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Closing the door on the old and opening the new

With 29 years of service under his belt, Rod MacKenzie closed the doors to the Fairfield Historical Society's library for the last time. That's because the library is moving across the street to its new home in the Fairfield Museum and History Center, located at 370 Beach Road, where Rod will be eagerly awaiting library patrons.

MacKenzie, a life-long Fairfield resident, came to the Fairfield Historical Society in June of 1979, at age 41, to work as an educator, describing the British burning of Fairfield. In his spare time, he made use of the library to do genealogy research, knowing that the Fairfield Historical Society's library is one of the state's foremost genealogical research libraries. After that summer MacKenzie began working in the library each weekend, helping people with inquiries, researching artifacts for curators, and assisting other genealogists. "I enjoy it when you throw a name at me and I get to learn about someone," said MacKenzie.

Over the years the type of genealogy research people tend to do has changed. "When I first started here, people generally researched early Fairfield families. As the years have gone by, ethnic groups are being researched more, because of the changing makeup of Fairfield, I think," said MacKenzie.

Since 1954 the library was located in the Fairfield Historical Society's building at 636 Old Post Road. This summer, the library, the Fairfield Historical Society's collection and its staff are moving into a newly constructed 13,000 square-foot museum on Fairfield's Town Green. The library will offer new research equipment, a comfortable reading room and improved access to much of its collection. "I have mixed feelings about leaving this building. I realize the need for a modern library, but I've become attached to this building," said MacKenzie.

The grand opening of the new Fairfield Museum and History Center is set for September 16, 2007. Visitors will be treated to a parade, a period re-enactor mock-battle, crafters, demonstrators and of course the grand re-opening of the library. "That will be a good day. I'll be happy to have the library open again, and get back to helping people with their research," said Mackenzie.

For more information about the Fairfield Museum and History Center, visit www.fairfieldhs.org, or call 259-1598.

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