

A Place Called Whippany

The history and contemporary times of Hanover Township, by: Leonardo A. Fariello

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<http://whippany.net/> contact: Len@whippany.net

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Whippanong Library



Whippanong Hall Association Capital Stock, 1895

note the stock reads “Whippanong” and the seal reads “Whippanong”

—This stock is on file with the Hanover Township Landmark Commission

The Whippanong Hall Association established the first public library in Hanover Township in 1895. Its books were enclosed in glass cases and housed in a building known as “Whippanong Hall.”

Whippanong Hall Association incorporated in 1893 and purchased a tract of land on the corner of Mt. Pleasant Avenue and Parsippany Road in Whippany (known then as Dover Turnpike and Halseytown Road). In 1894 the association built Whippanong Hall, which opened in 1895. The “Hall,” as it was often called, served as a civic center for general public purposes. It functioned as a meeting place, township hall, post office, boys’ club, and public library. The library was called the “Roberts Memorial Library.” It was established in honor of Mrs. J. W. Roberts. The caretaker of the hall served as the

librarian and postmaster of Whippany. The library had 2,000 volumes of well selected books.

Unfortunately, in 1909 Whipponong Hall and the first public library in Whippany came to a sudden end. The building burned to the ground and many records and books were lost. At that time the loss was set at \$5,000.

In 1910 the Whipponong Hall Association incorporated the Whippanong Library Association as a sister organization with the same trustees serving both organizations. That year the Hall Association relinquished their land in a sheriff's sale and bought it back a month later as the Whippanong Library Association.

In 1920 the Hall Association made attempts to build a memorial hall in recognition of World War I. The memorial hall was never built and the associations maintained the site as the Whippany Memorial Park. Over the next several decades the Whipponong Hall Association and Whippanong Library Association remained inactive and the land remained vacant.

In the fall of 1954 the Whippany P.T.A. (Parent-Teacher Association) formed a committee to establish a free public library in Hanover Township. The P.T.A. donated \$100 to get the project started. In November 1955 the library committee incorporated as the Hanover Township Public Library Association.

In 1956 officers of the Hanover Township Public Library Association and officers of the long inactive Whippanong Hall and Library Associations held a meeting to discuss plans to establish a public library. At that meeting the new and the old civic corporations merged and trustees from each of the organizations were elected as trustees of the new association. Funds of the Whipponong Hall Association and legal title of the Whippanong Library Association became the assets of the merger and included one acre of land in the center of Whippany (the site of the old Whipponong Hall) and \$3,500.

In 1956 the community joined together to help make the vision of a local public library a reality. The teachers of the Whippany and Cedar Knolls Teachers Association donated \$402 which was raised from a basketball game held for the benefit of the library. Betty Welch Clemens School of Dancing contributed the proceeds of its annual dance recital to the library fund in the amount of \$394. Rowe Manufacturing Company donated \$50 and Sandoz Company (now Novartis) donated the same. The 1956 sixth grade of Whippany Public School donated \$31 and the Little League donated \$30.

Also in 1956, the library association made plans to build a 6,000-square foot building in the center of Whippany to house the Whippany post office and the Whippanong Library; plans were drawn, but nothing more materialized.

By 1957 the Whippanong Library Association had raised \$7,217. It wasn't enough to build a new library, but it was enough to operate one. That year the Whippany Fire Company consented to house the Whippanong Library under an agreement that the library association pay its utility bills in lieu of rent. Books were loaned and donated to the library and purchased by the library association. The Whippanong Library officially opened on the second floor of the Whippany firehouse on April 6, 1957.

In 1958 the Hanover Township Committee began to include the Whippanong Library in their annual budget. The township's first contribution was \$5,000. Also that year the Rotary Club of Whippany donated \$200.

In 1958 the library contained 4,518 books; there were 290 adult members and 685 children, with a total circulation of 9,865 books. In 1959 there were 480 adult patrons and 921 children members with a circulation of 14,479 books, and library hours were increased. In 1959 the Township of Hanover funded \$6,000 to the library and in 1960 it funded \$7,500.

In 1961 the Whippanong Library Association sold its one-acre tract of land on the corner of Mt. Pleasant Avenue and Parsippany Road for \$16,000. The Whippany post office was built on the site. The proceeds of the sale were used to buy books and pay operating expenses.

In 1962 membership increased to 2,691 patrons with a circulation of 30,935 books.

Over the next two decades the township and the library continued to grow and the library had run out of space. In 1978 the Township of Hanover added a library wing onto the municipal building. It was completed in 1979 when the library moved to its present location. The library was expanded along with the rest of the municipal building in 2002 and opened a bigger, brighter library in August of that year.

The Whippanong Library is a great amenity to the residents of Hanover Township and although it is housed at the municipal campus and partially funded by the Township of Hanover, it is still run by the Whippanong Library Association. The Whippanong Library Association is made up of a Board of Trustees. There are eleven trustees; new trustees are selected by the board. The library currently has three full-time employees: a library director and two librarians, as well as nine part-time employees. Together with the Township of Hanover, the Whippanong Library continues to thrive.

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Contact Information: Len Sunchild Publishing Co., Len@whippany.net, 973-539-5355