

Jamesburg's Ball for Books



The Jamesburg Library Ball in the Forsgate Country Club Saturday will climax the borough's three day celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Jamesburg Branch of the First National Bank of Middlesex County and the 300th anniversary of the state of New Jersey.

An annual event, this year's ball will celebrate still another historical event in the life of the borough, the completion of Jamesburg's first permanent public library.

The history of the library dates back to 1882 when the Jamesburg Literary Society was organized. In 1884 the society, in an effort to bring to the citizens of Jamesburg the benefits of the cultural life, opened a free reading room. This was closed in the fall of 1885 for lack of interest and finances.

In that same year the Jamesburg Library Association was organized with the Rev. B. S. Everitt as president; F. Lemuel Buckelew, then president of the Jamesburg Bank, as vice-president; G. A. Schultz, secretary, and T. W. Hill, treasurer. The library of 300 books was opened in Dr. Suydam's drug store under the supervision of George Hoffman.

Members of the association paid \$2 a year in dues and were entitled to borrow a book a week. Nonmembers paid \$1 for each book borrowed.

The library was later moved to the Presbyterian Church basement where it was conducted as the Free Sunday School Library until 1931. At that time the books were transferred to the Jamesburg School.

The school continued to provide library services until some 10 years ago when the need for classrooms made it necessary for the school to convert the library into an additional classroom.

The Presbyterian Church once more stepped in to fill the gap and the church basement again became the repository of Jamesburg's books.

At the same time the Jamesburg Lions Club became aware of the need for a library and youth center and launched a borough wide campaign for support of the project.

The borough's second Library Association was officially incorporated in 1956, and, in 1958, ground was broken on land donated by the Fire Department.

Opened last year for the use of youth groups and the Lions Duplicate Bridge Club, the building did not begin to function as a library until June. Since opening day ceremonies on Memorial Day some 5,171 books have been circulated.

Saturday's ball, a major social event in the life of Jamesburg, will, as it has in the past, benefit the library with proceeds going toward repayment of the \$9,000 still owed on the building.

But as part of the borough's tercentennial celebration, this year's ball will stand out as a tribute to Jamesburg's past and as a testament to the progress that will mark its future.

History of the First National Bank of Jamesburg (Continued from page 9)

garding reorganization. Voorhees served as conservator until December 14, 1933. Trustees for the benefit of the waived deposits accruing to the depositors of the old bank were to be Donald R. McCain, Louis M. Heckman and Voorhees. For the third time in its history the current pastor of the Jamesburg Presbyterian Church entered the active life of the bank when the Reverend Andrew S. Layman presided at stockholders' meetings. The Reverend William Wells was an original shareholder, and the Reverend B.S. Everitt served as acting cashier in 1903.

The reorganized bank received its license to begin business in accordance with the provisions approved by the Comptroller of the Currency on December 16, 1933. New directors elected were: Wilton T. Applegate, president, Dr. Louis M. Heckman, vice president, George R. Bailey, Addison A. Conover, John H. Herche, and William W. Drake, cashier. T. Clifford Emens continued his directorship from the old board.

In 1941 the Jamesburg Bank entered into an agreement with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York for the purpose of maintaining adequate U.S. Defense Savings Banks, Series E, for the sale in the bank. For the third time in its lively existence the bank was conducting wartime business. On December 18, 1941, came the death of Wilton T. Applegate, who had served as president since the reorganization of the bank in 1933. Dr. Louis M. Heckman was elected president.

The name of Robert E. Jeffrey appears for the first time in the list of employees of the bank on January 14, 1947. Others employed then were Helen D. VanAken, assistant cashier, Myrtle Bunn, Alberta Applegate, Ila Brinker, and Harry Howell, janitor.

Dr. Louis M. Heckman, president of the board of directors died January 22, 1951. John H. Herche was elected president. In 1953 Robert E. Jeffrey was appointed assistant cashier. One hundred and fifty dollars was given by the bank to the Jamesburg Landscape Project, the planting of flowering bushes along the railroad tracks through the center of town. Somehow the minds of the people had changed so that now they wished to hide Buckelew's exciting rails with forsythia and lilacs and drive-in and walk-in windows were suggested, planned and built in 1954. This modern improvement met with great approval.

In March of 1956 a committee of two, John H. Herche and William Drake, was formed to explore the possibilities of a merger with another banking institution. In April the same committee was authorized to investigate the possibility of a merger with the First National Bank of South River, New Jersey.

The merger was based on thirteen shares of South River Bank stock being given for one share of the Jamesburg Bank. The Jamesburg Bank would retain its special identity in that its original 1864 charter would be continued in use. By now Jamesburg was listed as the thirty-eighth bank in the nation still chartered under the National Banking Act of 1863.

At a stockholders meeting on October 2, 1956, President John H. Herche presented a resolution for the ratification of a consolidation agreement executed by the board of directors of the First National Bank of South River and the board of directors of the First National Bank of Jamesburg.

The resolution was declared ratified, confirmed, and effective, subject to final approval of the Comptroller of the Currency.

This is the end of the story of the Jamesburg Bank as a separate entity, but actually it is the beginning of a new phase of its life as an integral part of The First National Bank of Middlesex County with offices in South River, Spotswood, Jamesburg, East Brunswick, Parlin, Sayreville, and, in 1963, in Monroe Township, the actual home of the original bank of 1864 because Jamesburg was not yet an independent borough.

Not many banks that were closed for the funeral of President Lincoln were still in existence to be ordered closed for the funeral of the also-assassinated President Kennedy in 1963, but the Bank in Jamesburg was. During the century of life the Jamesburg Bank witnessed the conclusion of the War Between the States, two World Wars, the Korean War, and various minor skirmishes. It weathered depressions and prosperity, changes in population, industry, transportation, and scientific and cultural developments never visualized by its founders in 1864. What its founders did anticipate correctly was that there would continue to be men of wisdom and integrity, no matter how faltering at times, to lead the bank on into a bright future.