

BUILDING LIBRARIES IN RANDOLPH COUNTY

by

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From 1938 until May, 1964 the Asheboro Public Library was located in one room in the City Hall and the headquarters of the Randolph County Public Library System was in the basement of the Court House six blocks away. The changes that come during a 25-year period in the life of a library do not need to be described. It became all too obvious by 1950 that one corner (910 sq. ft.) of the City Hall was totally inadequate to provide library services to the citizens of Randolph County. Plans were started for securing a new building which materialized 14 years later.

In January, 1963 the voters of Asheboro approved a \$300,000 bond issue by a vote of 695-60 to raise the necessary funds to build a new city library which would also house county library headquarters.

Randolph County's plan for library service provides for municipal ownership of facilities with county appropriations for operating expenses. All libraries are open to all residents of the county. The first building designed for library service in the county was a gift of Mr. M. E. Johnson for the town of Ramseur, with a population of 1,258. It was opened for service in May, 1961, and plans for the Asheboro building were in process at the same time. Before the move was completed to the new Asheboro building Federal aid grants were available for construction, and library boards in both Liberty

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This photo shows one of the reading areas in the Randolph County Public Library, Asheboro. The advantageous use of artificial lighting is well illustrated.

(pop. 1,438) and Randleman (pop. 2,232) applied for grants. The Liberty project was carried through to completion, and the new building was opened for service in September, 1966. The Randleman Board of Trustees proceeded with their project through the preliminary plans stage and will renew their planning in the near future. In the meantime, both the Randleman and Franklinville libraries have been moved to remodelled buildings. As a result, all five libraries in the system are now in new or remodelled quarters.

The Asheboro building was planned over a two-year period by the architect, a committee from the Asheboro Library Board, and the county librarian. This group attended institutes and workshops on buildings, visited other libraries, examined available studies, listed special local needs, and finally wrote a basic building program which somehow was never polished off as a literary piece because the group worked so intensively with the architect that there was a meeting of the minds. Since offices of the architect and the general contractor were across the street from the library, conferences were easily arranged by anyone needing an answer. The architectural firm of J. Hyatt Hammond Associates was selected as architect and C. H. Wood, Inc., as general contractor.

As the floor plan developed the building became a large square of approximately 110' x 120' with the bookmobile garage attached. The floor space is 18,000 square feet—all on one floor except for the furnace room in the basement. The construction was of interest to laymen and librarians alike. After the foundation was in place, 18 concrete columns were erected upon which 12 steel trusses spanning approximately 55' each between columns are supported. The green clay tile and anodized aluminum roof with a seven-foot overhang was balanced on the columns, then the terrazzo floor was poured throughout the building, after which the brick exterior walls were laid. Having no load-bearing walls allows for changes anywhere in the building in case of revision of library service or expansion of the headquarters area.

The depth of the trusses above the ceiling is used for space for all electrical and

mechanical services. Outside light is provided by a few glass window walls and a glass ribbon under the eaves throughout the building. In addition, eight coffers in the reading room with skylights above provide both daylight and artificial light as well as heat and air-conditioning.

The brick is pink antique with flecks of beige and black. In all public service areas maintenance-free materials were used — panelling, brick, or plastic covering. Earth colors were preferred in decoration, so that the library is rich in shades of brown, green, rust, red, and gray.

The reading room is open with high shelving to the side and rear and counter-height shelving free standing in the center area. The room is a spacious 60' x 110' with the circulation desk and children's room at one end and the reference desk at the other. The other room open to the public is across the hall; this is the Randolph Room devoted to local history and furnished with gifts. The library is also headquarters for the Randolph County Historical Society and has been designated a Garden Center.

The meeting room area is composed of a large room panelled in redwood which will seat approximately 100 persons, rest rooms, storage rooms, and a small kitchen which may be used for light refreshments by request.

The office area is for the headquarters staff of the Randolph County Public Library System and is divided between administration, technical services, and extension services. There is a bookmobile garage and loading zone which will house two bookmobiles. A parking lot at the rear of the 150' x 266' lot will accommodate 25 cars.

No new services have been provided in the new buildings except for the meeting rooms, but all services have been extended and improved. All libraries have shared in the improvements because the headquarters staff has been able to coordinate services more effectively.

The Ramseur and Liberty Libraries each have approximately 3,200 square feet with 52' x 30' reading rooms, meeting rooms seating approximately 40 persons, rest rooms, storage rooms, and offices. Both are heated electrically. There are ample parking areas. Architect for the Ramseur Library was John James Croft, Jr. of Asheboro, and the Liberty Library had J. Hyatt Hammond Associates as an architect. Contractor for each was J. E. Allred of Asheboro.

The patrons respond to the beauty of the three buildings and are using them happily and successfully. All of the buildings have space and provision for expansion. So far no tragic errors in planning or construction have been evident. The heating systems in all three have required occasional adjustments, but time seems to work out engineering problems. The building adapts, or the heat improves, or the staff becomes philosophical. A few light switches could be somewhere else, but the furniture arrangements do interfere with logical switch placements at times. All in all, the staff has found the buildings to work out much as they were planned. The architects for the Asheboro building must be happy with the results, for they won a Merit Award for their efforts.

"The books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame."

—Oscar Wilde