

# Montclarion

## (CA){PUBLICATION2}

### PIEDMONT AVENUE LIBRARY TURNS 80

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**Memo:** If you go

What: 80th anniversary celebration of the **Piedmont Avenue branch library**

When: 2-5 p.m. Saturday

Where: 160 41st St.

Information: Call 510-597-5011.

OAKLAND -- Readers young and old are expected to gather Saturday to mark the 80th anniversary of the Piedmont Avenue branch of the Oakland Public Library. But the celebration may be bittersweet as the branch soon may have to leave its home at the heart of the avenue's key intersection. Along with live jazz, the celebration will feature children's activities and refreshments, as well as a prize for the individual wearing the best 1930s outfit -- or the kind of clothes a patron would have worn when checking out a book on March 8, 1932, the branch's Opening Day.

"The library is like a Piedmont Avenue tradition," said Patricia Faralles, 31, a nearby resident. "It has its own charm. It's like Fenton's or the clock above what used to be J's Hamburgers. It's what can make the avenue feel like a village."

To help mark the anniversary, library officials are collecting people's memories and thoughts about the branch, which they say is the fourth busiest in the Oakland system. The Piedmont Avenue Memories Project invites people to share comments for future generations of library-users.

Go to <http://www.oaklandlibrary.org/branches/piedmont.html> for details.

The original Piedmont Avenue branch opened in 1912 at 3975 Piedmont Ave., near present day Wells Fargo and close to Monte Vista Avenue.

Oakland architects Miller & Warnecke designed the current single-story building after library officials secured City Council approval in November 1931.

Despite being one of the two smallest branches in the Oakland system, the library at 160 41st St. features regular toddler and preschool story times, selections of CDs and DVDs, and what library officials say is the biggest collection of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender fiction and nonfiction in the East Bay.

But the 1,700-square foot library also has drawbacks.

It has no public restroom, just three public computers and can feel especially

cramped on a busy weekend afternoon with its approximately 1,000 titles on the shelves.

"For me, it's a place to hang out, study and work on projects," said 19-year-old Hector Prato. "It's not like going to a cafe, where things can get noisy. The quiet puts you in the mood to work."

Two years ago, neighboring Citibank sold the property that houses the branch to Goodhue Property Investments.

While the bank charged just \$1 a month for rent, the new owner began charging \$4,250 each month under a one-year lease that ended in November. The library has a one-year renewal option.

Since then the branch's future has been uncertain, and library representatives have been meeting with community groups to gather input and discuss relocating to other nearby sites.

It also remains unclear how much money from Measure Q, the parcel tax that Oakland voters passed in March 2004 to benefit libraries, will go toward moving or maintaining the branch.

Among the suggestions is to house the library in a portable on the grounds of Piedmont Avenue Elementary School.

Oakland resident Edwin Brehens, 26, said moving to a portable could discourage people from patronizing the branch since the collection likely would be cut and fewer services offered.

But Brehens said more computers and technology upgrades are needed at all branches, not just Piedmont Avenue, to attract people.

"Then again, maybe we all have too much technology nowadays," he said.

"These kinds of places force you to be a little old-fashioned and read a book."

Reach Peter Hegarty at 510-748-1654 or follow him on [Twitter.com/Peter\\_Hegarty](https://twitter.com/Peter_Hegarty).