

Persistence and Patience: An Unofficial History of the Friends of the Library, Hudson, NH, as remembered by Jane Bowles. Taken from notes of a presentation made at the September 19, 2017 meeting of the Friends of the Library of Hudson, NH

Four Phases of the Friends of the Library

1979 – 1988 (9 years): In the beginning

1988 – 1998 (10 years): Low point - Hiatus

1998 – 2009 (11 years): Rebirth

2009 – 2017 (8 years): High Point

1979-1988 In the Beginning

Before the Friends were officially organized the Hudson GFWC Hudson Junior Women's Club made the Hills Memorial Library one of their priorities. As an example: The group obtained a reconditioned army vehicle & transformed it into Hudson's 1st bookmobile & several women got commercial driver's licenses to drive it.

In the late 1970s Jane Pfarner moved to Hudson and joined the GFWC Hudson Jr. Women's Club. Jane had her Masters in Library Science, was an avid library advocate, and moved to Hudson from a town that had a Friends group. She worked with Alice Jones, Director, to start a Friends group. Meetings were held at night in the Children's room, and were open to the public. There was always a Program/Speaker and thematic refreshments arranged by the Program & Hospitality Committee chairmen. The Friends' bookworm logo was designed by Friends member Rosanne Empey. Jane Pfarner continued to play an active role in Hudson library history serving as a Library Trustee, and an employee of the Hills Memorial Library before she & her family relocated to KY. She returned to Hudson in 2009 for the dedication of the Rodger's Memorial Library.

The Friends of the Hills Memorial Library Constitution & By-Laws were adopted and our Articles of Incorporation were submitted in 1980 with Phil Rodgers' lawyer, Harrison Smith, providing pro bono legal fees.

To promote the library & raise money for a building fund we recycled cans, sold tote bags, and had book sales. In 1980 the Friends held the First Library Lawn sale selling spaces on the Hills Library lawn. The friends had a refreshment table selling chili dogs, baked goods, and sodas. The Lawn Sales were very popular and continued for 18 or 19 years.

The first Museum Passes may have been purchased by the Friends during this period.

During the 1980s there were Town Meeting attempts made for library expansion and increased librarian salaries. Some were successful, some failed. Patience Jackson conducted a feasibility study, and the trustees attempted to start a capital campaign (which failed due to lack of major donors in town).

Plans at this time were to have the expansion attached to the Hills building. The Friends created a slide show of local historic library building that had attractive additions. A script was created and presentations were made to many clubs and organizations in an attempt to get passage of

a major bond article. Lack of town support for the bond caused many Friends to become discouraged.

NOTE: The RML Archives has a notebook containing all the Library Warrant Articles that were presented over the years – including the results of the vote. Some articles failed by 2 or 3 votes. Some bond articles obtained a majority but failed to reach a super majority.

1989-1998 Hiatus – Low Point

Eventually FOL membership dwindled - Friends became inactive – burned out or moved away - returned to the work force, etc. There was considerable turnover in Library Directors and Staff. Town support for library staff (raises), budget, and expansion waned.

Although not holding regular meetings, or really being organized FOL maintained its Charitable Organization status with NH Charitable Trust with Treasurer, Alice Coakley, filling out the annual form and paying the annual fee.

Library Staff took over the popular Library Lawn Sale with minimal assistance from the former Friends members (Bob Gagnon and Chris Sweeney can relate to this) and it continued for at least 18 consecutive years until 1998.

Wanting to provide adequate library facilities for the town, Trustees obtained a portable classroom type trailer that was placed in the Hills parking lot (I don't recall if this was a warrant article, or budget acquisition). Annex II housed the adult fiction, biography, magazine collection, and books on tape with its own circulation desk, 1 comfortable chair, 1 table, 2 computers, & a couple of wood chairs. There was a small staff room at the rear with a water bubbler & small refrigerator. There was no staff area in the main building, and only 1 bathroom (in the main building).

1998 - 2009 Rebirth

In 1998 Two Children's Room mothers who were frustrated by the lack of town support for a new library decided to pursue re-activating FOL. Lisa Weber, Patricia Barstow, and Jane Bowles met with State Library consultants and subsequently became Pres., Treas., and Secretary, respectively. Patricia & Lisa faded away after several years, and were replaced by Linda Kipnes, Barbara Costello, Leona Dolloff, and John Knowles who, along with Jane Bowles, held all the executive positions from 1999-2002. Jane, Linda, and Barbara continued as President, Treasurer, and Secretary from 2002-2009. In 2007 Barbara Kurtze became a valued member of the leadership team serving as Membership Committee chm from 2007 to the present, and later serving several terms as Secretary.

In 1999 the Friends obtained 501 (c) 3 status.

In 2000, with staff morale at a new low over salaries & working conditions, the Friends began National Library Week Staff Recognition. A second, smaller trailer had been purchased and placed in the parking lot to be used as the Technical Services area.

In 2000 Toni Weller became Library Director (2000-2012). Her guidance + faithful Trustees + 20+ year employees like Bob Gagnon & Gayle St. Cyr, provided stability for renewed expansion efforts. These efforts energized the Friends and attracted new members. Several Friends served

on town committees: Capital Improvement (Jane) and Budget (John Knowles). Library supporters were elected to the Board of Selectmen: (Ann Seabury (GFWC member) & Lisa Riley (Library Trustee). A Library Building Committee was established consisting of Friends, Library staff, trustees, and citizens. Jane Bowles and Elaine Brody would eventually serve as Chairmen of this committee.

In 2001 the town voted to purchase 49 Ferry St for future library expansion. It was a Rodgers Bros. house, brought up to code to be used for public use and library storage. Friends and Trustees held their monthly meetings in the living room. The Friends meeting in May was a Potluck social. The Friends received permission from the Trustees to use the kitchen, and bedrooms to create a monthly used book sale which would augment sales from a small bookcase in Annex II. A 'naming' contest was held resulting in the name Second Hand Prose. Despite attempts to cite Second Hand Prose as a business operating in a Town residential zone, we persisted, and were able to continue our once a month sales.

In 2002 the Leonard Smith Scholarship was established as a memorial to 'Lenny' who was serving as a Library Trustee when he helped the Friends defend their position in the above mentioned citation from the Town. The large tent was purchased. The Friends paid for painting the new bookmobile, and conducted a naming contest. *The Rolling Hills* was the winning entry.

In 2004 47 Ferry Street was purchased for storage & future expansion.

During these years the Friends – began a Books for Newborns program – decorated the library for the holidays – paid for Santa's Visit photos – worked on landscaping and beautification – donated monies for the children's' summer reading program & poetry contest – participated in Old Home Days & Harvest Fest – collaborated with Pete Duquette whose sale of 'Read the Trees' T shirts benefited the library building fund – sold Old Hancock sun catchers & Hills Memorial Library tote bags. By 2006 the Friends had amassed \$15,000 in their Library Building Fund. They continued their advocacy & support for the library budget, librarian salaries, and funding for a Library Expansion Capital Reserve Fund.

Like the Library Lawn Sale in the 1980s, Second Hand Prose at 49 Ferry St. attracted new, enthusiastic Friends members. (Julia Twaddle, Christine Shaw, and Rick Lageux).

Between 2005-2007 library expansion efforts intensified. With expensive asbestos remediation needed at the Ferry St properties, focus shifted to a piece of Town owned land on Rt. 102 next to Alvirne for the new library. Architects were hired. In 2005 the Friends paid for informational brochures. In 2006 the Friends paid for an Expansion Survey to be published in the HLN. (results indicated support for a library at the new location). Rick Lageux stepped forward to create a computer database of over 300 library supporters (those who had signed petitioned warrant articles, patrons, people who offered locations for political signs, wrote letters to editor, etc). Friends manned information tables at the polls, Harvest Fest, Old Home Days, etc. In March 2007 they made phone calls to 'get out the vote', and went around town pounding political signs into frozen ground. They bought ads in the HLN. "Support Warrant Article ??". And they

were bitterly disappointed when the \$4 million warrant article received a solid majority of the vote, but fell slightly short of the 2/3 required for a bond article.

Prior to the vote the bond had been reduced to \$4 million by eliminating several items, one of which was the stone facing on the building's exterior. Knowing how this would affect the appearance of the building, Phil Rodgers was contacted by the Building Cm. chm. Phil agreed to fund a 6 figure amount for the stonework IF the bond passed.

The Friends continued to hold meetings and Second Hand Prose at 49 Ferry St. They continued with NLW recognition, the scholarship, and support of library programs.

Seven months after the \$4 million bond failed Phil Rodgers' donation was announced (fall 2007) and groundbreaking for the new library took place in June 2008. Phil's support for the library had never wavered for 30 years.

2009 to present - High Point

As construction of the new library progressed, the sale of the Ferry St. properties was authorized at the March 2009 town meeting. The last Second Hand Prose was held that month. The friends spent the next 2 months closing and dismantling SHP, and the property was sold at auction in May 2009.

The Friends donated funds raised at SHP to dedicate one of the Study Rooms in the new library (ca \$25,000?).

The friends ordered 100 RML tote bags for the RML dedication in June 2009. The year marked the 100th birthday of the Hills Memorial Library, and the 30th anniversary of FOL's founding.

Our name was changed to Friends of the Library of Hudson, NH.

The Trustees granted permission for the Friends to convert the former Children's Room at Hills into the new location for Second Hand Prose. Opening day in the new location was in August 2009 during a Library Lawn Sale conducted by the GFWC. (history repeating itself)

The Friends held their May 2009 meeting in the new library and elected Rick Lageux as President (2009-2012). With the availability of more room, new programs were funded – movie licenses – art hanging system – children's room furniture & seating – a telescope – robots – 3-D printer, etc. The Friends held a Barnes & Noble fundraiser, Coupons for a Cause fundraiser (2011) & several Chamber networking events. They have continued long standing programs for NLW, Santa's visit, scholarship, decorating, Second Hand Prose, etc. Facebook page was first launched in 2010. Second Hand Prose AT NIGHT began in 2012.

In 2012 Charlie Matthews became director of the library. The Friends have been pleased to have his support, and to honor many of the requests he has made to the Friends to support the library staff and services.

Suzanne Richard served as president (2012-2017). Connie Owen was elected President in 2017.

And Finally ... special kudos to Bob Gagnon whos has always been there for the Friends of the Library. From setting up the tent at Old Home Days, to lugging boxes of books, to setting up Christmas trees, his assistance has been invaluable.....for 40 years!