

Valley Libraries - - Something To Treasure

OF ALL THE MANY BENEFITS of the American way of life, perhaps none is generally so taken for granted as that relating to education. Yet none more eloquently symbolizes American freedom and opportunity than our system of public schools and public libraries.

Budget reports, although packed with essential information, are frequently dry documents, through the reading of which the average citizen flogs himself with his sense of civic duty. Not so, however, with the Santa Cruz Public Library budget report for the 1949-50 fiscal year, prepared by the Board of Library Trustees and Mrs. Geraldine G. Work, librarian.

This report on the city and county libraries is an eye-opener on the service rendered by the libraries and on the cooperation of citizens which has made that service possible. It also serves as a warning that, because of the limited funds which in the past have been provided for operation of the county library system, the 10 county branches have been doing what might almost be described as a precarious tightrope act, and it points to the need for adequate support of the county as well as the city libraries.

While the entire 24-page report is of great interest and importance to all citizens of the county, those sections dwelling with San Lorenzo Valley branch libraries are, of course, of special significance for Valley residents.

For instance, the report points out that the present location of the Boulder Creek branch in the Boulder Creek Fire Department building was made possible by the efforts of the Fire Department and other interested citizens. "The provision of this space," the report emphasizes, "entailed a real sacrifice on the part of the Fire Department, as it had been a needed part of their building. When the library was forced to move from the building it had been in for many years it was difficult to find a space for it. Rather than to lose it, an effort was made by interested citizens to build an annex on to the Fire House, and sizeable contributions were promised for this purpose. When it was found that this could not be done as planned, the Fire Department made the present arrangement, which provides a satisfactory library location."

Do the people of Boulder Creek appreciate their library? The figure of 4,663 books circulated during the 1948-49 fiscal year shouts a definite "Yes!"

The Ben Lomond branch, in the Community Library building, circulated 6,302 volumes in the 1948-49 year, according to the report, which says that this library "is a source of pride to the residents and has their support," and which adds: "More books are badly needed to answer the requests sent in to the headquarters library. Several gifts of good current books have been made to the branch by residents of Ben Lomond."

Felton branch, in Community Hall, is open two days a week; 629 books were borrowed from it in 1948-49. This library, the report stresses, "needs more publicity as to the collection and its location." "There are a few very active borrowers there," the report continues, "and those who know about the library appreciate it. However, with the great increase in population and the many newcomers as property owners, further publicity is planned to acquaint them with their library."

The small Alba branch, located in the old Alba schoolhouse, serves as both a library (open one day a week) and a gathering-place for a community group who get together for social events, talks and motion pictures, the report states, and 2,780 books are listed as the number circulated in 1948-49, many of them delivered by the librarian to the homes of people who are hampered by illness or transportation difficulties. The original deed for the land specified that it be reserved for the people's use as long as it was used for school or library purposes. Despite the fact that since the original owner made the gift to the county the property has changed hands many times, and despite efforts to take over the school property, the report states that "a decision from the District Attorney's office has clarified the matter, and the building is reserved for the use of the community as a library and for community uses."

In addition to these four Valley branches, the reading shelves at Camp Ben Lomond have been provided with books by the Public Library, and the reading by the boys has been directed by the camp supervisors. In 1948-49, 777 books were borrowed there, many of them "along technical lines, or in the study of history or psychology." Also, the camp has used music, including records, obtained from the Public Library's music department.

The Santa Cruz Public Library report is one that should make everyone in the county, including Valley residents and visitors, proud of this vital phase of our American heritage—and determined to preserve and develop it.