3 cities of Anna Maria Island, north Longboat Key, Cortez village and northwest Bradenton. The Library also draws patrons from all over the US and Canada who are visiting the area.

The Library since inception has been operated by dedicated volunteers and now has one part time clerk who is paid for 20 hours per week. The clerk provides continuity in the daily operation and assists the volunteers in their execution of library procedures.

Financial support for the operation and maintenance of the Library has been provided mainly by the terms of the will of the late Beulah Hannah Hooks Tingley, membership fees, book sales and donations from generous patrons.

The Library is open 24 hours per week on a varied schedule so that all can find a convenient time to visit. Approximately 2000 childrens and juvenile books are part of the collection along with some 500 paperbacks, newspapers and magazine subscriptions and a smattering of audio books. Many materials are acquired by donation and the emphasis is on recreational reading appropriate to a resort and retirement population. In order to comply with the expressed desires of the membership, bestselling fiction, non-fiction and biographies make up most of the books purchased. Mysteries and adventure stories are popular selections.

Two grants from the Sarasota Bay National Estuary Program have allowed for the design and public education regarding the xeriscape landscaping of the property. The design highlights local plantings that are salt tolerant and able to survive in the sun drenched sandy environment with low maintenance and minimal use of fertilizers.

Tingley Memorial Library today is a friendly modern community resource valued by residents and visitors to the charming island city of Bradenton Beach.

For further information contact:

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