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HISTORY OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE TO NEGROES IN
OUACHITA PARISH, MONROE, LOUISIANA, 1949-1965

A THESIS
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

All citizens including Negroes should make use of the free public libraries, because reading is of central importance to American citizens. To retain our democratic way of life, it is essential that we, as Americans, be cognizant of current national and international affairs, and a reading citizen is an informed one.¹ "Everywhere the educational world has agreed that without reading there is little learning, or, at best, learning under a most discouraging handicap."²

For many years, Negroes in the South had been deprived of public library service. To a great extent this was due to the segregated practices of the South. Many communities, financially unable to support two libraries sufficiently, maintained only one and as a result, Negro readers were usually without library service.³

Gleason pointed out that as early as the period between 1900 and 1910, an undesignated number of public libraries in the South made some degree of their services accessible to Negro readers. The type of service was characterized by four patterns: (1) the grant-

¹ Eltonnie Junius Josey, "Use of Libraries: Key to Negro Progress," Negro History Bulletin, XXV (April, 1962), 161.

² Lucille F. Fargo, The Library in the School (Chicago: American Library Association, 1947), p.32.

³ Virginia Lacy Jones, "How Long? Oh, How Long?" Library Journal, LXXXVII (December 15, 1962), 4504.

ing of limited privileges to Negroes at the main branch, (2) the establishment of a Negro public library with an independent board of control, (3) the provision of library stations of the general public library to serve Negro citizens, and (4) the establishment of a separate branch for Negro patrons to be served. She also stated that Negro readers were not allowed to use the reading-room, or browse in the stacks in the public libraries.¹

In 1962, it was reported that there had been considerable advancement in public library service to Negroes since the Gleason study was made. In many communities in the South, the formerly closed doors of the public libraries were being opened. However, there were still a number of libraries in the South whose services and facilities remained closed to Negro readers. Nevertheless, in various municipalities some Negro branches had become a part of the complete library program and Negro librarians were very slowly becoming a part of the in-service library staff.²

In 1963, the Library Administration Division of the American Library Association published the Access to Public Libraries Study in an attempt to determine the extent of limited access to public libraries in the United States, with emphasis on discrimination practiced in Southern libraries. The findings of the study revealed that the forms of limitations included such restrictions as "...the borrowing of books, ... use of periodical collections, ... use of reference materials,

¹ Eliza Atkins Gleason, The Southern Negro and the Public Library (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), pp.18-29

² Josey, op.cit., p.162.

and ...where Negroes may sit." It was further disclosed that "the quality of the book stocks, staff, book selection procedures, and other factors were generally worse in the Negro branches and bookmobiles than in their white counterparts."¹

A continuation of a series of studies on public library service to Negroes in the South is presently being made by students of the School of Library Service, Atlanta University. A recent one was compiled by Mrs. Willie B. Aldrich who wrote "A History of Public Library Service for Negroes in Salisbury, North Carolina." Mrs. Aldrich reported that there has never been a trained librarian on the staff of the Negro Branch Library, but instead the librarians have been college graduates who benefited by some library in-service training. She also pointed out that throughout the history of the library, inadequate service has been rendered to Negroes.² A similar situation was pointed up in Mrs. Fayrene N. Mays' thesis, "A History of Public Library Service to Negroes in Houston, Texas." Here it was found that 11 persons had served as librarians of the Negro branch. Of this group only four had had the benefit of any formal training in librarianship.

¹ American Library Association, Access to Public Libraries Study, A Research Project Prepared by the International Research Associates, Inc. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1963), pp.42-43.

² Willie Lee Bank Aldrich, "A History of Public Library Service for Negroes in Salisbury, North Carolina" (unpublished Master's thesis, School of Library Service, Atlanta University, 1964), p.29.

³ Fayrene Neuman Mays, "A History of Public Library Service to Negroes in Houston, Texas" (unpublished Master's thesis, School of Library Service, Atlanta University, 1964), p.30.

Community Background

Ouachita Parish, Louisiana, one of the 19 parishes which was created by dividing the Territory of Orleans, was established on March 31, 1807. It is named for the Ouachita Indians who were inhabitants of the area when it was first discovered and explored. Many of their mounds are still found in the Ouachita Valley.¹ The parish is located in the northern part of Louisiana and is situated on the Ouachita River. The largest and most important cities in Ouachita Parish are Monroe and West Monroe, with Monroe being the parish seat.

In 1950, Ouachita Parish ranked eighth among the 64 parished in the state of Louisiana, with a population of 74,713.² By 1960 the population of Ouachita Parish was 101,663 which included 32,759, or 32.2 per cent nonwhites and 68,904 whites.³

Ouachita Parish has exceedingly rich farming soil because of the bottom lands of the Ouachita River. The great staple crop is cotton with timber and cattle ranking high in terms of resources.⁴ For a number of years agriculture was the major industry in the

¹ Stuart O. Landry (ed.), Louisiana Almanac and Fact Book (New Orleans: Louisiana Almanac and Fact Book, Inc., 1962), p.397.

² Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, Inc., A Statistical Profile of Ouachita Parish, A Report Prepared by the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, Inc. (Baton Rouge: Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, Inc., 1965), p.1.

³ U.S. Bureau of the Census. Eighteenth Census of the United States. Louisiana: General Social and Economic Characteristics, 1960, Vol.I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p.93.

⁴ Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, Inc., op.cit.

parish, but in the past decade new industries have been established. Among the major industries are the Olin Mathieson Chemical Corporation, the Commercial Solvents Corporation, the Thermatomic Carbon Company, the Selig Manufacturing Company and United Gas. Other industries in the chemical, furniture, fertilizer, lumber, and paper fields are located in Ouachita Parish.¹

Table 1, on the major occupations of employed persons by race and sex in Ouachita Parish, Louisiana, shows that the largest number of nonwhites are employed as private household workers and that practically all of them are women. Service workers accounted for a large number of the nonwhite female workers. The occupations related to operative and kindred work are those that have the most nonwhite men. Relatively few nonwhites of either sex work as managers, clerks, officials, or sales workers and most of these are men.

According to the Census, the median income of families in Ouachita Parish for 1960 was \$4,367 with 8,361, or 34 percent, of the families earning less than \$3,000 a year. The median income for the nonwhite families was \$2,201 per year.²

In 1965, there were 62 elementary and secondary schools in Ouachita Parish. Of this number, there were six high schools, one junior high school and 12 elementary schools attended exclusively by Negroes.

¹ Landry, op.cit., p.397.

² U.S. Bureau of the Census. Eighteenth Census of the United States, op.cit., pp.214, 224.

TABLE 1

MAJOR OCCUPATIONS IN OUACHITA PARISH, LOUISIANA, BY RACE AND SEX, 1960*

Occupations	Nonwhite			White			Total Number	Percent Nonwhite
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total		
Professional, Technical, and Kindred Workers	183	341	524	1170	1151	2921	3445	15.2
Farmers and Farm Managers	63	-	63	228	19	247	310	20.3
Managers, Officials and Proprietors except Farm	134	66	200	2868	503	3371	3571	5.6
Clerical and Kindred Workers	122	56	178	1160	2614	3774	3952	4.5
Sales Workers	78	43	121	1748	897	2645	2766	4.3
Craftsmen, Foremen and Kindred Workers	444	4	448	3963	62	4025	4473	10.0
Operative and Kindred Workers	1522	286	1808	3236	549	3785	5593	32.3
Private Household Workers	43	2386	2429	4	169	173	2602	93.4
Service Workers, except Private Household	750	1121	1871	624	939	1563	3434	54.5
Farm Laborers, except Unpaid and Farm Foremen	218	12	230	88	9	97	327	70.3
Laborers except Farm and Mine	1482	11	1493	692	12	704	2193	67.9
Occupations not reported	224	94	318	383	223	606	924	34.4

* U.S. Bureau of the Census. Eighteenth Census of the United States, op.cit.p.224.

There is one four-year coeducational college in Ouachita Parish.¹ It offers programs leading to the bachelor's and master's degrees. The college is predominantly white, but admits students of both races.

According to the Census of 1960, the median school years completed by the total population was 9.8. The median school years completed by nonwhites was 6.3 and 1,516, or 10.2 percent, of this group had no schooling. More than one fourth of the nonwhites completed no more than four years in school. Only 1,287, or 8.6 percent, finished elementary school; 867, or 5.8 percent, completed high school; and 386, or 2.6 percent, completed four years of college or more.²

The cultural advantages for Negroes in Ouachita Parish are limited, but do include fraternal and civic organizations, public and parochial schools, the public library, churches, speakers, a pageant, and choral groups from the various colleges and universities.

The recreational facilities that Negroes have access to include the Bernstein Park Zoo, theatres, two recreation centers with swimming pools and tennis courts, and the Forsythe Park and Selman Field golf courses. Other recreational facilities permit excellent hunting, fishing, and boating. Two daily newspapers are published: The Monroe Morning World and the Monroe News Star. There are also two weekly newspapers published: The Ouachita Citizen and the Monroe News Leader, the latter being a Negro publication.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this study is to present the historical develop-

¹ Landry, op.cit., p.235.

² U.S.Census, op.cit., pp.196, 219.

ment of public library service to Negroes in Ouachita Parish, Louisiana. The study will cover the period from the beginning of such service in 1949 to 1965. The ultimate aim is to ascertain and present information concerning the origin, establishment and growth of the service.

This study is of value in that it may give further insight into the development of library service to Negroes in Ouachita Parish and it will also add to the series of studies being made by students of the School of Library Service, Atlanta University, concerning library service to Negroes in Southern cities. It is expected that the findings of this study will create further awareness on the part of public officials in the development and improvement of such service and facilities.

Methodology

In order to get an overview of the service that has been rendered to Negroes, Library Literature¹ and the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature from 1958-1965 were consulted. Related articles were selected and read for background information. Theses devoted to this study were examined and read to learn what studies had been made on public library service to Negroes in other Southern cities.

Various sources in the immediate community of Ouachita Parish

¹ Library Literature (New York: H.W. Wilson Co., 1958 - 1965).

² Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature (New York: H.W. Wilson Co., 1958-1965).

served as indispensable aids in providing data for this study. These sources consisted of newspapers, books, pamphlets, articles, and budgetary reports. Some local and state publications devoted to the historical development of Ouachita Parish were also used. Interviews were held with the Director of the Public Library System in Ouachita Parish and with librarians at the Carver Branch Library. These interviews were conducted to secure information concerning the historical development of the library, its budget, quarters, use, service, organization and personnel.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE TO NEGROES IN OUACHITA PARISH, LOUISIANA, 1949-1965

Main Library

The women of the Monroe Civic League realized in 1916 the need for library service for the people of Monroe. Through their united efforts and the action of the mayor and the city council, the McQuire Building on Wood Street was granted to the Library Committee of the Civic League for an indefinite period to be used as a library. This building was very old and dilapidated. It was the task of the ladies to make the building usable.¹

To obtain funds necessary to renovate this building, the Library Committee solicited charter memberships at \$2.50 per member. This entitled one's name to be placed on the charter roll and one year of free use of the library's books. From the chartered membership drive, enough money was realized to put the McQuire Building in satisfactory condition with shelves and furniture. In addition to the money collected, a book club gave 200 volumes, two book cases and the proceeds from the sale of a bale of cotton; Monroe Furniture Company gave a dozen chairs and one table; the Peters Furniture Company, three tables; Munholland-Danwitz Furniture Company, one dozen chairs; Mrs.

¹ Golden Anniversary, Ouachita Parish Public Library 1916-1966. Booklet prepared for the Open House Celebration of the Ouachita Parish Public Library System Golden Anniversary. (Monroe [n.p.] April, 1966), p. 2.

W. N. Potts, a stove; and Mr. E. Fudickar, Jr., a ton of coal.¹

Miss Lutie E. Sterns, a Milwaukee club woman and social worker, was making a tour of the state in the interest of the free library movement. During her tour she was invited to Monroe by the Civic League to make a speech in the interest of the library in Monroe. On February 16, 1916, she delivered the address in which she emphasized the importance of the library as being a free institution, and one in which everyone in the community could participate. Miss Sterns stressed the fact that the public library for Monroe should be free and that it was the responsibility of the municipality to provide adequate free library facilities for its people.²

Miss Sterns also met with a group of local people interested in a public library and discussed the characteristics of a free library. It was emphasized that a trained librarian was a necessity. She assumed the responsibility of securing, for the library, a trained person. Mr. W. L. Smith and associates guaranteed \$720 for the first year's salary of this trained person. At the end of this period of time the city was to take full control including the providing for the salary of the librarian.³

In the meantime, the Library Committee was busy collecting donations of money and books for the library. A book shower was sponsored

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p.3.

³ Ibid., pp.3-6.

by the Library Committee which yielded books and money. The donor's name was inscribed in the book and five dollars each were given by the Philomathean and the Dialectic Literary Societies of the City School. The Twentieth Century Book Club contributed \$10.00 to the effort.¹

In April, 1916, Mrs. Jessie Sadler, a member of the committee, received a telegram from Miss Sterns that a trained librarian, Miss Alice Gillim, of Owensboro, Kentucky would arrive.² Miss Gillim had received a certificate from the Carnegie Library School of Carnegie Institute of Technology. She was a children's librarian in Owensboro before she came to organize the library in Monroe.³ In the meantime, the book showers continued, for the library shelves were not yet filled with needed books. There was also a need for current periodicals. On May 8, 1916, the Monroe Free Public Library opened with 731 books. The city contributed \$50.00 per month to its support.⁴

Six years later in 1921, the library was moved from its original location on Wood Street to more spacious quarters at 418 Jackson Street. This building was formerly the home of Mrs. Anna Meyer, which at her death in 1920, was left to the library, along with \$20,000 for upkeep.⁵

¹ Ibid., p.4.

² Ibid., pp.3-6.

³ Who's Who in Library Service (New York: H.W.Wilson Co., 1933), p.182.

⁴ Golden Anniversary, op.cit., pp.3-6.

⁵ Monroe Chamber of Commerce, "Golden Anniversary Celebration." Monroe Magazine (September, 1966), 17.

In 1940, the library was reorganized. Its name was changed to the Ouachita Parish Public Library. A contract of joint support was worked out with the cities of Monroe, West Monroe and the Ouachita Parish Police Jury. At the same time a graduate librarian was acquired and the West Monroe Branch was established.¹

A half mill tax was voted in 1947, by the parish to support the library, and in 1948, the first bookmobile was put into operation. Until 1949 the services of the library were available to white people only even though nearly one third of the population was nonwhite. In 1949, the library received the Modisette Award from the Louisiana Library Association for making the most progress during the past year. In 1956, the John Cotton Dana Award for excellent publicity was won. This was in regards to the campaign for the construction of three new buildings to house the expanding library for which the parish had voted a \$700,000 bond issue.²

Today (1965), the Ouachita Parish Public Library System has four new modern buildings: the headquarters building at North 18th and Stubbs Street, completed in 1959; the Anna Meyer Branch, completed in 1960; the West Monroe Branch, completed in 1958; and the Carver Branch, completed in 1964.³

Some of the services and facilities provided by the Ouachita

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

Parish Public Library System include: meeting rooms, reference service, interlibrary loan service, phonograph records, framed reproductions of paintings and ceiling projectors for microfilmed books. It also operates two bookmobiles.

In 1916, Miss Alice Gillim served as librarian of the Monroe Public Library, and from 1916-1917, there was Miss Edith Gunby; from 1917-1932, Mrs. Lillian Herron Williamson held the position to be followed by Mrs. Edith Atkinson from 1933-1938, and Mrs. S. W. Brown from 1938-1940. For the Ouachita Parish Public Library, Mrs. Frances Michie Hurst was the first librarian and from 1946 to date Miss Frances Flanders has served.¹

Negro Branch Library

Before 1947, the masses of the Negro population of Ouachita Parish received no library service of any kind. Those few select Negroes who did obtain service received it through the efforts of white friends who would borrow needed books from the public library for Negroes. In addition to this, Mrs. Leslye Mae Thomas, Jeannes Supervisor of Ouachita Parish Schools, had been working diligently with the Parish Librarian in an effort to obtain library service for Negroes. Finally, in 1947, the Ouachita Parish Public Librarian sent one or two boxes of professional books to the Jeannes Supervisor's office to be used by the Negro teachers in the area.² There were

¹ Golden Anniversary, op.cit., p.7.

² Interview with Mrs. Leslye Mae Thomas, Jeannes Supervisor of Ouachita Parish Schools, Monroe, Louisiana, November 7, 1966.

Negro teachers trying to further their education through college extension courses offered in the area, who were handicapped because their assignments required the use of library facilities.¹

The Colored Chamber of Commerce.-- In the fall of 1947, an organization known as the Colored Chamber of Commerce, which in 1963 changed its name to the Twin City Chamber of Commerce, initiated steps to secure a public library for Negroes. The Colored Chamber of Commerce was organized in 1946 under the leadership of Dr. Raymond Pierce, a Monroe pharmacist. It had for its purpose the improvement of the general welfare of the community. There were approximately 19 business, professional and civic-minded men and women in this organization initially. Its meetings were held once a month in the Pierce Building, at 917 DeSiard Street in Monroe. At this time no set fees or dues had been designated, but the members contributed as much as each could afford in order to get the library movement under way.²

There have been several presidents of the Chamber since 1946. These men have been: Mr. Ibra January, a tailor; Mr. Bernie Dayton Robinson, a teacher; Mr. Abraham Bowie, an insurance agent; Mr. Joseph Pendelton, a service station owner; and the present president, Mr. Charles Edwards, Supervisor of Instruction, Monroe City Schools.³

¹ Interview with Mrs. Rebecca Bose, member of the first Colored Chamber of Commerce, November 15, 1966.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

The Twin City Chamber of Commerce is now composed of approximately 54 business, professional, and civic-minded men and women. Their meetings are held once a month at the Liller Maddox Marbles Recreation Center located at 2950 Renwick Street in Monroe. The organization is financially supported by annual dues. For large businesses it is \$10.00, for small businesses, \$5.00, and individual members, \$2.50.¹

Beginning of library service.--- The initial step taken in 1947, by the Colored Chamber of Commerce to obtain library service for Negroes was the appointment of a committee which was composed of Dr. Raymond Pierce, Mr. Emmitt Davis, Mr. Pete Thompson, a restaurant owner, and Mr. Herman Marbles, a barbecue stand owner. They met with the Ouachita Parish Public Librarian and the President of the Library Board of Control to discuss the need for public library service to Negroes.²

At this meeting it was explained to the committee that a Negro branch library had been planned for the next expansion project of the library, which would not develop until 1949. The Negroes were also told that the library would provide the book collection, salary the librarian and all maintenance costs of the branch, but that no funds would be available for a building. It would be the responsibility of the Colored Chamber of Commerce to provide housing for public library service to Negroes.³

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Frances Flanders, "The Carver Branch of the Ouachita Parish Public Library." Paper written in 1951, p.1.(Typewritten.)

The first two branches.--- Near the end of the year of 1948, the Chamber had not yet been able to secure a building and it was apparent that temporary quarters would have to be provided for the Negro branch. On the basis of this, the Ouachita Parish Public Library Board of Control made arrangements with the Monroe City School Board to rent a building. This building, which was located on the grounds of the Monroe Colored High School, was situated on Powells Alley.¹

This was a one-room frame building which was originally used as a classroom. Members of the Chamber of Commerce painted the inside of the building and put in shelves for books. The Ouachita Parish Public Library paid the School Board \$505.00 rent for one year for the temporary quarters of what became the Carver Branch. The branch was governed by the Ouachita Parish Public Library Board of Control and the branch librarian was responsible to the Ouachita Parish Public Librarian.²

In the meantime, efforts were being made by the Colored Chamber of Commerce to raise money to get a permanent building for the branch. The Ouachita Parish Police Jury owned a lot, located in a Negro neighborhood, which was donated for the branch site.³

In May of 1949, Dr. Pierce called the Parish Librarian and informed her that the buildings at Sleman Field, a former Army Air Base,

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p.2.

in Monroe, were being sold for a very nominal sum to institutions. She, along with a member of the Police Jury, went to the auction and purchased a surplus army barracks 20 x 100 feet in size for \$55.00. About the same time the Colored Chamber of Commerce presented the first installment of money which had been raised through a library drive.¹

The purchased barracks was moved to the site donated for the library on the corner of North 10th and Adams Street in Monroe. This was to be the first permanent library building for Negroes and was to be used from 1950 until 1964. The drawing of the plans for the building and the renovation of it for occupancy were done under the supervision of the members of the Library Board of Control and the Parish Librarian.²

This converted barracks was divided into four rooms. The main reading room was the largest and was 20 x 50 feet and one room 12 x 12 feet served as the librarian's office. In addition there were a storage room 8 x 8 feet and a restroom 4 x 8 feet. The reading room could accommodate 34 seated readers and the book collection consisted of 1,480 books.³

The first librarian and the only staff member of the Carver Branch, in 1949, was Mrs. Odalie Richardson McDonald. She received her appointment from the Parish Librarian upon the recommendation of Mrs. Leslye Mae Thomas. In 1949, the librarian's salary was \$1,612.00 and in 1950, it was \$2,220.00. The library hours, in 1950, were from

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p.4.

³ Ibid., p.2.

11:30 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. Mondays through Fridays and from 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. on Saturdays.¹ Beginning in 1954 Mrs. Irene Dotson served as a part-time assistant. She was responsible for the branch when Mrs. McDonald could not be present.²

People and fund raising.-- There were many people who participated in the leadership activities for the development of library service for Negroes. Among them were: Mr. Joe Miller, a funeral director; Mr. Abraham Bowie, an insurance agent; Mr. St.Elmo Johnson, an attorney-at-law; Mr. Lucius White, a tailor; Dr. Sullivan Hill, a physician; Mr. Eluen Hoston, a shoe store owner; Mr. Bernie Robinson, a teacher; Dr. John Thompson, a dentist; Dr. John Calvin Roy, a dentist; Dr. Grover McClanahan, a physician; Mr. Ibra January, a tailor; Mr. Joseph Fendleton, a service station owner; Mrs. Rebecca Bose, a teacher; Dr. Raymond Pierce; Mr. Emmitt Davis; Mr. Pete Thompson; Mr. Herman Marbles, Mr. Sam Hill; and Mrs. Marie Penn.³

Contributions to the library drive came from Negro businesses, churches, schools, social organizations and clubs, ministers, beauticians, vocational schools, community groups, insurance companies and educational and religious organizations. The Junior Chamber of Commerce (white) and also white businesses contributed as well as individuals of both races. At the end of the drive a total amount of

¹ Interview with Mrs. Odalie McDonald, former librarian, Carver Branch Library, Monroe, Louisiana, October 8, 1966.

² Interview with Miss Frances Flanders, librarian, Ouachita Parish Public Library, Monroe, Louisiana, January 19, 1966.

³ Interview with Mrs. Rebecca Bose, op.cit., November 15, 1966.

\$2,670.34, had been raised. All money was turned over to the treasurer of the Ouachita Parish Police Jury. It was kept in a separate account. Checks on it were authorized by the President of the Library Board and the Parish Librarian.¹

By sponsoring a pop concert and a style show the librarian of the Carver Branch raised enough money to buy a window fan, awnings for the front windows and a fence to enclose the lot. The Colored Chamber of Commerce built a cement sidewalk. Most of the furniture for the library was donated by clubs and individuals of both races. The City of Monroe donated all electric wiring, plumbing and plumbing fixtures. The total amount spent on this building was \$3,024.22.²

The present building.-- On December 7, 1964, a modern Carver Branch Library was opened for Negroes. The construction of this branch was made possible through the cooperation of the Monroe City School Board and the Ouachita Parish Police Jury. The School Board leased to the Police Jury for \$50.00, a site situated on the campus of Carroll High School. The total cost of the new branch was \$77,187.00. Of this amount \$59,504.67, the cost of the building, was a loan by the Police Jury. The cost of the furniture, \$12,682.33, was paid for from the library funds. The money paid by the Police Jury was to be repaid from library funds over a period of seven years.³

¹ "Receipts of the Colored Chamber of Commerce Library Drive," Carver Branch Public Library. Compiled in 1950. (typewritten.)

² Flanders, "The Carver Branch of the Ouachita Parish Public Library," op.cit., 4, 5.

³ Monroe Morning World, April 25, 1965.

In 1964, the library paid the Police Jury \$9,000.00 and in 1965, \$7,325.73 on this indebtedness. The building should be paid for in 1971.¹

The Carver Branch Library is situated on Carroll High School campus at 2941 Renwick Street in Monroe. Nearby are Carroll Junior High School and Liller Maddox Marbles Recreation Center. The library is a light beige brick structure of modern architectural style.

From the sidewalk one steps upon a brick-laid platform at the entrance of the building. This platform leads through a pair of swinging doors into a foyer, where, at the right, is found a display case. There is a second set of swinging doors which lead from the foyer into a reading room for adults and children. As one enters, the adults' reading area is to the right and the one for children is to the left.

In the adult reading area there are 10 square tables and four persons may be seated at each. The chairs are upholstered in colors of orange, red, yellow or green and one color is found at each table. In this area is a browsing space consisting of six lounge chairs --four yellow and two orange -- and an end table.

In the reading area for children there are five child-sized square tables with room enough for four children to be seated at each. The color scheme is the same as that in the adult area. There is also one slope-top-table here, which will accommodate six children on each side.

The "L"-shaped charging desk, to the left, as one enters the

¹ Letter from Miss Frances Flanders, Librarian, Ouachita Parish Public Library, Monroe, Louisiana, September 27, 1966.

reading room, is located so that the librarian at the desk can easily serve and observe the adult and children's reading areas.

An office, 22 feet long and 10½ feet wide is located behind and to the left of the children's area. It is also used as a work-room.

A staff lounge is situated adjacent to the office and is equipped with a compact kitchen and a restroom. Next to the lounge is a room which houses the building's mechanical equipment. A bookmobile garage 14½ feet long and 30 feet wide is located at the extreme left front of the building even though the branch does not have a bookmobile yet.

The library has an acoustical ceiling and indirect lighting, central heating and air conditioning. The floors are covered with light beige asphalt tile and the walls are of exposed brick and plaster, painted light beige. There are two public restrooms, a janitor's storage closet and also a water fountain.

Other than the tables and chairs the library's furnishings and equipment include a 72-tray unit card catalog, a vertical file, a magazine rack, a bulletin board, two dictionary stands, one atlas stand, three book trucks, and one stationary book display rack. It also has 10 blue colored steel stacks located at the extreme back of the adult and children reading areas. There is a section of wall shelves in the adult and children reading areas. These shelves and stacks have a total book capacity of 15,000.

At the front entrance, on the left, as one steps upon the brick platform, there is a wall depository where books may be returned when the library is closed.

Government

The Ouachita Parish Public Library System is organized in accordance with the provisions stated under the Louisiana Library Law, Act 36, of 1926. It is governed by a Board of Control appointed for overlapping five-year terms by the Ouachita Parish Police Jury. The members of the Board of Control in 1965 were: Mrs. B. W. Biedenharn, chairman; Mrs. C. M. Strauss, vice-chairman; Mrs. William King Stubbs; Mrs. Julius B. Kugler; Miss Carrie Dee Drew; and the ex-officio member, President of the Police Jury, Mr. T.W.Humphries.¹ None of these is a Negro.

The establishing of policies for the operation of the library and the employment of the Parish Librarian are the responsibilities of the Board of Control. Other employees are appointed upon the selection and recommendations of the Parish Librarian. The members of the Board are not concerned with the actual operation of the library. Their function is a policy-making one.²

The Carver Branch Library has always operated as a part of the Ouachita Parish Public Library System.

Personnel

The Carver Branch Library staff is approved by the Parish Librarian. The branch librarian is responsible to the Parish Librarian, who, in turn, is responsible to the Library Board of Control.

¹ "Ouachita Parish Public Library Manual for Branch Operation." Compiled by the Parish Librarian and Staff, 1964. p.1.

² Ibid.

When the Carver Branch Library opened on February 12, 1949, Mrs. Odalie Richardson McDonald was its first librarian. She served until August, 1953. Mrs. McDonald was a graduate of Huston-Tillotson College in Austin, Texas, and received a Bachelor of Library Science degree from the University of Denver, Denver, Colorado in 1947. Mrs. McDonald was the only full-time staff member of the Carver Branch until 1952, when Mrs. Irene Dotson was hired as a part-time substitute during Mrs. McDonald's absence.¹

In 1953, Mrs. Irene Dotson became the branch librarian. She had attended Southern University and Grambling College, but was not a college graduate. Before 1963, her library education was limited to on-the-job training provided by Mrs. McDonald and by attending library workshops and professional meetings. During the summers of 1963 and 1964, Mrs. Dotson attended Grambling College and in 1964 she completed her undergraduate minor in library science. She served as librarian of the Carver Branch for eleven years until 1964, with no other staff except occasional student volunteers.²

In September, 1964, Miss Albertine Collins was employed as branch librarian and Mrs. Dotson became her assistant. Miss Collins is a graduate of Grambling College, Grambling, Louisiana, with a major in social studies and a minor in library science. Miss Collins has also earned 15 hours of graduate work in library science from Louisiana

¹ Interview with Mrs. Odalie McDonald, op.cit., October 8, 1966.

² Interview with Mrs. Irene Dotson, assistant librarian, Carver Branch Library, Monroe, Louisiana, August 17, 1966.

State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.¹

Mrs. Gloria P. Myles, an itinerant librarian in Ouachita Parish School System, was in charge of the branch library during the summers of 1963, 1964 and 1965, due to the absence of Mrs. Dotson and Miss Collins. She also worked in the branch from September, 1963, through May, 1964, as a part-time reference librarian. She is a graduate of Southern University with a major in English and a minor in library science. She received a master's degree in education from Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, in June, 1954.²

Clarence Marbles, a student at Grambling College, who was doing his practice work at Carroll High School served as part-time assistant from February through May, 1965. Olivest Johnson, a senior at Grambling College, was hired as a page during the summer of 1965. This was the first time that a page had been hired at the Carver Branch.³

Duties of the branch librarian.-- It is the duty of the Branch Librarian to supervise the members of her staff, and to make monthly book circulation and registration reports to the Parish Librarian. She is also responsible for interlibrary loans and reference service. Other duties include the filing of cards in the card catalog and keep-

¹ Interview with Miss Albertine Collins, branch librarian, Carver Branch Library, Monroe, Louisiana, September 13, 1966.

² Interview with Mrs. Gloria Myles, part-time librarian, Carver Branch Library, Monroe, Louisiana, September 21, 1966.

³ Interview with Miss Frances Flanders, op.cit., September 22, 1966.

ing the vertical file up-to-date. She is to see that all books that need mending are returned to the Main Branch and that no damaged books are circulated or shelved.¹

The Branch Librarian is responsible for reporting to the Parish Librarian all needed repairs of the building. It is also her duty to see that the grounds of the library are well-kept.²

Examining each book that is added to the branch collection, reading widely, and stimulating the use of the library by the patrons are other duties she performs. She also plans meetings with groups and speaks to them in the interest of the branch.³

Duties of the assistant librarian.-- The Assistant Librarian is chiefly responsible for displays, circulation, shelving books, and weeding and reading shelves. Some of the duties of the branch librarian and the assistant librarian are shared.⁴

Salaries.-- It was not possible to ascertain the exact salaries of the branch staff, which are recommended by the Parish Librarian and approved by the Library Board of Control. In 1965, the combined salaries for Miss Collins, for nine and one half months, and Mrs. Gloria Myles, for three months, was \$4,300.00. During this same year, Mrs.

¹ Interview with Miss Albertine Collins, op.cit., February 20, 1967.

² "Ouachita Parish Public Library Manual for Branch Operation," op.cit., p.2, 3.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Interview with Miss Albertine Collins, op.cit., September 13, 1966.

Irene Dotson who worked for a period of nine and one half months and Clarence Marbles who worked for a period of three months received combined salaries of \$2,627.00. Olivest Johnson worked for a period of three months and received \$450.00.¹ A total of \$7,552.50 was spent for all salaries in 1965 (see Table 2).

Circulation

In the 17-year period of the Carver Branch Library, the circulation of children's books has always been a great deal more than that of adult books. A peak of 5,000 adult books was circulated in 1950, to be followed by varying degrees of slumps until 1965, which was one year after the opening of the new branch. As the total circulation fell during these years, the proportion of juvenile book circulation increased in some instances. In 1951, the total circulation was at a high of 12,908, to be followed by continuous declines until 1964. The total circulation more than doubled between 1964 and 1965, from 15,188 to 37,070. Of the 37,070 books circulated in 1965, there were 26,162, or 70.57 percent, classed as juveniles (see Table 3).

Materials Collection

On February 12, 1949, the Carver Branch Library opened with a total of 1,480 volumes: 532 juvenile books and 948 adult books. This book collection was built by the Parish Librarian who solicited bibliographies from people "who had worked with Negroes." With these lists she started ordering books for the Negro branch in the early part of 1948.²

¹ Letter from Miss Frances Flanders, op.cit.

² Frances Flanders, "Chamber of Commerce Aids in Establishing Negro Branch," Library Journal, LXXV (June 15, 1950), 1069-70.

TABLE 2

EXPENDITURES FOR CARVER BRANCH, 1965*

Expenses	Total
Salaries	\$7,552.50
Periodicals	226.70
Books and Bindery	8,673.00
Repairs	4,109.28
Utilities	1,697.46
Audio-Visual Equipment	200.00
Building Debt	7,325.73
Total	\$29,784.67

* Letter from Miss Frances Flanders, op.cit.

In 1950, the book collection grew to 1,863: 717 juvenile books and 1,146 adult books. By 1965, the Carver Branch Library had 8,799 volumes and subscribed to 28 periodicals which were suitable for children and adults. There was a total of 464 reference books in the library, and three newspapers, one daily and two weeklies.¹

Of the 8,799 books in the library, 3,916, or 44.51 percent, were juvenile books and 4,883, or 55.49 percent, were adult books.

¹ Letter from Miss Frances Flanders, op.cit.

TABLE 3

THE CARVER BRANCH LIBRARY BOOK CIRCULATION,
1949-1965*

Year	Adult	Juvenile	Total	Percent Juvenile
1949	2,518	6,323	8,841	71.52
1950	5,000	7,290	12,290	59.32
1951	4,135	8,773	12,908	67.97
1952	4,622	7,599	12,221	62.18
1953	3,532	8,789	12,321	71.33
1954	2,466	6,389	8,855	72.15
1955	2,329	8,436	10,765	78.36
1956	1,938	6,665	8,603	77.47
1957	2,201	8,901	11,102	80.17
1958	1,735	6,406	8,141	78.69
1959	1,561	8,917	10,478	85.10
1960	1,540	5,100	6,640	76.80
1961	2,009	5,456	7,465	74.41
1962	1,976	4,281	6,257	68.42
1963	2,746	7,544	10,290	73.31
1964	4,519	10,669	15,188	70.25
1965	10,908	26,162	37,070	70.57

* Taken from the circulation records of the Carver Branch Library, 1949-1965.

Non-book material in the library includes 66 phonorecords.

All needed circulating books, as well as references which are not found in the Carver Branch Library are supplied daily on temporary loan by the Main Library. Materials for the library are selected, ordered and cataloged by the Main Library; however, the branch librarian of the Carver Branch may recommend books and materials which are of interest to her patrons.

The Main Library houses phonorecords and pictures which may be borrowed by any branch. The branch libraries also have access to the book collection of the Main Library.¹ So far, the librarian at the Carver Branch has received no request from patrons for phonorecords or pictures that might be borrowed from the Main Branch.²

Financial Support and Expenditures

The Ouachita Parish Public Library System is supported by a one and one half mill property tax paid by all property-owners in the parish. Miscellaneous funds collected by the Library System, such as fine money are paid into the Library Fund and are handled in the same manner as tax funds. All funds are handled by the treasurer of the Ouachita Parish Police Jury who writes all checks.³

The annual budget of the Ouachita Parish Public Library System is prepared by the Parish Librarian and the chairman of the Board of

¹ "Ouachita Parish Public Library Manual for Branch Operation," op.cit., p.17.

² Interview with Miss Albertine Collins, op.cit., February 20, 1967.

³ "Ouachita Parish Public Library Manual for Branch Operation," op.cit., p.1.

Control and is adopted by the entire Board. After the budget has been adopted, it serves as a basis for the disbursements of funds for the following year.¹

The Librarian at the Carver Branch Library does not have a budget and no specific amount is allocated to her for the operation of the branch. She makes requisition for what she needs to the Parish Librarian. Table 2 lists the itemized expenditures of the Carver Branch Library for 1965.² Table 4 indicates the expenditures for the Carver Branch Library from 1949 to 1965 and shows that the monies spent for salaries of the staff fluctuated. In 1949, the librarian's salary was \$1,612.00 and by 1950 it had increased to \$2,220.00. There was a slight decrease in 1951, and, in 1953, it again increased. From 1954 through 1962, there was a reduction in salaries compared to the previous years; nevertheless, during this period the salaries increased each year. From 1963 through 1965, the money almost doubled each year, and reached its peak in 1965, one year after the opening of the new branch. During these last three years, the library personnel increased, which accounts for the indicated salaries.

The amount of money spent for periodicals was less than \$100 until 1964, at which time \$150 was spent and in 1965 this was increased to \$226.70. During the first year of the Carver Branch Library, \$4,440.00 was spent for books and bindery, but the amount spent each

¹ Ibid.

² Letter from Miss Frances Flanders, op.cit.

TABLE 4

EXPENDITURES FOR CARVER BRANCH LIBRARY, 1949-1965*

Year	Salaries	Periodicals	Books and Bindery	Repairs and Furniture
1949	\$1,612.00	\$14.50	\$4,440.00	\$ -
1950	2,220.00	17.00	1,200.00	-
1951	2,180.00	19.00	825.00	-
1952	2,504.00	22.00	621.00	-
1953	2,062.00	24.00	519.00	-
1954	1,507.00	25.00	654.00	-
1955	1,474.00	27.00	780.00	-
1956	1,600.00	31.00	705.00	-
1957	1,711.00	33.00	456.00	-
1958	1,792.00	37.00	651.00	-
1959	1,702.00	41.90	747.00	92.50
1960	1,881.00	56.00	831.00	-
1961	1,800.00	66.00	1,008.00	-
1962	2,098.00	75.00	1,485.00	75.00
1963	2,903.00	80.00	3,107.00	-
1964	4,916.00	150.00	6,091.00	7,583.04
1965	7,552.50	226.70	8,673.00	4,109.28

* Provided by Miss Frances Flanders, op.cit.

TABLE 4 (continued).

Utilities	Audio-Visual Equipment	Building	Total
\$ -	\$ -	\$ 505.00	\$ 6,571.50
-	-	790.33	4,227.33
-	-		3,024.00
-	-		3,147.00
-	-		2,605.00
			2,186.00
			2,281.00
			2,336.00
			2,200.00
			2,480.00
343.38	-		2,926.78
383.00	-		3,151.00
351.72	-		3,225.72
378.34	-		4,111.34
393.71	-		6,483.71
488.39	-	9,000.00	28,228.43
1,697.46	200.00	7,325.73	29,784.67

from 1950 through 1961 decreased gradually to a low of \$456.00 in 1957. From 1962 through 1965 more money was used for books and bindery than in the previous years. In 1965, the amount spent nearly doubled that spent in 1949.

For repairs \$92.50 was spent in 1959 and \$75.00 was spent in 1962. The amount of money spent for furniture for the new branch in 1964 was \$7,583.04 and in 1965, another \$4,109.28 was spent. Increasing amounts of money were spent each year for utilities, reaching a peak of \$1,697.46 in 1965. For audio-visual equipment the sum of \$200.00 was spent in 1965.

In 1949, the sum of \$505.00 was paid for the rent of a building to house the Carver Branch Library and in 1950, for the renovation of the first permanent quarters for the Carver Branch \$790.33 was spent. The present quarters was paid for by a loan from the Police Jury and each year the library reimburses the Police Jury. In 1964, the sum of \$9,000.00 was repaid and in 1965 a total of \$7,325.73 was repaid.

Services

The Carver Branch Library is open for the public's use from 9:00 A.M. until 8:00 P.M. Mondays through Thursdays and from 10:00 A.M. until 6:00 P.M. on Fridays. On Saturdays it is opened from 9:00 A.M. until 3:00 P.M.

The Carver Branch Library started off in 1949, becoming engaged in such activities as weekly story hours, a summer reading club, and an adult reading club which also met once per week. The adult reading club's objectives were to discuss books and to try to stimulate

more adult interest in reading by sponsoring book talks. There were approximately 30 members in this club. The attendance for the story hour was from 22 to 25 children.¹

The Branch Librarian on her own initiative, delivered books to the various Negro schools in the outlying areas of the parish. She would distribute them to alternate schools on Thursdays to be used for a period of two weeks. The librarian also sponsored National Library Week activities and acted as a consultant for school programs.²

Between 1953 through 1962, story hours were held approximately twice a month and the adult reading club met about this often. In 1962, due to the lack of participation, the story hours and the adult reading club were dissolved and by 1965 the only activity that was still being carried on was the summer reading program.³ In the summer of 1965, of the 325 children registered in the summer reading program, 266 earned reading certificates.⁴ It is the only activity that has lasted during the 17-year life of the Carver Branch Library.

Attendance.-- Now (1965), approximately 210 adult books are circulated each week. Most of the adults using the library are in the teaching profession. They make use of it for professional growth and

¹ Interview with Mrs. Odalie McDonald, op.cit., October 8, 1966.

² Ibid.

³ Interview with Mrs. Irene Dotson, op.cit., August 17, 1966.

⁴ Interview with Miss Albertine Collins, op.cit., September 13, 1966.

research. The few housewives who use the library use it for recreational reading.¹

Reference Service.--- Many reference questions for adults are answered by telephone. If the question cannot be answered immediately, the patron is asked to leave his name and telephone number. If it is of a research nature, the patron is advised to come to the library. There is no cooperative planning between the school and the Branch, however, the Branch librarian has participated on several school programs.²

Integrated services.--- The Ouachita Parish Public Library System opened its doors for racially integrated library services in the fall of 1964.³ In the summer of the same year, there was publicity about racially integrated services. On July 9, 1964, Mr. Bennie Brass, a high school graduate and Mr. Jimmy Andrews, a high school student, attempted to receive library service at the Anna Meyer Branch on Jackson Street. They were denied service and were asked to leave. After refusing to leave, an arrest was made. They were jailed and charged with disturbing the peace and trespassing. Approximately two days later both were released on a bail of \$100.00 each. A week later, about 22 Negro students went to the Main Library and each branch in

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Interview with Miss Frances Flanders, op.cit., January 19, 1966.

the Parish at the same time to receive library service. All students were arrested and jailed except the minors, who were released in the custody of their parents. After this incident, Mr. Bennie Brass filed a suit for the opening of the libraries for use by Negroes. However, the Main Library and all of the branches opened without court order. The suit is still pending. To date it has not come up for court action. All of these incidents took place after the 1964 Civil Rights Act had been passed.¹

In 1965, there was a total of 117 Negro patrons registered at the Main Library and branches, exclusive of the Carver Branch.² The Negro children that are registered at the Main Library and the branches may participate in the summer reading program at that particular branch. Negro patrons may use any and all branches in the Parish. Library cards are now issued to all citizens from any branch.

There are no Negroes on the Public Library Board and none is on the staff of the Main Library nor the other formerly "white" branches. The Negro neighborhoods in Ouachita Parish receive no bookmobile service of any kind.

¹ Interview with Mr. Bennie Brass, student, Grambling College, Grambling, Louisiana, March 18, 1967.

² Interview with Miss Frances Flanders, op.cit., January 19, 1966.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to present the historical development of public library service to Negroes in Ouachita Parish, Louisiana. This service began for Negroes in 1949. Before this time there was a public library in Ouachita Parish but its services were available to white people only.

The population of Ouachita Parish in 1950 was 74,713 and by 1960 it had risen to 101,663. The nonwhite population is 32,759, or 32.2 percent, of the total population.

For a number of years agriculture was the major industry in the parish due to its rich farming soil. However, in the past decade or more industries in the chemical, furniture, fertilizer, lumber and paper fields established in Ouachita Parish involve approximately one third of the labor force. There were 2,429 nonwhites employed as private household workers. This number represents 93.4 percent of the 2,602 domestic workers, practically all of them being women. Service workers accounted for the next largest group of workers.

The majority of nonwhites who completed high school ended their education at this level. Of the 867 nonwhites who finished high school only 2.6 percent completed four years or more of college.

The Ouachita Parish Public Library began service in 1916. The Mayor and the City Council granted an old building to the Library

Committee of the Monroe Civic League to be used as a library.

This was a subscription library, however the city of Monroe contributed \$50.00 per month to its support. In 1940, through contractual agreements, the cities of Monroe and West Monroe combined forces with Ouachita Parish to form the Ouachita Parish Public Library. In 1965, the system had a main building and three modern branches.

It was not until 1946 that Negroes, who had been excluded from public library service, began making concrete efforts to obtain services. An organization known as the Colored Chamber of Commerce which consisted of Negro business and professional persons, along with the Jeannes Supervisor of Negro schools appealed to the Parish Librarian and the Library Board of Control. The Board of Control rented a used classroom of the Monroe Colored High School but it was left to the Negroes to prepare this room for suitable use, and equip it with materials and staff. Its resources were very meager.

In 1949, a surplus army barracks was purchased for \$55.00 to serve as the Negro branch. It had four rooms, and could seat 34 people, who had access to 1,480 books. In 1964, a modern brick structure was opened, on the campus of the Carroll High School campus, to serve Negroes.

These two structures, both called the Carver Branch, have been paid for through money raising efforts on the part of the Negro leadership of the parish and particularly those in Monroe. The current building should be completely paid for by 1971.

The Carver branch in 1949 had a librarian who was a college graduate and had earned a fifth year Bachelor's Degree in Library

Science from the University of Denver. She gained a part-time helper in 1952. In 1954, the Carver Branch staff had two full-time staff members and occasional part-time help. None held a professional library degree.

A total of \$7,552 was spent for Carver Branch salaries in 1965, but it was impossible to determine exactly how much the two full-time staff members earned. It is safe to assume that the librarian earned \$4,000 or less for nine and one half months' work and that the assistant, \$2,500 or less for this same period of time.

In 1965, there were 8,799 books in the Carver Branch and a little more than half of these were adult books. However, through the 17 years of the existence of the Branch, children's books have circulated far more than those for adults. Teachers borrow more books than any other type of adult.

When the Carver Branch first opened, it sponsored weekly story hours, summer reading programs for children and an adult reading club. By 1962 the story hours and the adult reading club had ceased because they were so poorly attended.

In the fall of 1964 following "sit in" demonstrations by Negro youths and the passage of the Civil Rights Act the Ouachita Parish Public Library and its services were racially integrated. In 1965, there 117 Negroes registered in the main library or other branches besides Carver. However there were no Negroes on the Public Library Board nor on staffs of any facility except the Carver Branch. Neither did the bookmobile offer services in predominantly Negro neighborhoods.

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February 20, 1967

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_____ Personal interview with Miss Frances Flanders, Librarian, Ouachita Parish Public Library, Monroe, Louisiana, January 19, 1966, and September 22, 1966.

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_____ Personal interview with Mrs. Gloria Myles, part-time Librarian, Carver Branch Library, Monroe, Louisiana, September 21, 1966.

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