



The Bookworm

A Publication of the Friends of the Steele Memorial Library

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BOOKS SANDWICHED IN

FALL 2009

October 23rd

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows is a cozy British romp in 1946 when the Germans still occupied the Channel Islands. The tale becomes a celebration of the written word where the love of reading has the power to connect people in surprising ways. Reviewer is Martha Horton, author and free lance writer.

October 30th

Blink and *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell. The author, a writer for The New Yorker, describes the power of thinking without thinking in *Blink*. The *Outliers* defines “success” and how one knows if it’s authentic. Reviewer is Mary Welles Smith, an avid reader and long time board member of the Friends.

November 13th

Hot, Flat and Crowded by Thomas Friedman. A leading New York Times journalist tells us why we need a green revolution and how it can renew America. The book will be reviewed by Elaine Farwell, Director of Tanglewood.

November 20th

The Piano Tuner by Daniel Mason. Welcome all piano lovers to the literary world! This is an adventure novel involving a piano tuner specializing in Erhard Pianos, a physician stationed in Burma, and a piano with a gunshot wound. Janice Brown, President of Thursday Morning Musicals, will be the reviewer.

All reviews are held Fridays from 12:00 - 1 PM in the Steele Memorial Library Auditorium.

A light sandwich lunch may be purchased for \$3.50, or you may bring your own.

In the event that schools are closed due to weather, the book review will be rescheduled.

Join us online at <http://www.steele.lib.ny.us/friends.htm>

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings

We begin this year on a sad note as Hank Heilmann, board member and chairman of the Film Festival Committee, passes away this summer. He will be missed.

As you peruse this newsletter, you will realize that the Friends are planning another year of interesting, fun and worthwhile events including Kinderbook, a program designed to encourage young children to become lifelong library users and Books Sandwiched In, a series of book reviews presented at the Steele Memorial Library during the noon hour. Other highlights of our year include the Book Sale and the Poetry Festival.

In addition to offering such fine programs, the Friends have been supporting our local library for over fifty years. We recently donated \$20,000 towards the purchase of a new Bookmobile. If you would like to join us, please consider returning the membership form that you will find in this newsletter. You might even consider becoming a board member or working on one of our committees. Thanks for your support.

Best,
Anthony J. Pucci
President

The *Friends* need
HELP SORTING BOOKS

The annual BOOK SALE is our big fund raiser, but before the sale, there's a lot of work to do. The donated books need to be sorted and boxed for storage until the BOOK SALE. We need *Friends* to help us sort and box these books at the Steele Memorial Library. If you can spare a couple of hours a week for just one month, please call Charlie Paone (734-7846) and volunteer.

Better yet, bring a friend to help you out!

Join us online at <http://www.steele.lib.ny.us/friends.htm>

2008 – 2009 Kinderbook Program Final Report

The Kinderbook Program completed its 6th and most successful year in June 2009 with 763 kindergarteners receiving their first public library cards during their kindergarten year.

The Kinderbook Program started in 2003 with the goals of encouraging parents of kindergarteners to obtain public library cards for their children and to take their children to public libraries to borrow books and participate in the children's programs. Eighty-three kindergarteners received their first library cards that year.

Last year, for the first time, elementary schools were encouraged to take their kindergarteners on field trips to public libraries to receive their public library cards and learn about the libraries. Five of 13 elementary schools in Chemung County took field trips and 421 kindergarteners received library cards compared to 213 the year before.

This year, thanks to the efforts of elementary school librarians and kindergarten teachers and public library librarians, 12 of 13 elementary schools made field trips and 763 kindergarteners received library cards. The Kinderbook Committee thanks everyone who worked on this year's program including volunteers who read to children at libraries during the field trips. The success of the program is due to their efforts!

Ralph Moore
Kinderbook Committee

Henry "Hank" Heilmann, a Friends of the Steele Memorial Library board member since 2007, died unexpectedly in July 2009. As a board member, Hank enjoyed working the annual book sale. He took the time to talk to children at the sale and always encouraged them to keep reading.

Hank showcased a Film Noir movie series for the Friends in winter 2009. Popcorn and its aroma filled the room for a wonderful adventure into the classics. Hank had a great laugh, like the slow rumbling of thunder. His personality and contributions to the Board will be greatly missed.

THE FRIENDS OF THE STEELE MEMORIAL LIBRARY
ELMIRA, NEW YORK

By Alan Parsons, President (1962)

The Friends of the Steele Memorial Library took form in early 1958 when the trustees, eager for some means of rallying public support behind them in their struggles with the Chemung County Board of Supervisors, invited the then president of the Rochester Friends of the Library, Attorney E. James Hickey, to give a talk in Elmira on the subject of Friends groups. Mr. Hickey carried the message very well. This, plus the fact that a certain amount of public indignation was beginning to swell up over the low salaries paid to librarians in the Steele Memorial system, made it relatively easy for the trustees to find approximately a dozen persons to serve on an Executive Committee for the formation and operation of a Friends group.

By late 1958 a constitution and bylaws had been adopted, a membership campaign (no dues the first year) was underway, and a prominent figure in the world of books, Virginia Kirkus, was scheduled to speak on January 21, 1959, at the Friends' first public function. Miss Kirkus proved to be an excellent choice, and gave the Elmira Friends a good boost in their efforts to organize and be known.

January, 1959, also saw the publication of the first issue of The Bookworm, the newsletter of the Friends of the Steele Memorial Library. This sprightly mimeographed sheet, running from three to nine pages, has been published three times a year since, with its appearance generally timed to announce important program developments. It has published biographical sketches of library staff members, lists of recommended books, articles on staff salaries and on the library budget, poems contributed by local poets, articles on memorial book giving, the library's record collection, and many other subjects.

Borrowing freely from the Rochester Friends of the Library, the Elmira group scheduled a series of lunch-hour book reviews during the months of February and March, 1959. Four reviews, spaced two weeks apart, made up the series, which met with considerable success. With this encouragement, the Elmira Friends have since scheduled a series every half year of either four or five noon-hour reviews. In the spring of 1960, a series of music reviews, instead of book reviews, was arranged. Persons attending the programs have been encouraged to bring their lunch, and lately the Friends themselves have taken on the supplying of sandwiches, salad, coffee and dessert (for a modest price) as part of the noon-hour festivities.

The program committee picks the books to be reviewed and the local citizens to review them. It has had remarkable cooperation from the people asked to speak. Books reviewed have generally been those "in the news" either as best sellers or because of local interest. Since their inception, programs have been introduced by the same person – a woman – who does an excellent job and gives a strong thread of continuity to the series.

Supplementing the noon-hour events have been various evening programs, also drawing on local talent. Two local poets have given readings of their works. A Civil War round table had four enthusiasts of this historic period presenting papers on their particular specialties. Play readings have been successful on four occasions and were offered again this fall. Here is one way that a Friends group can work with other organizations in the community, in this case the Elmira Little Theater and Thespis at Elmira College. Faculty members have been drawn upon for such topics as "An Evening with Robert Penn Warren," "Elizabethan Lyrics with Musical Illustrations," and "The Southern Literary Renaissance." A member of the library staff, recently returned from a summer school course which included a tour of notable European libraries, spoke on "Libraries of Europe." Unusual color slide collections have been shown.

One series of evening programs, entitled "An Invitation to the Arts," was designed to introduce the high school student to the fields of painting, dance, theater and music. Talented

Elmira College students performed on the evening devoted to dance and theater, while their instructors made explanatory comments. An artist-teacher and doctor-musician gave illustrated talks on the painting and music evenings.

At its annual meeting or in the late spring of each year, the Friends of the Steele Memorial Library have had either a panel discussion on public library problems or have sponsored the appearance of an outstanding speaker in the world of letters. Mystery writer George Harmon Coxe (a former Elmiran) came one year, author-poet Morris Bishop another year, and, most recently, Dr. Louis C. Jones of the New York State Historical Association, gave a talk that was cosponsored with the Chemung County Historical Society.

The primary purpose of the programs has been, of course, to draw attention to the public library and its contents. For this reason, insofar as possible, they have been held at the library. The library staff has invariably arranged an excellent display of books and other material, dealing with the subject of the particular program and indicating the versatility of the library's collections.

Numerous projects outside the sponsorship of public programs have occupied the attention of the Elmira Friends. They have made appearances before municipal bodies to urge better salaries for the library staff and the construction of new branch libraries. They have served coffee to college students using Steele Memorial Library as a place of study while home on vacation. They have arranged displays in local banks during National Library Week. They have distributed the American Library Association's Notable Books list among their membership. They have assisted the local Council of Jewish Women in collecting used books for distribution to such institutions as the Elmira Reformatory and the Veterans Facility at Bath, New York. They have also helped in the arrangements for a week-long visit of the McGraw-Hill bookmobile to the Elmira area.

One project, begun a little over a year ago and still going strong, is a weekly book list, "Library's Latest," for the newspaper. Approximately 20 persons are now involved. Each week one of these Friends visits the library's cataloging room and picks out the dozen-or-so most significant or interesting new books (in his opinion), which will be placed on the shelves the following week. The selector then writes a sentence or two about each of the books for a weekly column, giving newspaper readers an introduction to the variety and scope of the new additions to the library.

One organizational aspect of the Elmira Friends might be of interest: the Executive Committee of the Friends of the Steele Memorial Library, its directing body, includes among its members at least one representative of the Board of Trustees of the Steele Memorial Library System, and the library director. In this way the Friends group is kept in touch with library developments and vice versa. Although it is an independent body, separate and apart from the library itself, the Friends group in Elmira works with the Board of Trustees and not against it. It makes no claim to having a voice in operating the library. It thinks of itself as sort of a public relations auxiliary of the Board of Trustees and the library staff.

The Friends of the Steele Memorial Library group has been able to round up anywhere from four to six hundred memberships in each of its annual membership drives. This brings in from \$600 to \$800 in contributions each year, an amount which has been quite adequate for its expenses. For the present at least, there are no financial problems for the Friends of the Steele Memorial Library.

We thank Al Parsons for providing this article he wrote for *The Bookmark*, the newsletter of the New York Library Association, when he was serving as president of a very new and active Friends of the Steele Memorial Library group.

The “early returns” from our most recent community survey

Most of us have a favorite library. It may be our favorite because it’s next door to our favorite grocery store, because it has the largest collection and is open the most hours each week, because it’s right in the middle of the Village we live in, because it’s conveniently located in our neighborhood, because it’s in the Town Hall, or because it arrives very close to our front door.

And many of us use more than one library. This may be because we find the staff friendly and accessible, because we are looking for a popular best seller on compact disc for an upcoming road trip, or perhaps simply because you want to return a few books and the library are on your way downtown to work.

But if the early analysis of our most recent community survey holds up, when you get inside the doors and begin using the collection, it’s likely that you are seeking a good book to read, and that book is probably fiction. Here are the top ten programs and services that our borrowers value the most:

Pleasure reading	62%
Children's programs	8%
Use of public access computers	6%
Reading for information / research	6%
Use of online services	5%
Audio books on compact disc	4%
Bookmobile services	2%
A place for meetings	2%
Movies on DVD	2%
Genealogy research	2%

This top ten list is important for a few reasons. First, while it confirms my impression that most people use and value traditional library services, I was surprised that “pleasure reading” was so overwhelmingly on top. Next, I was very pleased that “children’s programs” ranked second, for the library staff at each of our neighborhood libraries puts so much time and thought into story hours, the summer reading program, and special events. Third, I was surprised that “movies on DVD” ranked so low.

Tell me, does this top ten list look and sound right to you? Give me a call (733-8611) and let’s continue the discussion.

Jim Sleeth, Director, Chemung County Library District.

Join us online at <<http://www.steele.lib.ny.us/friends.htm>>

Your membership is important to our libraries and to the community.
If you haven't already become a FRIEND, please join us.

I would like to become/remain a **Friend of the Steele Memorial Library**.

My check for \$_____ is enclosed.

I can help on Book Sale Publicity Newsletter Other_____

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

Dickinson \$5.00 **Austen** \$10.00 **Twain** \$25.00 **Joyce** \$50.00 **Shakespeare** \$100.00

Mr. _____ Telephone _____
Mrs. _____
Miss _____

Ms. _____
Address: _____ Zip _____

Please make checks payable to: **Friends of the Steele Memorial Library**
101 East Church Street
Elmira, New York 14901

Dues and contributions to the Friends are tax deductible

Join us online at <<http://www.steele.lib.ny.us/friends.htm>>