

**From the "History Of Islesboro, Maine"**

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## **The Alice L. Pendleton Library**

Islesboro is justly proud of its beautiful granite and brick public library. This library was initiated by the enthusiasm and hard work of the late Alice Lavinia Pendleton, known affectionately as Miss Alice, of this town and Brooklyn, New York.

At the 1902 annual town meetings citizens voted to fund a town library. It was decided that the library, to be called the Islesboro Free library, should be located on the second floor of the old Pendleton schoolhouse (District#4) diagonally opposite the present library; its doors opened on September 12, 1902.

Miss Alice, who had studied library science at Eastern State Normal School, Castine, was appointed the first librarian as well as chairperson of the library committee comprised of John P. Bragg, Urania Burgess, Theresa Grindle Capt. Charles Pendleton, who incidentally was a member of the Dark Harbor Library founding board. The sum of \$200 was appropriated by the town to purchase books; Miss Alice made a special trip to Portland to choose them. The state furnished \$100 worth of historical and reference books. In addition, Miss Alice and her sister Brina (Mrs. Ray) Stevens collected books from friends and relatives far and near. From the beginning circulation was large, with 65 books loaned on the first day. It was soon discovered that the top floor of the school was very hard to heat. What to do was a problem, but Miss Alice had the solution. She suggested that the library be moved to a small house midway on Vess Hill owned by her father, Fields C. Pendleton. So the modest little place was rented for three dollars a month and was kept quite cozy with a wood stove. The little front room was filled with books, then the back room and pantry, all available space in the building was used, until it was obvious that a new library was needed. But the library was to stay in this stop for the next sixteen years.

As early as 1905, there had been agitation to build a new library with Miss Alice taking the lead. A parcel of land at the top of Vess Hill was secured from the heirs of Sewell Fletcher. A finance and building committee was established by the town in 1912; members were W. E. Hatch, Harry A. Babbidge and Loranus F. Pendleton. In the following years, the library committee and other island organizations had numerous benefit affairs to swell the library funds: home talent plays, dances at \$1.00 per couple with music from Belfast and Rockland, a local arts and crafts show, and afternoon teas at various neighborhood homes were for a quarter one could have tea and cake or cookies. Later Silver teas were a pleasant way to raise money for books. Small girls, crisp in starched dresses, felt important as they passed dainty sandwiches and "Russian" tea.

The idea of a new library grew steadily in popularity. Civic interest was evidenced by monetary gifts. In addition, all the rocks that form the cellar walls were donated by the late Leslie E. Smith of the west side, while other residents gave their services. In 1917 the town signed interest-free notes for \$2,500 to Fields S. Pendleton, Miss Alice's brother, to pay for the construction of the new building, for which the cost was approximately \$4,500. Construction began in late spring of 1917 with local contractors in charge: Frederick A. Lee for masonry and William E. Hatch for carpentry. The new facility opened the name of Islesboro Free library on January 14, 1918. One senior citizen recalls that grade school children were excused from the classroom to help with the moving. Due to a bay freeze-up that winter, spring was well advanced when the library's furniture arrived.

The attractive structure became the town's cultural center under the guidance of its benefactor, Miss Alice. Every Saturday afternoon in the summertime was a "sociable" with varied programs arranged by weekly committees: children performed costumed as early island settlers; there were historical essays or quizzes; wild flowers or bird contests were held with prizes; there were poetry, career hobby or antique afternoons; of the guest speakers, probably the known was monologist Ruth Draper. In later years there were book clubs, historical society meetings and Memorial Day observances.

About 1925 Miss Alice began wintering in New York, but her interest in the town library never failed; each summer she continued as assistant librarian, until her death in 1951. For a half century Miss Alice was a faithful friend and supporter of the town library. She would have been happy to know that in 1956 it became her memorial, The Alice L. Pendleton Library. A bronze sign bearing the name, given by Brina Stevens, grace the front of the building.

The first flag raising was in 1918, with the pole, a gift from Capt. John Davies, placed on the south side of the building. Miss Alice paid for the pole and her cousin, Winfield S. Pendleton, Jr. presented the flag.

The body of Sgt. Guy Malcolm Yeaton, Islesboro's only World War I fatality, is buried on the north lawn. The town raised \$4,500 in 1921-2 to erect a suitable memorial to Sgt. Yeaton and all the other island man who served overseas. Placed on the north side of the building, the memorial is a granite square holding a steel Flagstaff surmounted by a bronze base on and ornamental frieze design by the late, world-famous artist, Charles Dana Gibson of 700 Acre Island, Dark Harbor summer resident. Bronze plaques bearing names of local man who served in the Civil War and World War I were placed on each side of the front door. The original flag pole has been removed.

The Alice L. Pendleton library benefited by receiving books, furniture and a sum of money when the Dark Harbor Library, supported entirely by summer cottagers, closed in 1965. A Dark Harbor memorial reading room was set up in the pleasant basement area of the library and has proved to be a useful addition. Part of the approximately 7,000 books available are housed here. Tables and chairs provide a quiet, convenient

spot for study. The room has been utilized puppet shows, nursery school and adult education classes.

Among the many faithful librarians was Marion (Mrs. Calvin) Kimball who is remembered for her outstanding service of 38 years. Louise Mackenzie is the current librarian. She reports good patronage and a steady growth in readers. About 400 books are circulated each winter month, with 900 during peak summer months.

### **The Dark Harbor Library**

The Dark Harbor Library was opened about 1900 by the summer cottagers. Located on the second floor of the Dark Harbor Post Office Building, the library was supported fully by summer people, and remained open year-round. Well remembered librarians are Martha Boardman, Helen Gilkey and Carrie May Randlett.

Finally in the fall of 1965, due to changing times, patronage dropped off. The library Board of Trustees, comprised of both summer and year-round residents, decided the time had come to close the facility and throw their support behind the town library.

The local school had first choice of books at the Dark Harbor Library. Some were sold at a public sale, others to a private dealer. The money earned was donated to the Alice L. Pendleton Library along with remaining books and library furniture. Later the library desk was appropriately placed at the Historical society's headquarters.

A well was drilled at the town library with the donated money. The Dark Reading Room was established in the basement area with a sign to that effect prominently placed in the reading room which is used for a variety of activities.

In addition to the two public libraries, branch libraries were placed at various sections of the Island in private homes. Books were changed every few months and these small libraries were well patronized as it was difficult in those days for people to travel about, especially in the winter time.