

## **GROTON LIBRARY HISTORY**

**Merifu Club, a literary and social club, was organized in 1921 with the following charter members: Frances Williams, Laura Krueger, Bessie Wetzel, Ida Archer, Joyce Redmond, Mildred Schornack, Isabel Olson, Genevieve Harding, Stella Brown and Adelaide Mohn. In the 1930's, after much discussion, this club decided to sponsor a library. The library has been the project of the Merifu Club since its inception in 1932.**

**Notices were put in the local paper asking for books for a library. Club members took coaster wagons and went from door-to-door collecting the books people wished to donate. Hours were spent gathering and cataloging the books, with the help of Arloene Bowles Becklund and anyone else who knew anything at all about library procedures.**

**It was also necessary to raise money, as library cards, pockets, etc., had to be purchased, so money was raised by holding various benefits such as pie socials, food and white elephant sales.**

**Of course, much time was donated to set up the library itself and at first members acted as librarians and kept the doors open on Wednesday afternoon and Saturday afternoon and evening. Saturday night was important as everyone in the community came to town at that time in the early days.**

**Signing up and taking turns as librarian turned out to be quite a problem, so eventually Mildred Schornack became the first permanent librarian. Her services were mostly volunteer except for the munificent sum of \$2 - her Merifu dues - which were paid for her. Jean McKiver was the next permanent librarian and served for several years. She was followed by Mrs. Irl (Ruth) Frommel, who is the current librarian. These women received salaries from the city of Groton.**

**Locations were first in the old hotel at the southwest corner of Main Street and then in back of Sippel's Market (in the Brooberg Building and now Ken's Fairway), and still later in a building next to Quiggle and Anderson Drug Store (now north part of Legion Lounge). Rent and fuel were furnished by the city and the librarians did the cleaning and kept the fires burning. Most of the buildings leaked and were cold and drafty in the winter and hot in the summer.**

**Sponsoring the library has always been a very challenging project for the Merifu Club. Various other organizations and people helped by contributing new "best sellers" as they could, and these were put on a special "one-week shelf," which usually had a waiting list so the**

books did not take up shelf room for long. Such a project was a much-needed service since those were depression years and most individuals could not afford books or magazines. Some years a story hour for children was held.

In 1968, Mr. and Mrs. William Wage consulted with Roy A. Richards concerning the building and furnishing of a library for the city of Groton. Roy proceeded to draw up plans for this building and to oversee the construction of it. He was assisted by the following contractors: Bill Krause, construction; Ray Gunderson and Bob Lapham, masonry; Dean Kranhold, plumbing; Randy's TV and Appliance, electric heat and electric construction; Kenneth Mortenson and John Bleibaum, interior decorating; Ackerson Hardware, paint and supplies; Paetznick Garness Furniture, floor coverings; United Building Center, building supplies; Schmidt Fiberglass Insulation Service, insulating and ceiling grid system; and Twin City Roofing, roof installation.

The library was finished in October 1968 and was formally dedicated on November 12, 1968. The presentation ceremonies were held at 3:30 p.m. in the new library building. Methodist Pastor K. Oliver Brekke spoke briefly and inspiringly and followed his speech with a word of prayer, as was fitting, and Mayor Omer A. Nelson, who had been presented with the key and who accepted the gift on behalf of the city.

Since this building was given to be used as a "public" library, gifts are welcome. A plaque has been placed on the library wall on which the names of all those giving gifts of \$25 or more, have been inscribed. All other gifts are recorded in a book.

The very unusual and beautiful oil painting hanging in the library was painted by a local artist, Amos Doeringsfeld. This lovely picture captures the beautiful vivid colors of a South Dakota sunset. Amos' name is inscribed on a metal plate below the picture. The library building also serves as the City Auditor's Office and as a bookmobile stop, besides the Wage Memorial Library.