The history of the Augusta Public Library

Augusta Historical Society and Museum

In 1975 and 1976, two of Miss McDaniel's Methods of Research students wrote research papers on the history of the Augusta Public Library. The students were Noreen Egger and Donna Leis. Following are excerpts from those papers.

Note: A good deal of the information that was used to write the papers came from an October 26, 1946 edition of the Augusta Daily Gazette written by George Harrington, whose mother, Mary Harrington, was instrumental in the founding of the early Library. In addition, she was Augusta's first postmistress.

It seems that the library began in 1885 (only 17 years after Augusta was established) in a small store on the east side of the 500 block of State Street owned by Mrs. Harrington. The library consisted of about 150 books which were contained in a walnut and glass cabinet, three feet wide by six feet high. Augustans checked out books from Mrs. Harrington for about a year at which time the Library was moved to the offices of Doctor John W. Brown for a short time when Mrs. Harrington sold her building. Doctor Brown's offices were located at the corner of 5th and State Street on the second floor of the Masonic

Thereafter, the books were moved to Mrs. George Brown's home where they were stored for the next 15 years. The books then were moved to the WCTU (Women's Christian Temperance Union) Reading Room with Mrs. Blanche Wilbur acting as librarian. When she retired, Mrs. Skiles and her daughter, Fannie, took over the librarian duties. Even though it was not supported by the city, townspeople thought of it as their public library and a sign of progress.

From the WCTU Reading Room, the library and books were moved to a building owned by Dave Liens at the corner of 6th and State. For the next 4 years, Adda Ruland acted as librarian. Shortly afterwards, the books were moved and stored in the basement of the residence of Mr. McNeal. The books were not used during this period of time until the Outlook Club and the PEO decided to rescue the books from storage. At that time, the city clerk's office was located in the George W. Brown building (the Opera House) located where our current Post Office now stands. Ed Weidlein, Mayor, did all he could to help preserve the library. The books were moved into the city clerk's office. Pansy Wiley, who was the clerk at that time, was in charge of the books.

Each member of the two clubs (Outlook and PEO) donated a book and asked for book showers and did various things to raise money for the library. In 1919 the City of Augusta took over the



The Augusta Public Library in 1962 after building. It still operates and stands in this location today.

library completely. By that time the new City Building was complete and while George Smith was the mayor, the library was moved into the new building. The library continued to grow and by that time it had a circulation of more than 20,000 books. The first official librarian was Mrs. Dixie Fenton. She served from 1919 through 1954. In March of 1958 the library board began a survey of the library

and its future needs. The following year they selected a firm to draw up plans. The voting public approved a \$100,000 general obligation to build the new library and in November of 1961 the new location was chosen at 1609 State Street. The new building was completed in December of 1962. There have been several remodels done in the years since.

Disaster turned to opportunity

Mark Somerville, Associate Pastor El Dorado Family Worship Center

John 4:35

Do you not say, "There are still four months and than comes the harvest?

Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!

On Tuesday, June 3rd, it rained hard all day and soon the flood waters begin to rise in El Dorado. It was not long that many homes and cars were covered with flood waters! Many families loss their homes and their belongs! It was truly a disaster. What are the steps to clean-up and recovery was on their minds!

Once again, the citizens of El Dorado who were not touched by the flood waters, begin to rally with hearts of compassions for them. It wasn't long before leaders in El Dorado begin to put together the resources and to begin with the clean-up and recovery. The citizens of El Dorado saw this as an opportunity to show Christ's love to these victims of the flood..

In less than a week, clean-up begins! Volunteers begin to assist with clean-up, providing shelters and meals. Many of the volunteers will never have their name mentioned, but the Lord knows their names and will reward

Let me be one of many who want to say, "thank you". This is truly showing a heart of compassion which makes El Dorado, a city of gold. Remember, our Lord said that loving your neighbor is the greatest commandment. James says that love is demonstrated by turning someone's disaster into an opportunity to put your love into action!

Things I never expected to know about "Gunsmoke"

Gaille Pike

Dear Readers,

Gunsmoke plays all day on two or three different stations, airing episodes from 1955 up until 1975. That is 635 episodes. It's on in this house like background music for two reasons: I live with an avid Gunsmoke fan and because, frankly, nothing else very good seems to be on the TV. The familiarity and consistency of quality in that show never ceases to impress me. You can see legions of actors, actresses, writers and directors at the very beginning (and sometimes the very end) of careers that would produce a pantheon of Academy Award Winners and Hollywood Megastars. I can't even list them all here. There isn't enough room. But you can easily search for and get the whole list.

In addition to becoming a "Gunsmoke" convert, I have also acquired a trove of quirky and arguably useless trivia about the series. It seems Matt Dillon was always going to or coming from Hays. Apparently, Hays was the preferred place for a hanging back then. It's about 105 miles and when considering a man on a horse could travel about 25-35 miles on a good day it could take Matt 3 or 4 days for the journey. Matt also frequently traveled down into Tascosa and Mexico but I'm not in the mood to calculate that milage. Let's just say that for a big man he got around.

And Matt also got shot a lot. Marshall Trimble, the Board President of the Arizona Historical Society, tallied that Matt Dillon was shot at least 56 times, knocked out 29 times,

stabbed three times, and poisoned once. In response to this indignity Matt returned fire, with estimates he either killed or wounded over 300 people.

Adapted from the popular radio program of the same name, then starring William Conrad (who among other things narrated the "Rocky & Bullwinkle" series) the first episode of "Gunsmoke" was introduced by John Wayne, whom the producers originally wanted to portray Matt Dillon. The Duke politely declined, but highly recommended his friend, James Arness. And, as they say, the rest is history.

An adherence to that history, historical accuracy and a scrupulous attention to the details of life in 1880s Kansas is evident in every episode, from how to properly repair a

fractured wagon wheel, or how much a bag of hound's tooth licorice cost, to the caliber, range and utility of dozens of firearms of the period. Matt's sidearm was the Colt .45 single action Army issue with a 7 & ½ inch barrel. Big man. Big

But Matt was rarely first to pull the trigger. And I wish some liked minded nerd such as myself and Marshall Trimble would calculate how many times Matt burst into a saloon, Colt drawn at the hip, and shouted "HOLD IT!" I believe that in the long run Matt Dillon, U.S. Marshall, Dodge City, KS., kept a heckuva' lot of folks from being shot than he ever shot himself.

Until next week—keep your eyes on the stars and your back to the wind.

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