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Mabton librarian retires

By DAVE LESTER

MABTON — Her hands move quickly, stamping due dates and exchanging books read for those soon to be enjoyed.

They are the hands of Mrs. Lorena Powell, librarian here for the last nine years, who is exchanging her stamp for a hoe, rake and watering hose and some of those books she has handled, catalogued and shelved but hasn't had an opportunity to read.

She is retiring with her husband Vern, to a life of gardening, caring for a new lawn and some traveling.

Caring for the 5,000-book library has been a fulltime job and more for Mrs. Powell, leaving very little time to read.

Mrs. Powell is completing her second stint as librarian. Her first experience with the job was in the late 1930's, when the library was strictly a city facility and was located on the second floor of town hall.

In between her two jobs at the library, Mrs. Powell attended business college, was a telephone operator, did some farm work, was a postal employee and operated the Mabton Theater with

her husband continuously from the time it opened in 1948 until it was closed in January of last year.

From its meager beginnings in 1914, when a group of Mabton residents went door to door seeking books, the library has grown into a full-fledged member of the regional library system.

As a girl, Mrs. Powell remembers the library's early days.

The library had mostly fiction books then and it cost a dollar to get a library card."

Fines for overdue books were two cents a day. The library also had a rental book section the youngsters eyed covetously. It cost a nickel to rent one of those special books, but Mrs. Powell recalls during those Depression days, the nickels had to go for other things more basic.

The library, opened in 1914, remained in town hall until a local group, Friends of the Library, was formed and raised \$5,000 in donations. Coupled with a \$5,000 bond issue approved by the voters, the library was moved to its present location on B Street, in what was a real estate office. The fund raising com-

paign began in 1962 and the library moved in 1964.

The library joined the regional system in 1948, bringing more and wider variety of book fare through the local library.

Memorials made to the library in the names of family members have provided funds for further improvements. Library supporters are now working toward establishment of a pioneer room in the library to include items of early day Mabton.

It has been the contact with people and the steady improvement in library facilities Mrs. Powell has enjoyed most about her job.

As was the case when she became librarian, Mrs. Powell is turning over the reins to her assistant, Peggy Zeebuth. Mrs. Powell became the assistant to then-librarian Mary Ann Carpenter in 1963.

Mrs. Powell particularly looks forward to working in her yard. After living above the theater for 29 years, a yard will be a welcome addition to her retirement years.