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Florida Library History Project

Latt Maxcy Memorial Library

(From There 's Only One Frostproof 1976 and The Frostproof News, 4/13/78)

By 1920 the need for a Public Library in Frostproof was being discussed. The need was emphasized in 1921 when a book collection housed in the Presbyterian Church, was given to the school as a library for the high school-to-be and the public. In 1921 a few Frostproof residents formed a Library Association with the purpose of securing land, money, and a building for a Library. The campaign began April 19, 1921 and soon the lot of 210 South Scenic was being discussed as a library site. A tent was provided for campaign headquarters and the library Funds progress was registered on a huge thermometer placed in the center of town.

Mr. Leo Elliott gave his services as architect, and work on the building was begun immediately with Mr. W.C. Roberson as contractor and builder. Mr. J.B. Simons made and gave wooden shelving which he described as "temporary". Replacement of this shelving was started in 1962 and completed in 1975.

The building was completed shortly before April 16, 1922 with such exuberance that the Methodist minister closed the Revival service for the evening and with the visiting evangelist and the congregation crossed over to participate in the dedication enthusiasm! The building cost \$3,500 with \$800 owing when the building was finished. Books were donated by individuals, the Town Council gave funds for new books, and Alice Corbett Cordes (Mrs. Henry B.) was the first volunteer librarian. The building, without awnings or the roof over the steps, is very much the same today as the existing Historical Museum. Two years after establishing the library for the town the Board of Trustees asked the Town of Frostproof for municipal support and management The Town Council soon requested that the Frostproof Woman's Club, organized in 1924 serve as the Managerial Board of the library. For a brief interval the Town Council assumed control, but again, the Woman's Club was asked to resume the responsibility. The Club's stewardship continued for the next forty-five years or so. In 1966 the sole surviving Trustee made legal transfer to the City of Frostproof of the Library, and lot, with continuation of the original purpose of use. In 1973 upon the request of

the Club, the City of Frostproof appointed a Library Board of Directors. Financially the library was and is funded by the City of Frostproof and the Frostproof Woman's Club, The City now provides full budgetary support. In 1975 the Library's second card catalog file became a reality.

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The Latt Maxcy Memorial Library was built by the Maxcy Foundation and donated to the City of Frostproof in April of 1978. Visitors to the library are immediately impressed by the commanding location at 15 North Magnolia Avenue and the open spacious effect created by the modern structure and uncluttered grounds. The building itself encompasses 5,935 square feet with another 3,900 square feet devoted to the promenade dock and an additional 1,713 square feet for the entrance walk stairs and handicap ramp. Space was provided for parking 34 cars, and an exterior book drop was installed for convenience. The approximate cost of the library, which was designed by R.C. Stevens and constructed by the firm of Stevens and Walton of Orlando was \$375,000. Joe Holmes was the superintendent of construction on the project. Simplicity and attention to detail were apparent in every detail of the current library, designed with a book shelf capacity of 30,000 volumes, ample room for reading, and research for all ages. Highlights of the interior construction and furnishing of the building are: recessed lighting throughout a clerestory over the entrance lobby, a reception, a check in and out desk counter, enclosed with plate glass panel partitioned reference and easy reading rooms, work room, receiving and assembly room, and the librarian's office. Tiled restrooms have facilities for the handicapped. Other niceties of design and furnishings include: entire public area carpeted for restful atmosphere, acoustic ceilings in all areas, general muting area furnished with 9 circular tables with capacity for 32 persons, lounge area furnished with 2 couches, magazine cabinet newspaper storage cabinet, sliding glass door display cabinet in public area, wall pegboards for display of various art items in public area, easy room provided with low tables, reference provided with reading tables, chairs, and sound retardant cubicles. On the walls are prominent displays of Mr. Latt Maxcy's African hunting trophies. A portrait of Mr. Maxcy hangs over the circulation area, painted by Bill Potthast of Winter Haven.

The Latt Maxcy Memorial Library currently offers its patrons access to 28,000 volumes of reading and research materials. The library also has one public access Internet terminal that is available to its patrons during regular business hours.

The current staff at the library includes Director Massa Hadden, Technical Assistant Kam Conley-Hollis, and Circulation Clerk Dedee Duckham

The library became a member of the Polk County library Cooperative in October of 1997. By increasing its service area, the library has added several new members to its "family" of patrons. As of February 1998, the library has 4,051 patrons.