

History of the Glen Park Branch Library

In the two years following the Great 1906 Earthquake and Fire, as San Franciscans displaced by the catastrophe spread out to find new places to live, Glen Park was quickly evolving from a bucolic rural landscape into a growing residential district. In need of utilities and greater attention from city leaders, a group of 40 civic-minded Glen Park women established the Glen Park Outdoor Art League in February 1908 with the mission to beautify the district and establish much needed city services for its residents.

These ladies would become Glen Park's earliest activists. The League's second president, Ada Parker Stillings, herself an earthquake refugee along with her husband, Calvin, and for whom Stillings Street in Glen Park was likely named, led the Glen Park Outdoor Art League's effort to establish the first branch of the San Francisco Public Library in Glen Park. Delivery Station F opened in September 1908 at 2975 Diamond Street (the site of today's Glen Park BART Station) in Mrs. Mary Bridget Mullally Hamilton's dry goods store. Mary Bridget was the wife of Tommy Richardson Hamilton, who was known affectionately by locals as the "Mayor of Glen Park." In just 7 years, Mrs. Hamilton herself would move up the ranks of civic leadership to become the President-General of the National Auxiliary of War Veterans and a prominent San Francisco suffragette.

In June 1914, what was now known as Glen Park Deposit Station F experienced the first of several moves the branch would endure over the next 85 years as it relocated to 598 Bosworth Street at Diamond Street. In February 1918, it moved next door to 596 Bosworth Street. Here it remained until January 1927 when Deposit Station F was promoted to a regular branch of the San Francisco Public Library following a request from the Glen Park Community Club. Located at 700 Bosworth Street (at the northwest corner of Lippard Avenue), the new branch offered reading material for both adults and juveniles. By 1953, the city was paying \$65 per month for the library space to building owners Nickolaos and Madeline Paxinos.

The Glen Park branch had reached its highest circulation in May 1939 with a distribution of 5,075 books and periodicals. Yet, between 1946 and 1952, the average circulation per month had decreased to 3,723, and by 1957 to 2,890. At this time, there were concerns that the Glen Park Branch was becoming too expensive to maintain: at a cost of 31 cents to circulate a book from Glen Park, it was more than twice the city's average.

As the branch was being considered for closure in early 1957, the San Francisco Public Library Bookmobile began making scheduled stops at 700 Bosworth on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays between 1:00 pm and 2:30 pm. Yet, the branch continued to remain open until the summer of 1964 when the building was identified for demolition (along with many others) for the widening of Bosworth Street from two lanes to four lanes as part of a larger plan to establish freeway corridors throughout the city. At this time, the Glen Park branch moved back to the site of today's BART station, at 2909 Bosworth Street at Diamond Street. Four years later in July 1968, and despite protests from local residents, the BART District purchased the block for \$100,000. This would cause the branch to move again in 1969 when construction for the new station began – this time to 2842 Diamond Street at Kern Street, today's Gialina Pizza Restaurant.

Then in 1970, William and Val Tietz, whose Glen Park family roots extend back to the 1870s, endowed the land at 653 Chenery Street to the San Francisco Public Library. The Tietz family demolished the old hardware store the family had operated for years, then designed and constructed a new building for the purposes of a library – today the site of Bird & Beckett Books and Records.

There the library branch remained for the next 37 years when, for the first time in the history of Glen Park, the city moved the Glen Park Branch Library into a city-owned, non-rental property at 2825 Diamond Street at Kern Street. The new building, constructed at a cost of \$5.5 million, opened its doors on October 13, 2007 with then-Mayor Gavin Newsom cutting the ribbon. It stands today as a testament to the nearly 110-year history of the Glen Park Branch Library that began with the civic work of Ada Parker Stillings, the ladies of the Glen Park Outdoor Art League, and Mary Bridget Mullally Hamilton, not to mention its ability to survive several relocations because of the passion of generations of Glen Park booklovers for their local branch.