

The Fight for Vienna's First Library

MR: Some people got together and decided for two reasons: A) the town should have a real library. Secondly, we should have a library accessible to all people. There was this convoluted reverter clause in the property where Patrick Henry library now stands. I won't go into the details, but the Town didn't own that land. I think it was part of the Fairfax County School district or something. It had a reverter that if it was used for anything except except except except except, the land would revert back. That's where the Little Library was. There ensued quite a difference of opinion between the trustees of the old library, many of whom were old friends, and this new group that formed called Friends of the Library. I have a habit of sometimes—I learned, I don't do it anymore—of wading into something without knowing what I'm wading into. A very good friend came to me and said, 'Maud, you believe in libraries, don't you?' I said, 'Of course!' 'Well, why don't you join the Friends group? We need...' 'Okay! I'm there.' And then I find out these little frictions between various segments of Town and everything. People don't realize what used to happen. We needed a decent public library. So we lobbied the county. We weren't getting along. But at one point, in those first couple of years, we had one thousand people sign up for Friends of the Library. I couldn't believe it one day when I read the statistics again. Everybody putting their dollar in. So the County finally said 'We will give you'—this is how Vienna got its first public library—'we will give you a storefront'. That's what they used to do. They'd rent space in a commercial center. The Giant shopping center was new. They rented a store down there. They said, 'but you have to put up \$8,000' for, "shelving". Well, you don't know Vienna at the end of the '50s. \$8,000! But, luckily, Mr. Yeonas kicked in some money, the Women's Club had innumerable rummage sales, we stood out in front of places. I had the post office at its original site, with cups, Saturday morning after Saturday morning, accepting contributions. We finally got our \$8,000 and we got the storefront library.