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Bricks, Books, and Metaphor: The Place of First Libraries in Alabama Communities

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While reading various histories of public libraries in Alabama, the writer became fascinated with what they revealed about the place of these communities' early libraries, in both the literal and the metaphorical sense. These histories include intriguing details about the buildings where libraries were first housed, few of which were originally built to be libraries, and about Alabama citizens' dedication to creating and maintaining community libraries.

Due to conditions of extensive poverty, illiteracy and poor education, and the rural nature of most of its communities, the majority of Alabama libraries were established much later than those in other parts of the country. By 1850 there were 1,064 social and subscription libraries in the New England states, where the public library movement began and flourished, but contrary to the Alabama experience, relatively few such libraries were started after 1890 as more and more towns established locally-funded public libraries.¹ By 1896 there were over one thousand public libraries in the country as a whole.²

In Alabama, as late as 1920, local government officials had established only one library with tax revenue. Almost all of the thirty-two libraries in existence in the state in 1921 began as private subscription libraries, which only later were given financial support from local governments.³ The same factors that delayed the formation of libraries in the state, however, certainly increased the need for them and may well have increased the citizens' motivations for establishing and

maintaining libraries when they became possible.

Information Gathering

During a 1997 sabbatical, the writer acquired a small number of library histories from the files of the Alabama Public Library Service (APLS). Letters requesting their histories were then sent to the rest of Alabama's more than two hundred public libraries. The responses to these requests, along with visits to twenty-one of the state's public libraries, resulted in a total of sixty library histories.

The writer sent out a second request in October 2003, and a third in November 2004, to the public libraries that had not responded earlier. Seventy-seven additional histories have been received thus far, for a total of 137.

The Early Libraries

The histories obtained by the author reveal that some sort of library or library system was established in Alabama communities in the 1800s and the 1810s and during each of the decades from 1870 through 2000. The number of libraries founded in each of these decades is listed in Table 1. For the four libraries in Hale County, Monroe County, Columbiana, and Camden, we know only that they were established "pre" 1920, 1927, and 1939 and "after" 1939, respectively.⁴ Those libraries established in the earlier decades would have begun as private association or subscription libraries. Most eventually became legally-recognized and locally-funded public libraries.

The 137 histories the author analyzed include information on the physical buildings that housed the libraries. They also contain numerous and

¹Jesse H. Shera. 1949. *Foundations of the Public Library: The Origins of the Public Library Movement in New England 1629-1855*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 67, 79.

²de la Pena McCook, Kathleen. 2004. *Introduction to Public Librarianship*. New York: Neal-Schuman, 44.

³Kenneth R. Johnson. 1971. "The Early Library Movement in Alabama," *Journal of Library History* 6 (April):120-123.

⁴"Hale County Library." [Material for this history was borrowed from "Historic Hale County" edited by Randall Curb and from notes and minutes of the Library Board of Trustees' meetings.]; Turner, Frances. 1988. "History of the Monroe County Library." [typescript]; "A Short History of the

very telling details indicative of the strong desire of local people for libraries in their communities and the generosity and hard work that brought these libraries into being. All across the state, in towns large and small, citizens gave of their money, often of their own books and magazines, and equally as important, of their time and labor, to establish libraries as places for the children and adults of their communities to read, become inspired, learn, and grow. The libraries' "metaphorical place" refers to the citizens' awareness of the importance and need for local libraries and their extensive efforts to create libraries for their communities.

The Libraries' Physical Places

Communities housed their first libraries in all sorts of buildings. Many were either quite small or in disrepair; a few seem rather strange places to use as libraries, as described in the following account. However, the people had such strong desires for libraries within their communities that they worked to make the buildings as attractive as possible.

As one might expect, many libraries were housed in city- or county-owned buildings. Fifteen of these were in city halls, some in "tiny rooms," and one in a hallway. Others were adjacent to, or even inside, mayors' offices. In Hueytown, an office used by the mayor in the morning was open for library use in the afternoon.⁵ Carbon Hill created a library in the rear of the city hall's auditorium, but reserved the right to hold public meetings and all elections in this space as well.⁶ The library in Midfield was in a building adjacent to the jail, while Pelham's library was in a building that still housed a jail, separated "by only a thin wall."⁷

Thirteen of the libraries were in courthouses. Scottsboro's probate judge even granted permission for use of his jury room, while a ladies' club

in Livingston leased a former probate judge's office for its library.⁸ Libraries were also started in city- and county-owned community houses and activity buildings located adjacent to courthouses. Housed in two small, damp rooms in the basement of a community house, Pleasant Grove's library had standing water when it rained.⁹

Twelve of the libraries were given space in schools, some of which were still in use at the time. Birmingham's superintendent of schools established a library in a room adjacent to his office, creating the "acorn which took root and grew"¹⁰ into the state's largest library system. In rural Walker county, a superintendent allowed teachers to use his personal collection and bought a supplementary collection, which he then housed in his office and circulated among the county's teachers and children.¹¹ Rainbow City's library was located in the renovated lunchroom of a school that had burned.¹² Public libraries in Cullman, Troy, and Florence were first located in colleges; Troy's remained a joint public/college library for eleven years.¹³ Started by the school's librarian, the joint public/school library at Marion County High School in Guin remains today as the state's only such joint-use library.¹⁴

Fourteen of Alabama's early libraries began in houses; in a few cases their founders continued to live there. A Geneva lady shared her personal library with the town, and "... both young and old gathered at her home to read, discuss and borrow her books."¹⁵ Fairhope's library began when a local lady initially invited people into her home to use her own personal library; she later had a small building constructed on her property which

Columbiana Public Library" [undated typescript]; "Jones, Margaret and Godbold, Mary Scott. "Camden Study Forum." [undated typescript].

⁵ Poole, Jean. 2003. "The History of the Hueytown Public Library." [typescript].

⁶ "History of the Carbon Hill Library." [undated typescript].

⁷ 2003. "A Brief History of the Midfield Public Library." [typescript]; Roberts, Barbara. 1997. "Pelham Public Library History 1964-1997." [typescript].

⁸ Hackworth, Eliza. "A History of the Scottsboro Public Library." [undated typescript]; Hutchinson, Margie. "Livingston-Sumter County Public Library." [undated typescript].

⁹ Holt, Dean. "History and Development [Pleasant Grove Public Library]." [undated typescript].

¹⁰ Owens, Marie. 1947. "Birmingham Public Library," in *The Story of Alabama: A History of the State*. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, pages 301-02.

¹¹ "History [Walker County Library]." [undated typescript].

¹² 1995. "Rainbow City Public Library." [typescript].

¹³ Myrick, John Paul. "Highlights of the History of the Cullman County Public Library.;" [undated typescript]; McDonald, William L. "Beginnings and evolution of the Florence- Lauderdale Public Library." [undated typescript]; 1995. "Troy Public Library." [typescript].

¹⁴ Junkin, Elaine. 1975. "A Dream Come True," in "News Notes," *The Alabama Librarian* 27 November/December:10-11.

¹⁵ "Emma Knox Kenan" and "Geneva Library Association--During the 1920's." [undated typescript].

served as the community's library for many years. When this benefactor and librarian "left the scene of her happy labors..." her funeral was held in the library building "that had so long been the object of her care and affection."¹⁶

Community buildings, such as banks and Masonic halls, often housed libraries. Twelve libraries were either upstairs over, or located within, offices and stores such as dentist's offices, hardware, and furniture stores. Opelika's library was in a small upstairs room inside a clothing store, and Roanoke's was in a corner of a ladies' dress shop.¹⁷

An old pump house was used as a library in Oneonta; the librarian's chair was placed on a board over the hole where the pump had been.¹⁸ Arab's library was described as having been "in a small building by the old mule bar"; Irondale's was in half of a one-room building "beside the railroad tracks."¹⁹ Hotels housed early libraries in Florence and Citronelle.²⁰ Sheffield's library was in a Red Cross building, and the Camden Study Club used an American Legion hall for its library.²¹

Two libraries were in churches, with the one in Brewton still being used for worship.²² The Evergreen library was in a storeroom at the rear of an old Baptist church. This building leaked so badly when it rained that it was hard to find a dry place to keep the books; there was also the problem of sharing the storeroom with rats.²³ Slocomb used an old army barracks for its first library.²⁴ Libraries in Eva and Moody started out in retired bookmobiles.²⁵ A group of ladies in

Arley purchased a trailer, while a "modular home" was bought for use as a library in Green Pond.²⁶

Early libraries in Anniston, Bessemer, Decatur, Montgomery, Selma, Talledega and Troy²⁷ were housed in buildings donated by the Carnegie Foundation. The Carnegie Foundation donated a total of thirteen library buildings to Alabama communities.

Most of these 137 libraries have moved many times throughout their histories, usually to larger more functional buildings. New buildings specifically designed as libraries eventually replaced many of the earlier buildings; these were funded with Library Services and Construction Act grants, money from local governments, and donations, often quite large, from private citizens and organizations.

The Libraries' Metaphorical Place in their Communities

The following section and accompanying case studies provide information on the occupations of some of the individuals and the types of organizations responsible for founding the 137 libraries. The citizens' efforts to fund, furnish, and acquire materials for the libraries are evidence of their strong desire and willingness to create and maintain libraries for their communities.

The Founders

From reading the libraries' histories, it is quite apparent that they began as dreams in the minds and hearts of their founders. Usually one person, a small group of individuals, or members of a local organization realized the need for a library and worked very hard to involve other citizens and groups in bringing their dreams to fruition.

¹⁶ Jean Zadnichek, Betty Suddeth, and Ann Taylor Blauer, eds. 1994. One of the First Priorities--A Library: A history of the Fairhope Public Library. Fairhope: Fairhope Centennial Committee.

¹⁷ Jones, Michelle W. "Lewis Cooper Jr. Memorial Library [Opelika]." [undated typescript]; Brooks, Glenda. December 8, 2003. Email to author.

¹⁸ Tish, Emily. November 2004. Interview with author, Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

¹⁹ 2003. "Arab Public Library." *Arab Tribune*; "About the Library." [<http://www.irondalelibrary.com/about.html>].

²⁰ McDonald, William L. "Beginnings and evolution of the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library." [undated typescript]; Staff of Citronelle Public Library, "History of the Citronelle Memorial Public Library." [undated typescript].

²¹ "Brief History of the Sheffield Public Library." [undated typescript]; Jones, Margaret and Godbold, Mary Scott. "Camden Study Forum." [undated typescript].

²² 1995. "Brewton Public Library History." [typescript].

²³ Warren, Lucy C. 1980. "History of Evergreen and Conecuh County Public Library." [typescript].

²⁴ 1994. Newton, Mary Sue. "Slocomb Public Library, Slocomb, Alabama, History." [typescript].

²⁵ "History of Eva Public Library"; "Doris Stanley Memorial Library." [undated brochure].

²⁶ "Arley Library." [undated typescript]; Hubbard, Noel. November 2003. "History of Eunice Kelly Worthington Library of Green Pond, Alabama." [typescript].

²⁷ Robertson, Mrs. J. Fred. 1984. "How the Bessemer Carnegie Library was Secured." *A Journal of History* 10 (Winter):18-21; 1970. Jenkins, William H. and John Knox, "The Story of Decatur, Alabama." Decatur: Mayor and Council of Decatur; 2000; 2003. "Brief History of the Montgomery City-County Public Library."

[<http://mccpl.lib.al.us/About/AboutLibraryHistory.htm>]; Nichols, Becky. 2004. "Celebrating One Hundred Years Bringing People Closer Together for Another 100 Years' 1904-2004 and Beyond! Selma-Dallas County Public Library." [typescript]; 1949. Welch, Ms. Willie. "History of the Talledega Public Library." [typescript]; 1995. "Troy Public Library." [typescript].

Sometimes particular people are named as the motivating force. Among these are mayors, presidents of men's service clubs, teachers, school librarians, county school library supervisors, school superintendents, a radio announcer, a dentist, a minister, and others whose occupations are not provided. The histories often merely credit a group of "interested" or "dedicated" citizens or "several citizens [who] met to try to make their dream a reality."²⁸

In some communities, individual Lions and Rotary Clubs, Jaycees, Chambers of Commerce, Exchange Clubs, community development organizations or committees were responsible for establishing their town's first libraries. In others, several or even all of the local community organizations worked together to create libraries. At times these organizations were merely the catalyst; organizations also sponsored the libraries. Often organization members served on library boards; slots on boards were at times designated specifically for a member or members of the organizations.

Women's clubs and particular, sometimes named, club members were the driving forces behind many of the state's libraries. The histories relate how members of women's clubs worked to motivate their local governments to establish libraries. In Rainbow City, for example, several ladies appeared before the town council and expressed an interest in starting a public library.²⁹

Forty-one of the 137 histories credit women's clubs with founding libraries; the majority continued to sponsor these libraries for many years. At times club members took turns serving as librarian; some of the libraries were housed in club members' homes. Often the clubs raised money to hire a librarian, buy books and furniture, and pay rent; some clubs leased buildings and club members went door-to-door collecting books. At some point in the clubs' histories, the club women opened "their" libraries to the public and/or turned them over to local governments. Most of these civic organizations continue to support the libraries with gifts of time and money.

²⁸ "History of the Daphne Public Library, Daphne, Alabama." [undated typescript].

²⁹ 1995. "Rainbow City Public Library." [typescript].

Funding, Furnishing, and Filling these Places with Materials

The histories of these libraries reveal how deeply committed and involved many local citizens were in creating and working to maintain libraries for their communities. Many of the buildings mentioned earlier, meager though they were, were either donated or provided rent-free by citizens. To finance these early libraries, citizens hosted variety shows, Halloween costume parties, street carnivals, barbecues, oyster suppers, and ice cream socials. They sold cookbooks and candy, collected soap wrappers, sponsored basketball teams and Lyceum courses, ran a tearoom, held garage and bake sales, quilt shows, Christmas bazaars, and conducted numerous other fundraising activities attended by local citizens.

The Tennessee Valley Authority donated books to some libraries; others received books from discontinued army camps. Citizens collected books by holding book teas and showers, by going door-to-door, and even by driving in a caravan to the state capitol to borrow them from the state library agency.³⁰ Citizens who were grateful to have places to go to read and materials to take home often willingly paid membership and book rental fees. They also signed bank notes; donated books and magazines, money and land; loaned money (interest free) and buildings; painted and cleaned, built shelves, tables and chairs; and moved books into their new libraries.

Case Studies

The following eleven case studies provide illustrative details of citizens' efforts in founding and maintaining Alabama's public libraries. Arranged chronologically by date established, the case studies describe libraries started over a period of 110 years, from as early as 1893 to as recent as 2003.

Tuscumbia

The Helen Keller Public Library in Tuscumbia, Alabama's "oldest library of continuous service," was chartered in 1893.³¹ Six ladies met to organ-

³⁰ "History of the Daphne Public Library, Daphne, Alabama." [undated typescript].

³¹ "Helen Keller Public Library: State's Oldest Library of Continuous Service Chartered October 13, 1893."; "A History of the Helen Keller Public Library Founded 1893: Tuscumbia, Alabama." [undated typescripts].

ize a “reading circle and library,” invited other interested woman to join and make contributions, and secured a charter. Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan were designated as “life members.” Townspeople donated books and bookcases, and Miss Keller received donations of books from her many out-of-town friends. Each member of the “Helen Keller Library and Library Association” paid fifty cents each year for dues and also took her turn as librarian; a small rental fee was charged for each book checked out. When the library outgrew its room in the Deshler Female Institute, members of the association and the community purchased a former opera house. The association was responsible for funding and operating the library, including paying a librarian for many years, until the city began appropriating six hundred dollars per year in 1947. In 1956, the association pledged twenty-five thousand dollars toward the construction of a new library building. In 1958, after sixty-five years of service, this group ceased to operate the library when it became a member of the regional system. Members remained (and still remain) interested and supportive of the library.

Selma

Selma’s first library was begun in 1894 when an agent for a struggling publishing company persuaded each member of the community who bought books from her company to also pledge money toward establishing a library. She gave the community some bookcases and about three hundred books. Subscribers paid three dollars to select books up to that amount, also pledging one dollar and fifty cents to defray the library’s expenses. Gifts from various sources furnished a room for the library on the ground floor of a hotel.

In 1903, a ten thousand dollar grant was obtained from the Carnegie Foundation to build a library. The citizens of Selma raised five thousand dollars to purchase a lot, and the city pledged to provide at least ten percent of the library’s financial needs each year. On June 22, 1904, a barbecue was held to celebrate the library’s opening and benefit its book fund. All the downtown businesses closed so that workers could take part in the celebration.

Selma’s current director Becky Nichols believes that “the heritage of being a Carnegie library has remained a cornerstone for the present library....” She describes the Selma library of today as “truly the center piece of our downtown community, as well as the hub for programs, activities, and resources.”³²

Geneva

The Emma Knox Kenan Public Library in Geneva began in 1901 as a subscription library. Mrs. Kenan and the ladies of the “Geneva Library Association” received many donated books and bought others by selling subscriptions for one dollar a year. In 1904, Mrs. Kenan agreed to help Geneva’s school principal organize a library for school children “on one condition, that it be open to the public.... A meeting of the heads of families was called in the Kenan home to make plans.”³³

Over the next twenty years, the ladies of the Geneva Library Association worked to raise money for a permanent building for the library. They gave dinner parties, sponsored girls’ basketball games and Lyceum courses with famous speakers and entertainers, served a dinner made of food contributed by nationally advertised manufacturers, held fashion shows, Halloween costume parties, and a series of street carnivals and fairs, and sold handmade items and homemade ice cream. By 1925, the ladies had raised almost enough money to purchase the one thousand dollar lot they wanted. A banker and several other businessmen “donated generously” to pay the rest, and Mrs. Kenan’s son-in-law donated his company’s equipment to build the library services and supervised the construction.

Livingston

In 1905, the Primrose Club, “feeling desperately the need of a library for Sumter County,” worked diligently to form their county’s first library. Incorporated as “The Sumter County Library Association,”³⁴ club members held “entertain-

³² Nichols, Becky. 2004. “Celebrating One Hundred Years 'Bringing People Closer Together for Another 100 Years' 1904-2004 and Beyond! Selma-Dallas County Public Library.” [typescript].

³³ “Emma Knox Kenan” and “Geneva Library Association--During the 1920's.” [undated typescripts].

³⁴ Hutchinson, Margie. “Livingston-Sumter County Public Library.” undated [typescript].

ments” and suppers, leased and redecorated a brick building formerly used as the probate judge’s office, bought tables and chairs, a desk, and bookcases, and supplied books and magazines. The club paid fifty cents a day to members who served as librarians and maintained the library for thirty-three years before transferring it to the county in 1938. From then on, the county paid the utility bills, the cleaning service, and the librarian’s salary in addition to furnishing some books, but the club continued to buy books and magazines and make significant contributions to the library.

Sylacauga

Sylacauga’s first free public library “was launched” by its Rotary Club.³⁵ Members of twenty-three civic organizations met and agreed to work together to create a library. All of the organizations donated money and books, and the library opened in 1936 with 164 books donated by local citizens, two hundred and fifty dollars, and the promise of fifty dollars a month in support from the city. In 1937, the county voted an appropriation of fifty dollars a month, which was soon raised to one hundred dollars each month to support the library.

Goodwater

In 1943, the newly organized Rotary Club “brought to the attention of the citizens of Goodwater the need for a library in the town.”³⁶ The club’s first president, a state legislator, told the Rotarians that any town that wanted a library could have one by securing state aid. The club chose the library as their first project and began raising local funds required for a match by the state. The library opened in 1944 with 441 books. The state library agency loaned the library many of their books, while interested citizens also donated books and magazines. In 1973, a new library built with Library Service and Construction Act assistance was opened and “tribute was paid to all those zealous, devoted

people who dreamed a dream that at last became a reality.”³⁷

Arab

Although a library “had been talked about and dreamed about for a long time,” Arab was without one until 1964.³⁸ An announcer at radio station WRAB called a meeting in the city hall, and a committee was appointed to explore the possibility of creating a library. A committee member offered to store any donated books at his home until a permanent place could be located and made ready.

Soon a businessman agreed for the library to use a small building he owned rent-free for its first year. Two men, one of whom was a committee member, brought their Boy Scout troops to paint the building, and a vocational agriculture teacher and the boys in his class built book shelves. Committee members installed the shelves and built tables and benches, and a lumber company donated a front door, which a committee member installed. Electricians wired the library at no cost; a lady made drapes; and a man loaned his typewriter. Citizens also donated an air conditioner, an awning, and a desk.

Every organization in the community gave money for books, and the library opened with a collection of five hundred books, each cataloged by a librarian at the local high school. A local florist donated floral arrangements, and the Arab High School Band played for the library’s opening.

Adamsville

In 1972, the president of the local Lions Club encouraged his club to start a community library as its project.³⁹ Club members asked several local residents to serve as board members, and the town annexed the property of a former school librarian, who lived just outside the town limits, so that she could serve on the board. Today a place on the Adamsville City Library’s board is perpetually reserved for a member of the Lions Club.

³⁵ Goff, Carolyn B. September, 1982. “History of B.B. Comer Memorial Library.” [typescript].

³⁶ 1994. “The History of the Goodwater Public Library 1944-1994.” [typescript].

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “Arab Public Library.” Arab Tribune. [n.d.]

³⁹ Lomley, Cecile. “Adamsville City Library.” [undated typescript].

Arley

When the nearby county library was destroyed by a tornado in 1974, Walker County officials offered to set up a branch library in the tiny town of Arley, if the town would furnish a librarian and a place to house it.⁴⁰ Busy with having a water system set up, the town council asked the Arley Women's Club for help. Since no building was available, the ladies decided to have a trailer built for two thousand nine hundred dollars. They raised eight hundred dollars with bake sales and road blocks, requests for donations, and other fundraising activities. A dozen ladies signed a note to borrow two thousand one hundred dollars. A man offered use of his lot, and another paid for having lights installed. A trucker brought shelves and books from the county library, and a local man installed the shelves. The club hired a woman to work as librarian. The town council paid the utility bills and a small per capita appropriation. Later they began paying the librarian, but the club continues to pay the insurance and repair bills and to purchase any needed equipment.

Hoover

In 1982, a Hoover couple invited twenty-three friends to their home to share their vision of starting a library for their fast-growing community.⁴¹ Three months after drafting bylaws and obtaining incorporation papers, the group became the Friends of the Hoover Library. The Friends circulated petitions asking the mayor and city council for support. They hosted a membership coffee, and obtained the promise of one hundred thousand dollars in financial support from the city, an additional 124 members, and the commitment of five citizens to serve as board members. The Friends raised funds by creating a cookbook, hosting a "tasting fair," and collecting dues. They also received donations from many individuals and civic organizations. The library opened in 1983, only fifteen months after the initial meeting of friends, and is now one of Alabama's busiest libraries.

⁴⁰ "Arley Library." [undated typescript].

⁴¹ Wailes, Carolyn. May 7, 1984. "History of the Hoover Public Library." [typescript].

Green Pond

One of the state's newest libraries, begun in 1996 and legally established in 2003, is in the tiny community of Green Pond, population 2,500. A retired schoolteacher instigated several town meetings, found other townspeople who wanted a library, and "minus one red cent in our coffers, four citizens set out to establish a library."⁴² One of the four pledged his personal balance so that the committee could borrow two thousand five hundred dollars from a local bank. They purchased a twenty year old modular building that had been used as a portable classroom. A citizen prepared the community-owned lot with his bulldozer. A couple contributed bathroom fixtures, and citizens plumbed the building, built shelves, painted and wall-papered the inside, made curtains, and built decks around the building. A local painter gave them a huge discount on painting the outside. Libraries and people in surrounding counties sent books for the library, and citizens and businesses donated furniture, computers and printers, videos, paint, and, occasionally, cash.

These descriptions of citizen involvement in local library development are but a few of the many detailed accounts that illustrate how highly motivated many of Alabama's citizens were to have a place in their communities where people could come to read, obtain materials for home reading, and meet together to discuss important issues. All of the written histories obtained thus far reveal that many people gave of their time and money, working strenuously and cooperatively to create public libraries for their communities.

Sadly, many of the conditions that delayed the library movement in Alabama still exist in parts of the state. Although this article has concentrated for the most part on the founding and early years of the libraries described, many of the histories also describe library services and programs provided more recently, many of which are designed for at-risk patrons and economically disadvantaged communities.

⁴² Hubbard, Noel. November 2003. "History of Eunice Kelly Worthington Library of Green Pond, Alabama." [typescript].

As in the libraries' early years, citizens who are able are often involved in funding and working with library programs to benefit those in need. Together the libraries' histories show that what often began as merely a dream and a desire in the hearts and minds of a few, exists today as places where all of a community's citizens can seek refuge, learning, and ways to improve their quality of life.

TABLE

Number of Alabama Libraries Founded in Each Decade from 1800 to 2000:

1800s – 1
1810s – 1
1870s – 1
1880s – 2
1890s – 7
1900s – 9
1910s – 4
1920s – 15
1930s – 18
1940s – 10
1950s – 14
1960s – 13
1970s – 17
1980s – 12
1990s – 4
2000s – 1