

GRANVILLE COUNTY'S NEW LIBRARY

The formal opening and dedication of the new Richard H. Thornton Library, serving Oxford and Granville County, was held on May 10, 1964. It is little wonder the citizens there are so very proud of this new building since it is one of the state's most attractive public libraries.



Entrance to the Richard H. Thornton Library.

The dedication program featured an address by Gerald Johnson which we are pleased to publish in this issue of *North Carolina Libraries*. Other speakers on the program included Mrs. Elizabeth Hughey of North Carolina State Library and Thad Stem of Oxford. The gratitude of the community to the library's greatest benefactor was reflected in the welcome given by Tom W. Johnson, Chairman of the Library Board of Trustees:

"Some three years ago, when the library personnel were actually in danger of falling from cracks in the floor, when our patrons were figuratively baking on one side and freezing on the other from the old style heaters in a big drafty room, windows were so full of books that no daylight, not even a breath of fresh air could come through, we had in Oxford a small band of hopefuls. They hoped and prayed that they would live to see in Granville County a library facility in keeping with this county.

"At that time in Oxford a radiant, erudite, white-haired gentleman and his scholarly wife were frequenting the library. They came daily, often twice, to study, to read, to help organize adult education classes and to attend those classes.

"The Library Board had thought of every possible solution to the problem of space and building. Best friends advised against going to the people with a bond vote. Public school needs were many, the court house was bulging, and our county commissioners were striving to cope with the problem of meeting the cost.

"And then this scholarly friend, a retired book publisher, said he knew of no county anywhere that needed a library more and he knew of none that would appreciate it as much, so he offered to pay on a matching basis up to \$75,000.00 of the cost of a new library building.

"The dark clouds began to turn to silver. It was this challenge, this inspiration, that set up and set off the undertaking that you see here today in its completed form.

"I can't say too much about, and for, Dr. Richard H. Thornton and his wife Nina. They have given and they continue to give to the public library of Granville County."

Dr. Thornton responded with a short speech from which excerpts are here included.

A Dream Come True

RICHARD H. THORNTON

It was just thirty years ago that the library department of the Oxford's Woman's Club, working under the direction of the North Carolina Library Commission, inaugurated a movement for public library service in Granville County. Two years later the people of the county voted a three cent tax on the hundred dollar evaluation, and thereby established the first county-wide, tax-supported library in the Southeastern States. This is a record to be proud of.

From these simple beginnings the Granville County Library was born. It has now developed into a community institution, efficiently serving the town and the county, with an excellent collection of something over 30,000 volumes, well catalogued and displayed. The usefulness of the library has been increased by its several branches in the county, and the travels of the bookmobile into less populated areas. The library has kept abreast of modern trends in providing records, films, and other accessories to study, and will now be able also to further interest in the fine arts.

The library has afforded a fine example of a community working together for instruction and enlightenment. It has become a center for many types of activities; several worthwhile study courses have been undertaken, and in this new building such facilities for instruction can be greatly expanded. The library can now provide a public forum for the discussion of important questions, and a gathering place for various cultural groups. It can be a center for the discussion of civic problems and be an aid to business groups. It can bring together both the young and the old for meetings of many kinds.

The Board of County Commissioners deserves special praise for the fine way in which it has supported the library, and ministered to its financial needs. Without their enthusiastic backing the library would never have attained its present standing. I am sure they will be equally interested in its future growth, and provide means for deriving maximum benefits from its operation . . .