

CHESTER TIMES – October 14, 1901

HISTORY OF THE FREE LIBRARY PROJECT – REVIEW OF THE Work
Given before the Media Woman's Club – A Child of the Organization

The history of the Media Free Library formed the subject of an interesting paper read before the Woman's Club on Friday last by Mrs. Henry C. Smith. The story of the library project is as follows:

That the Media Free Library is an assured success is a self-evident fact that all who live in the town must know, but I have been asked to take the place of Miss Lewis, who cannot be with us this afternoon, and give a brief sketch of its history.

You also know that the first step towards starting a public library was taken in this club. Less than a year ago the Civic Committee of the Woman's Club formed as a branch of its work, a Library Committee, having as chairman and members, a few women of our club who earnestly desired to give Media the advantages of good literature. This committee worked faithfully, energetically and hopefully during the early winter months to stir up enthusiasm in the club and through the town, and to raise money through donations, but they soon found that the only way to create any great interest in the undertaking was to make it a more general movement. Several gentlemen of the town, especially interested in such matters, were invited to meet with the Library Committee and through them much advice and help was obtained. Then it was seen that the project to create and maintain a public library for the town, though started in the Woman's Club and rightly called a child of the club, to be carried out successfully must join hands with and ask and support of the people of the town; as a public undertaking and not under the Woman's Club or any other society or coterie of people.

THE PUBLIC MEETINGS – Several mass meetings were held, still through the efforts and courtesy of the Civic Committee, for they gave the club room and defrayed the expenses. These meetings called forth much discussion and difference of opinion among the people of the town as to the need for, or the possibility of maintaining a Town Library, but they had the desired result in creating interest and thought, in the matter.

The battle was half won when we started people to thinking. Conviction usually follows honest thought, and the majority being soon convinced that we would need a library and that we could have one if we willed to have it, a permanent Library Association was formed. This Association to be composed of every person of the town feeling any interest in the library, either for himself or for the benefit of the town, held its first regular meeting May 14. At this meeting the constitution and by-laws were adopted, with dues of \$1 per year agreed upon and officers and Board of Directors elected as follows: President, Dr. E.L. Clark; secretary, Miss Dora Lewis; treasurer, Mrs. Henry C. Smith; directors, Mrs. William F. Lewis, Miss Sallie Williamson, Mrs. William Easby, Mrs. Henry Wirz, Prof. Leon Watters, Horace Green and George Yarnall.

On June 18 a book reception was held to which all people of the town were invited and where much interest in the project was shown and about 300 books donated. Through the courtesy of the Media Town Council, we were given a room in the Town Hall, with light and heat; and in two months the Executive Board had collected \$700 in contributions, furnished the room, engaged a regular librarian, and on the first day of August opened the library to the public. The interest manifested in the library was shown by the large number of people who came to this opening on the evening of August 1, and in the demand for books, which immediately began. In August 261 persons registered and took out books

and in September 111 more added their names. Of these 372 persons, 228 are women, 79 men and 65 children. In August, 937 books were taken out and in September 1054 making a total of 1991 books in two months, or an average of 1000 books read each month.

ONE THOUSAND BOOKS – Since the opening of the library about 200 more books have been brought or donated, so that the number of books at present on the catalogue is about 1000. This number will be greatly increased shortly, as the Friends Library Association has loaned us all the books of their library, 500 in number, to be placed on our shelves in our room and made free to the public under exactly the same rules as our own. Through the advice and generous help of the legal member of our Board, the Free Library Association of Media, has been made an incorporated body, with a seal in proof of which you will soon find a very handsome charter framed and hanging on our walls.

Though this is a free library, I trust it will not escape the mind of anyone that it is maintained entirely by the generosity of the people of Media and that each person will feel it his or her privilege and duty to do something towards its support. Surely anyone deriving any benefit from it can at least join the Association and pay the \$1.00 a year. The present membership is perhaps \$1.50, but it should be twice, yes, four times that size. Some people have been so generous that it should encourage others to greater effort. The running expenses from year to year. In keeping an efficient librarian and in renewing and adding to the books, will necessarily be great and therefore every effort must be made to add continuity to our treasury.

A project with this end in view is to have a bazaar in the Haldeman House on the afternoons and evenings of the 14th and 15th of November. We earnestly request that you will all take the greatest interest in this effort to donate money and assist those who have undertaken the work with your contributions, kindly interest, and attendance, for only with the help of each and all can such an undertaking succeed.

Keith Lockhart Collection