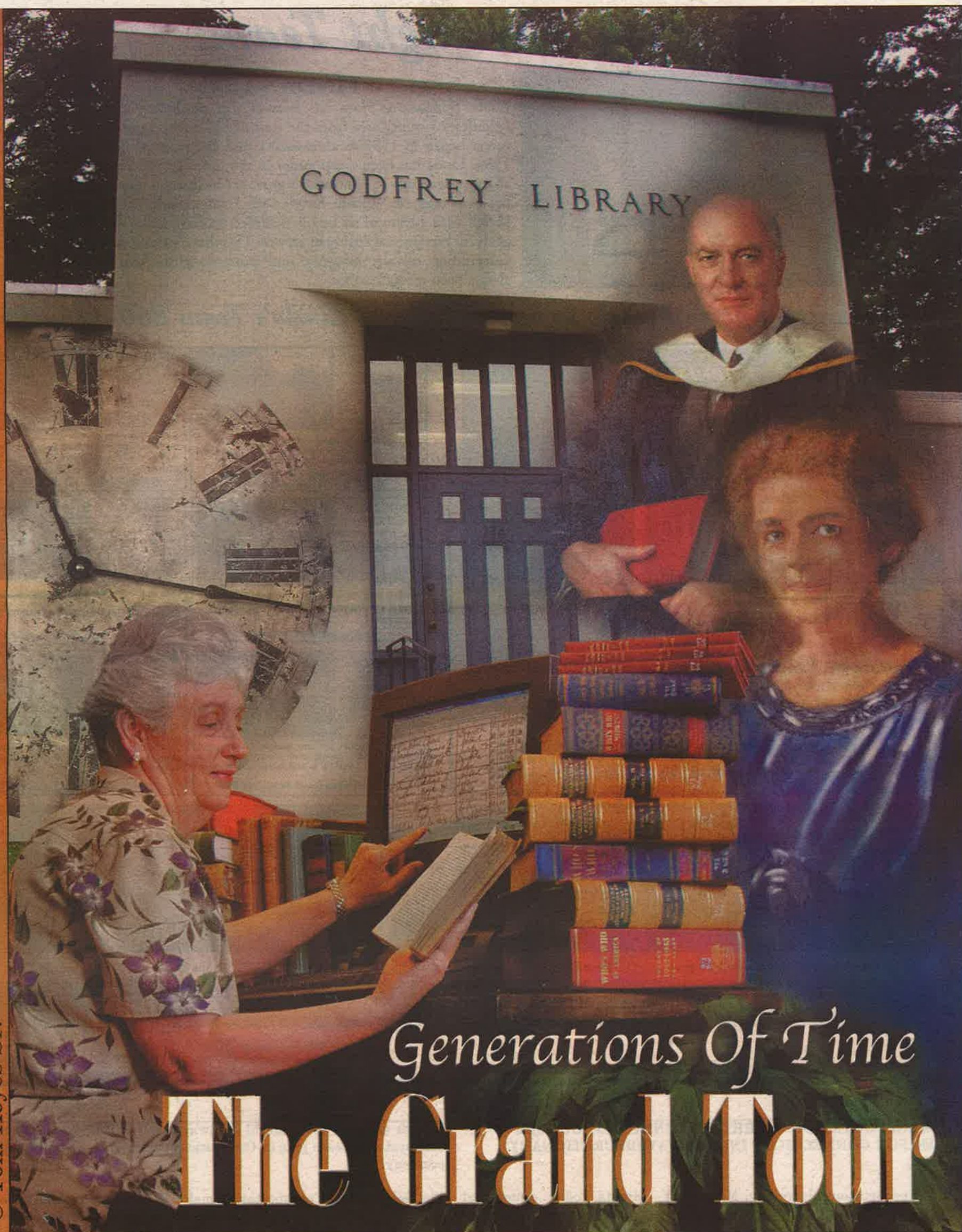




The Chronicle

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Generations Of Time The Grand Tour

Past generations beckon you to the Godfrey Memorial Library on Newfield Street in Middletown. If you've ever wondered where your family came from, who were your ancestors, if you're related to anyone famous, Library Director Nancy Doan (left), Assistant Director Tom Kemp, or any of the library volunteers can help you find the answers. Reference materials date back to colonial times and beyond. You needn't hail from New England either, research can be conducted for any location throughout the United States and many other countries.

Story on page 4.

RELATIVELY SPEAKING

Godfrey Memorial Library provides a wealth of genealogical assistance to the public.

By Pat Tattenbaum

Middletown- In *The Mikado*, Pooh-Bah, boasts, "I am, in point of fact, a particularly haughty and exclusive person, of pre-Adamite ancestral descent. You will understand this when I tell you that I can trace my ancestry back to a protoplasmal primordial atomic globule."

Of course, not all of us are that lucky. How far back can you trace your family history? Alex Haley spent years discovering and writing about his "Roots." Members of the D.A.R. revel in their ancestral connectedness to eminent historical persona. My personal route into the genealogical past took me to Middletown, and the Godfrey Memorial Library at 134 Newfield Street.



(Front) Godfrey Memorial Library Assistant Director Tom Kemp (left) and Director Nancy Doan (right).

The large, squared-off, white structure sits back from the road atop an inviting, tree-shaded knoll. The Library was opened and dedicated on May 6, 1951, and named by its founder, A. Freemont Ryder in memory of his wife, Grace (Godfrey) Ryder and her brother, Brig. General Stuart Chapin Godfrey. The facility depends on volunteers for various every day duties, and although it has a small endowment income, no funds from city, state, county or the government finance its operation. Needless to say, all donations are welcome.

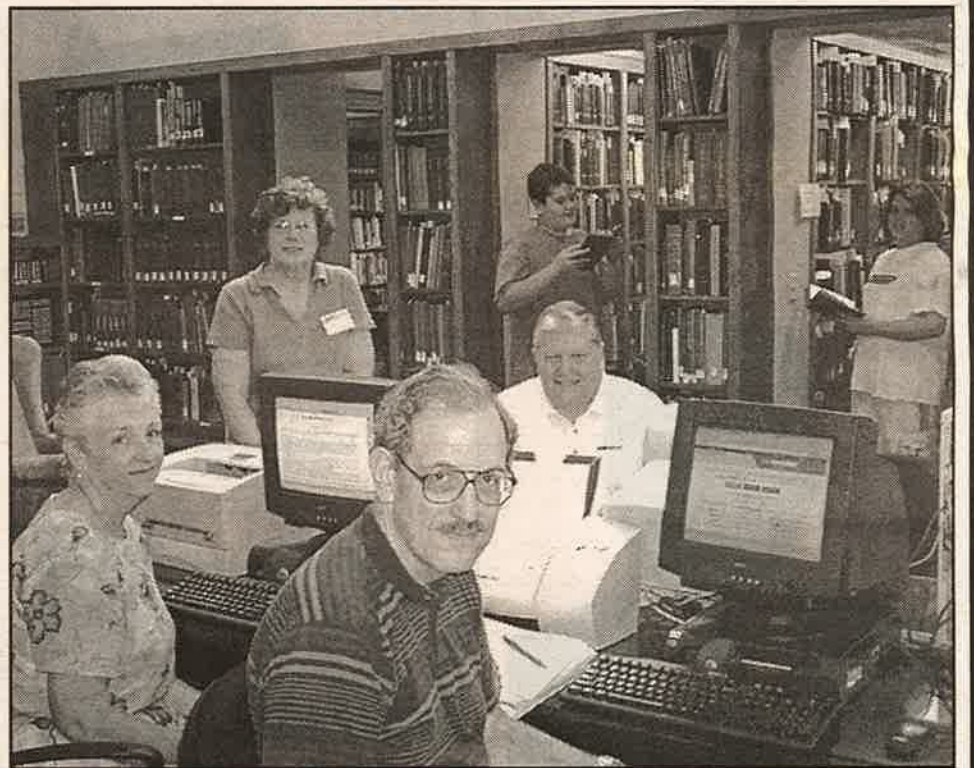
Nancy Doan, the Godfrey's long time director was kind enough to give me a personally guided tour of the facility, which houses a vast collection of books, CD's, microfilm, and a multitude of other pertinent reference materials, all available to the public free of charge. The book selection is divided into three categories: family genealogy, local history, and biography. At present, the library contains approximately 17,000 volumes, but Nancy informed me that new material arrives daily from a myriad of sources. Coverage is mainly New England and the thirteen original colonies, but some material is obtainable on every state. Numerous indexes are on hand, including Filby's index to passenger and immigration lists. Also readily available are military records dating from colonial

times, cemetery and church records from throughout Southern New England and New York State, and the Hale Collection for Middlesex and Hartford counties, plus shelves of city and business directories dating back to 1825.

Computers have replaced typewriters; mimeographs succeeded by fax machines and scanners. Reference materials are easier to catalogue and classify, and the Internet effortlessly links researchers to related sources throughout the world. All in all, the place is a veritable gold mine of historical records. Tom Kemp, the library's assistant director, and author of more than two dozen books on genealogy, pointed out that only one other facility in the United States is a greater storehouse of genealogical data than the Godfrey, and that is the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. His latest book, *Virtual Roots 2* (Scholarly Resources, 2003), was just released and Mr. Kemp has donated his entire royalties from this book to the Godfrey Memorial Library.

Next to gardening, genealogy is the most popular adult hobby in the country. If you're interested in researching your family history, but the thought of embarking on a project like this on your own seems a bit mind-boggling, never fear. Help is available at a modest hourly charge.

The Godfrey's hours are Monday from 9 AM to 8 PM, and Tuesday through Friday from 9 AM through to 4 PM. Parking and admission are free. For more information, you can reach Tom Kemp by e-mail at TKemp@Godfrey.org, by phone at (860) 346-4375 or log on to the library's website: library@godfrey.org.



Left to right: (front) Nancy Doan, library volunteer Bruce Tyler, (second row) library volunteer Diane Reid, (standing back row) Andrew and Sarah Kemp.

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