



# Pausing to Ponder

## Sharpshurg Public Library Marks Beginnings From Early 1900s

By Barbara Twigg

Washington County Free Library (WCFL), Sharpshurg Branch is listed as being established on January 9, 1902, with Bertha Mumma being in charge. "Miss Birdie" was a public county school teacher and served as the first Secretary-Treasurer to the Sharpshurg Library Association in 1936. From 1902-1913 two "deposit stations" were maintained in Sharpshurg.

No. 1 station was maintained by either V.R. (Victor) Mumma or S. Mumma throughout this time. Victor was Bertha's brother and S. Mumma, Samuel her father. The History of Sharpshurg by Barron states the early library was housed in the post office which makes sense seeing that both Victor and Samuel were postmasters. The 1922 Sanborn Map shows the post office was located at the address of 121 East Main in the western section of the building.

Station No. 2 was maintained by W.J. (William) Highbarger until 1907 when he passed away. From 1908 till 1911 the Washington County Free Library annual report lists either Highbarger Hotel or Highbargers as being in charge of the station. Mrs. Harriet Highbarger (William's wife) was listed as in charge in 1912. The Highbarger or City Hotel was located on the square at 101 East Main.

The Sharpshurg Stations housed a collection of books provided by the main branch. The Washington County Free Library paid for the transportation of the cases and the postage on all books ordered by individuals at the stations. The Mumma station housed 207 books the first year which were circulated 334 times. The Highbarger station housed 256 books which were circulated a total of 439 times.

In 1913, both stations were discontinued and a "book case branch" was established in the "light and roomy store of M.L. Burgan in Sharpshurg, and Miss Eyerly put in charge. According to the 1913 WCFL annual report, "Every Thursday she takes the 2:15 PM train on the B.&O. R.R. to Keedysville, drives the three miles to Sharpshurg remaining there till evening when she returns at 8:45 over the Norfolk & Western R.R." The total circulation for the year was 4,296. Cases of books would go out

and remain for 60 days. It is written in the "Story of the Washington County Free Library" that the usefulness of these collections depended upon whether the custodian was interested in books or if his ulterior motive was to bring customers to the store. Miss Eyerly wrote, "Many thanks are due to Mr. and Mrs. Burgan and Mr. Gross, the clerk at the store, for their courtesy and interest". She also thanked Katherine Adams for taking over during her dinner hour.

About 1919 the library was moved to the Episcopal Church Parish House. On the 1922 Sanborn map of Sharpshurg, the library is shown to the right just behind St Paul's Church.

It was later moved to the "Smith" property at 131 West Main Street, then to the Nicodemus house on Main St. (where Dr. Gardner had his office). From 1925 to 1937 the library was located in one of the public schools on Antietam Street. I was curious about the choice of locations for the library but several of the Mummas were members at St. Paul's. Sallie Smith (131 West Main property) was the sister of Victor Mumma's wife and Bertha was a teacher at Sharpshurg along with Charlotte Davis who later became a Sharpshurg Library board member and custodian of the "Sharpshurg deposit station" in 1941. In the 1937 WCFL's annual report, it states that the "Sharpshurg station was closed for three months due to the lack of heat and was transferred from the old abandoned school house to the bright room on the second



**A group of students assemble in front of the M.L. Burgan store where a "book case branch" was established in 1913. (Courtesy WCFL)**

floor of the Community building at 106 East Main Street. With enlarged quarters remodeled for this purpose, this station is now more centrally located than it has been for some years". The community building was built by the International Order of the Red Men in 1911 and purchased by the town, who agreed to set aside space for the library.

The library was incorporated September 14, 1936, as The Sharpshurg Library Association of Washington County, Inc. The Board of Directors are listed as Katherine Adams (niece of Theresa Kretzer), Stella McK. Lyne (daughter of Dr. Augustin Biggs), Bertha Mumma, (Continued on page 22)



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Sharpsburg, the library is shown to the right just behind St Paul's Church. It was later moved to the "Smith" property at 131 West Main Street, then to the Nicodemus house on Main St. (where Dr. Gardner had his office). From 1925 to 1937 the library was located in one of the public schools on Antietam Street. I was curious about the choice of locations for the library but several of the Mummas were members at St. Paul's. Sallie Smith (131 West Main property) was the sister of Victor Mumma's wife and Bertha was a teacher at Sharpsburg along with Charlotte Davis who later became a Sharpsburg Library board member and custodian of the "Sharpsburg deposit station" in 1941. In the 1937 WCFL's annual report, it states that the "Sharpsburg station was closed for three months due to the lack of heat and was transferred from the old abandoned school house to the bright room on the second

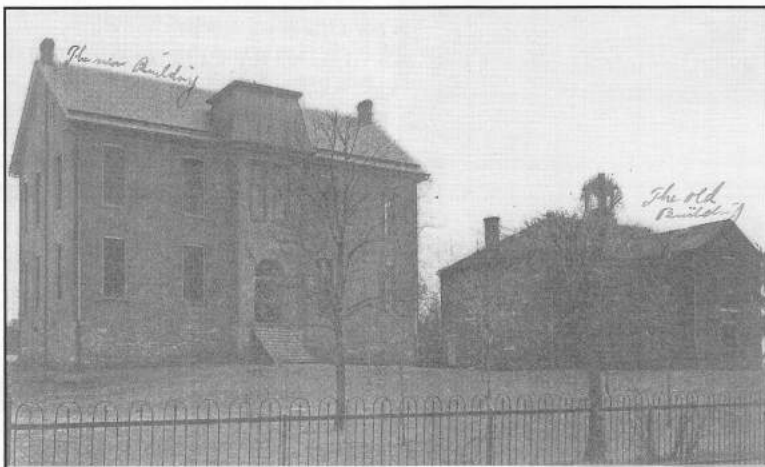
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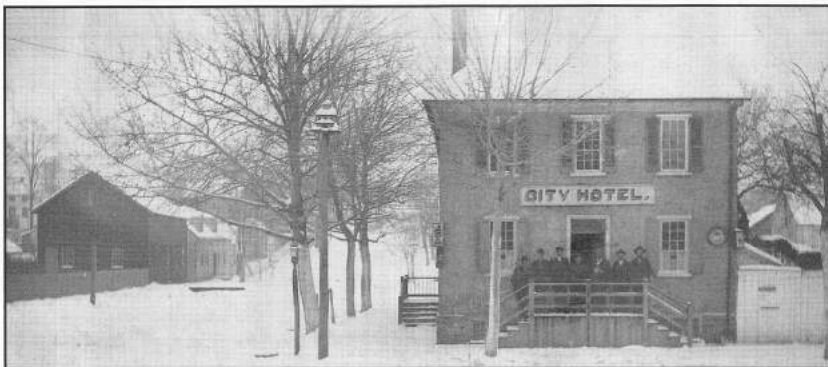
(Continued from page 20)



**The initials B.K.E. and the line are pointing to Beulah Eyerly who was in charge of the "book case branch" in Burgan's Store. This photograph was taken in Keedysville. Miss Eyerly served both communities. (Courtesy WCFL)**



**Records don't indicate which one of the schools the library was located in from 1925 to 1937. The above photo shows both the "old" and "new" schools on Antietam Street. (Courtesy Sharpsburg Historical Society)**



**The Highbarger or City Hotel was located on the square at 101 East Main. (Courtesy Sharpsburg Historical Society)**

Bessie Grove and Charlotte Davis. Soon after, the library received a gift of \$500 from the late Raleigh Sherman to be used in the support of the library. Mr. Sherman, an attorney in Washington, DC, maintained a house in Sharpsburg.

The 1941 WCFL annual report lists the library as being under the supervision of Mrs. Charlotte R. Price. The library was open on Thursday afternoons only and had 1100 volumes on its shelves. A basket of books requested by patrons was received from the Washington County Free Library weekly.

The Sharpsburg Library Association minutes listed that the Librarian received .25 cents an hour in 1946 and the library was now open on Wednesdays also. In May of 1946, 700 pounds of coal was delivered to the library for \$3.15.

"Library Card Parties" were quite the thing in the 40's in Sharpsburg. People would pay to play cards (the game 500) and small prizes were given for high and low score. Usually there were four to a table. Refreshments were served and the library would receive the admission price. E.P. Earley of the Norfolk and Western Railway Co. paid \$1.70 to the Chairman of the Card Party Committee to pay postage for 170 "postals". The Library Association hosted "Silver Teas and Displays" from 1953 until 1963.

Mrs. Elta Hamilton retired in 1968 from her librarian duties at the Sharpsburg Library. In an article from the Hagerstown paper about her retirement she stated, "that mostly younger folks come in to browse and borrow. The 28 steps up to the library room discourages the older citizens," she believed. A newspaper article from November 1972 states that the town of Sharpsburg agreed to allow the library to move from the second floor to the first, otherwise they would need to install a fire escape. In 1975 the first floor was remodeled as a permanent home for the library with an Open House to celebrate the renovation on Sunday, May 4, 1975. Saturday hours were added that June and in 1979 Tuesday hours were added.

The WCFL Sharpsburg Branch is still located at 106 East Main Street, Sharpsburg, MD. Along with the regular collections, there are over 350 titles on the Civil War with a concentration on the Battle of Antietam. There is also a nice local collection along with some local artwork. Additionally programs for all ages are offered including those about the Civil War and local history.

**(Editor's Notes:** The WCFL Sharpsburg Branch is still located at 106 East Main Street, Sharpsburg, MD, in the Community Hall. The library was located on the second floor when the photo from the Sharpsburg Historical Society that is part of the logo on page 20 was taken. Barbara Twigg is the Branch Manager of the Sharpsburg Library. Hours for the library are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday 2:30-8pm and Saturday 9:15am-1pm. Additional information can be obtained through [www.washcolibrary.org](http://www.washcolibrary.org) or <https://www.facebook.com/WCFLSharpsburg/>)