

History of the Dolores Public Library

In the 1920s, the library was located in the high school building as a joint library with the school. The high school was then located at the corner of Central and 6th Streets. The high school was torn down in the 1940s, and the site became the location of the old Dolores State Bank building. The general public found parking a problem, and there was no room to sit and read with the school activities going on.

In the 1950s the old town hall burned, and the town planned to rebuild. A group of ladies from the Dolores River Garden Club under the enthusiastic leadership of Mary Jane McRae and Inez Thomas asked that a room be included for a town library. This room was included, as well as space for the fire department. Husbands of Garden Club members found themselves drafted as carpenters and transporters of books contributed from all over the area. Future plans included building a second floor for offices. According to the Dolores Star, the library opened in the summer of 1956.

History shows that from 1956 to 1983 volunteers and part-time staff operated the library with limited resources and service hours. The board consisted mostly of garden club members. The Town of Dolores donated money, along with the county, in order for the community to receive basic library services. The library joined the Southwest Regional Library Service System in 1968. The state established seven regions to provide consulting, workshops, and training to library staff in each region. The library had no phone until V.T. Boyd became mayor. He had a phone installed in the library room, and the town paid the bill.

In 1983, Carole Arnold was hired as library director. She began writing grants, and the first was a Preschool Enrichment Grant. This grant built on the premise that a library's future depends on children and provided materials and furnishings for the corner of the library designated for children's story time. In 1984 the library began collecting aluminum cans in order to purchase materials and books for the story time program. Aluminum cans collection has been a successful project that continues today thanks to the residents and tourists in the area and to the many wonderful volunteers who have hauled cans to a recycling location.

In 1984 and 1985, the Town decided they could no longer fund the library but would continue to provide the space. Carole began researching library law, which is part of the Colorado Revised Statutes and met with Jon Schler of the Colorado Community Development in Grand Junction and with Cliff Fossum, Attorney for the Town of Dolores. The three established a library district, according to Library law. To become a library district, there had to be two government entities to support the district, public meetings supporting the district had to be held, and the mill levy could not be over 1.5 mills. The Town of Dolores agreed to be one of the entities. The Dolores School District passed a resolution, becoming the second entity. Michael Green, a partner with Cliff Fossum, completed the paperwork on behalf of the new library district. Mancos Public Library also became a district at that time. Montezuma County provided funds to all three libraries in the county at that time.

In 1986-1987, the Dolores Fire Department needed additional space as there was no room for the fire engines and rescue equipment or room to clean vehicles after a call. The Town then provided space for the fire department at the west "y" in town. At this time, the library requested the vacated space and was granted part of it. In 1987, an LSCA grant, along with other small grants and fundraisers, provided for a "bare bones" remodeling, adding handicapped restrooms for the building and a small addition in front for a reading room. An open house was celebrated on April 15, 1988. When the district moved into the remodeled jail and fire department space, Carole knew that space would be filled to capacity with no room for growth, so funds received from donations and fundraisers were saved for a new home someday. In 1989, the Friends of the Dolores Library had a concrete patio prepared under the front windows for the children's summer reading programs and story time activities. In 1990, Carole wrote a grant to the LSCA and the Ballentine Foundation to fund an Oral History project.

In 1992, the library acquired more areas of the fire department's workroom and began working with the Town to replace the heating system and remodel a couple of work areas. Another LSCA grant was written. A successful election allowed for the increase in the mill levy from 1.5 to 4 mills. The additional funding helped increase hours, programs, and the collection. In 1992 Volume I of the Oral History: Our Past, The Portals to

the Future was published. In 1994 a grant to the Mabel Hughes Charitable Trust was awarded for the second volume of the Oral History Project. In 1995 a grant from the El Pomar Foundation was also received, allowing the transfer of the bib records to the MARC format. New circulation and catalog software was also ordered. The Tabor amendment, which restricts government spending, was approved by voters in 1992. This amendment occurred at the same time of the mill levy increase, and the wording in the ballot issue was ambiguous. In 1997, the voters successfully "deBruced" the district, which removed some TABOR restrictions. The 5.5% Gallagher Amendment, which maintains property tax revenue, was also successfully approved.

In 1998, Carole Arnold wrote a small \$500 planning grant to assist the Library District in planning to plan. The System Director was the facilitator in the planning sessions. A state library consultant also determined that at least 7,500 square feet was needed for the district. In 1999, Carole and the trustees began to look around for property. A committee walked or drove around the community to look at vacant land and/or buildings that might be for sale or were empty. Local realtors assisted.

In 2000, the Town of Dolores stated that they needed space at Town Hall, and the District began to look at re-designing the location. Carole had worked with Jon Schler and his architectural students with the earlier remodeling project at the Town Hall. Again, they assisted with the new project. Carole wrote an Energy Impact Grant for \$300,000 in 2001. An election was held in November to build a new library. The vote failed by a small margin. As a result, the District was going to lose half the grant. Carole contacted State Representative Kay Alexander and wrote a letter to the director at the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. Senators Jim Isgar and Representative Mark Larson helped to save the grant, and the District was able to keep \$250,000 of the grant. Ken Charles, a local consultant based in Durango, also assisted.

In December 2001, land was donated by John and Beulah Becher Vanderpool. This property, located next to the post office, had been in the Becher family for many years. In 2002, 28 architects responded to a Request for Tender for building a new library. This number was cut to 8, and finally, Dennis Humphries and Joseph Poli of Humphries Poli Architects of Denver were chosen. Carole and the trustees again began the process for an election and for additional financing. This process resulted in many public meetings and planning sessions. Grants were written and awarded. The successful election on November 5, 2002, allowed for the finished plans. Bids were let out to begin the project, and Colorado Jaynes Company was awarded the bid. The Library was completed in April 2004, with the doors opening in May 2004. The Library was completely built with grants, donations, and fundraising efforts, with the exception of \$200,000. Dolores State Bank provided the additional financing, and the capital lease was paid off in 2013. In addition to the land donated by Mr. and Mrs. Vanderpool, the District received a wide variety of other donations, which included furnishings, materials, and labor.

Awards:

- Colorado Association of Libraries: Library of the Year 2004
- Governor's Award for Downtown Excellence 2005
- Library Journal Best Small Library in America: Special Mention, Dolores Public Library, 2006
- 2nd place 50 Best Smallest Libraries in the United States by Library Journal