

Proclamation

A Proclamation Commemorating the 85th Anniversary of the Monessen Public Library May 1, 2021

WHEREAS, on August 18, 1908, Miss Mary Jones, presented the idea to City Council and School Board, citizens and businessmen on her desire to establish a Monessen Branch of the Carnegie Free Library. The idea never materialized, and;

WHEREAS, a quasi-municipal library began in February, 1935 with a library of 200 volumes for adults being opened in the Monessen High School Library, under the supervision of the Emergency Educational Relief Administration, through the Roosevelt Administration, and;

WHEREAS, by October 1935, the New Deal legislation was disbanded and the Monessen School Board temporarily sponsored the library, and;

WHEREAS, on January 8, 1936, a voluntary committee, led by Wade Blackburn, Mrs. J. Karl Beery, and Harry R. Pore presented a formal petition to City Council for funds to install and maintain a free public library for Monessen's citizens, and;

WHEREAS, City Council directed that \$1,000 be listed in the City Budget in 1936, for use of the library. Upon this, an open meeting was held, in order to form a library, and;

WHEREAS, A membership and finance drive were held to raise additional funds for the library. The drive was opened by nine persons at \$100 each, and 110 other charter members contributing \$10 or more, and;

WHEREAS, upon the establishment of financial funds, a charter was applied for, and the Monessen Civic Library Association was incorporated, and;

WHEREAS, the library was managed by its first librarian Mrs. Martha Jane Bloom-Whitsett, who was aided by helpers from the WPA Project, and;

WHEREAS, upon the creation of the association, women's clubs, fraternal organizations, and churches joined with the Chamber of Commerce to set up a permanent organization to finance, locate, and provide a free public library, and;

WHEREAS, THE MONESSEN PUBLIC LIBRARY WAS STARTED ON MAY 1, 1936, in three upstairs rooms at the Barker Building at corner Sixth Street and Donner Avenue. The library contained 1234 books, was open 22 hours a week, and had a circulation of 50 books per day, and;

WHEREAS, the Civic Library Association continued holding membership drives, in order to expand and offer additional volumes, space, and services, and;

WHEREAS, the Monessen Public Library relocated to its own building at 112 Fifth Street on May 1, 1944. The Barben Building was purchased by the Civic Library Association for \$10,000, which was obtained by a building fund drive, donations, reserve funds from a War Bond, and a loan from the People's National Bank and Trust Company of Monessen, and;

WHEREAS, in 1957, the Monessen Civic Library Association asked the Parente Administration to assume responsibility for managing the library, and;

WHEREAS, the Library Association retained architect J. Russell Bailey, along with H. Ernest Clark to design a modern library in the City's Business District, and;

WHEREAS, on November 5, 1957, Monessen voters, with the support of clergy, the business community, and civic organizations approved a bond to construct a new Public Library Facility, and;

WHEREAS, the contents of the Fifth Street location of the Library was moved via "Student Book Brigade to the current library building location at 326 Donner Avenue, in 1959; the facility also served as a district center beginning in 1962; the library functioned as the District Center for Westmoreland and Fayette Counties until the end of 2010, and;

WHEREAS, the Monessen Public Library was renovated and in 2012, through a bond and state monies to serve as the Monessen Public Library and Cultural Center, and;

WHEREAS, the Monessen Library provides many services beyond lending books; They provide computer access, genealogy, children's activities, community events, meeting space, and much more.

NOW THEREFORE, I, Matthew T. Shorraw, Mayor of the City of Monessen, do hereby commemorate the 85th Anniversary of the Monessen Public Library. Our Library is a focal point of Downtown, and important fixture for our residents and surrounding communities, and we are lucky to have such a wonderful Library, thanks to the support and dedication of countless organizations and individuals over the past eight decades



Matthew Shorraw
Mayor, City of Monessen