

Originally published by the Wapato Independent on April 18, 1968

THE WAPATO INDEPENDENT...April 18, 1968

Mrs. Johnson retires as Wapato librarian

A position which started as a temporary one 25 years ago will end this week for Mrs. Clark (Ethel) Johnson, Wapato city librarian, when Mrs. Roger (Connie) Ryan of the Yakima Regional Library assumes the position Monday.

It was during the Second World War when the former librarian resigned that Mrs. Johnson agreed to help out until a suitable replacement could be found. The library board found

it impossible to fill the position because the defense industries took all the help available. As a result the temporary position became more permanent as the years passed and her dedication to her work won for Mrs. Johnson the admiration and respect of the entire community.

She first came to Wapato in 1912 to live with her sister, Mrs. Mondula Scottland, while going to school until 1916. Fol-

lowing her marriage to Clark Johnson, she returned to Wapato with him in 1921 where they established their home. Clark was a rural mail carrier for a number of years and then a trucker for Consolidated. He returned to his mail carrier position which he held for several years before his death in 1958.

They lived at 610 Wapato Avenue since 1932 and Mrs. Johnson's sister, Mrs. H. C. Mervin, also a widow, makes her home there with her.

The Johnsons have two children, a son, Dale Johnson, a commander in the submarine service of the U.S. Navy. At present he is based at Victoria, B. C. with NATO. He and his wife have three sons and a daughter.

Mrs. Johnson's daughter, Mrs. B. H. Harnon lives in Moses Lake and also has three sons and a daughter.

Retirement will give Mrs. Johnson the opportunity to devote more time to the organizations which she has been associated with for a number of years. She is past president of the American Legion Auxiliary as well as the Tillamook Literary Club of which she is also a charter member. She is a past worthy matron of the Eastern Star and is a member of the Community Presbyterian Church.

She also expects to have opportunities to visit her son and daughter and their families more frequently and to keep up with the reading which has become such an important part of her life.

An Open House honoring the retirement of Mrs. Clark (Ethel) Johnson after 25 years as Wapato librarian will be held Sunday, April 21, at the Wapato Library between the hours of 2:00 and 5:00 p. m. The Wapato facility became a "Community Library" under

the jurisdiction of the Yakima Valley Regional Library Jan. 1. The open house, sponsored by the Library Board, will provide an opportunity for the public to see the changes in the library since affiliation with the regional system. Mrs. George Snyder is chairman of the event.

The first effort for a public library in Wapato was started in 1906, when the Wapato Women's Club was organized. In 1908 the club received the first shipment of books from the state free circulating library in Olympia.

The books were kept in the Hub Mercantile Co. store, where Mrs. Alex McCredy presided as librarian Saturday mornings from 9:00 to 4:00 o'clock. Later the books were moved to the A. DeVries jewelry store on Wapato Avenue.

When DeVries built his own building, an upstairs room was set aside for the library and Mrs. DeVries became librarian. She held the position from 1911 to 1916.

MOVED TO CITY HALL

The next move for the library was to the city hall, where Mrs. H. J. Sourwine was librarian until 1920. Later the library was placed under supervision of the city clerk and it was open Saturday afternoons from 2:00 to 5:00 o'clock.

In 1925 the American Legion Auxiliary adopted as a major project sponsorship of the city library. The group presented a play to raise funds, met with the city council to confer on library matters, and came to an agreement with the council that the organization would buy new books if a trained librarian were placed in charge. Mrs. George W. Ley was hired and she continued as librarian until she resigned in 1943 and Mrs. Clark Johnson was named her successor.

LIBRARY BOARD NAMED

November 27, 1941, Mayor G. H. Hodgson called a meeting to organize a library board. Original members were Paul Volkman, Mrs. George Rodman, Mrs. Clark Johnson, Walter Hallauer and Dale Whitnack. Mrs. Rodman was elected chairman. The library has been operated as a part of city government since 1941 with the library board in charge of administration.

The Library Club was organized in 1935 as a library improvement project by women of the American Legion Auxiliary, assisted by members of the Progressive Club, Parker Woman's Club, Donald District Woman's Club and the Wapato Garden Club. The club sponsored for many years a Library ball to raise funds for new books. In 1937 plans were started for a library building. Residents of the city signed a petition asking the council to build at the corner of Wapato avenue and Fifth street on ground then known as Hotl Park.

The club agreed to raise \$500 toward the cost of the building and the city council advanced \$1,000. Labor was to be furnished by the Works Progress Administration. By 1940 the library Club was able to present final plans for the building, which had its official opening in April, 1942.



MRS. CLARK (ETHEL) JOHNSON