

A Capsule History of the Fairport Public Library (FPL)

- 1839** Perinton voters approved \$10 "for purchasing a library" -- ultimately our own FPL -- for Fairport's District School No. 9 at 36 East Church St.
- 1840** The new library began with Charles H. Dickinson as its librarian. He served until October of 1842. Librarians to 1855 are named in School No. 9 records at the Fairport Historical Museum.
- 1848** Library started opening to the public every other Saturday afternoon.
- 1855-1856** The school and its now-public library were moved to a new building at 38 E. Church St. Old School No.9 razed.

Private libraries in the 1870s - 1890s:

These *coexisted* with the school library as Fairport's rapidly growing population drew the School Board's attention to school construction and away from focusing on its own library.

The first private library (1880 or earlier and which *they* called the "Fairport Public Library"!) was that of Julia and Emma Dickinson *(Charles' daughters) and Elizabeth Dowd. This was in the Dickinson home at 10 East Church Street. It was relocated (date unknown) to 123 South Main Street where a cousin, Mrs. Buckland and, later, Mr. & Mrs. Charles D. Case were librarians. This library was open to the public, but it was not free. It closed in 1893 or 1894.

Later, apparently both John H. Hardick and William T. Fonda operated private rental libraries in the Hawkins Block on the east side of South Main Street near the canal.

Continuing FPL's "genealogy":

- 1872** School No. 9 was moved--with its library--to 38 West Church St. as the Fairport Classical & Union Free School. In 1874, this was chartered by the N.Y. Regents as Fairport's first high school.
- 1895** A new state law permitted the transfer of school libraries to Library Committees which would make the books available to the public. FPL received its provisional charter on November 21. It is the only State School District Library in Monroe County. We are uncertain whether Mabel E. Storms or Charlotte Goodrich [Mrs. Frank] Howard was the first FPL Librarian.
- ca.1897** Books were moved from the high school to a room in the Hawkins Block (demolished for the 1912-13 canal enlargement).
- 1898** It is clear that Mrs. Howard was Librarian this year. She served until 1901.
- 1901** Nettie I. Reynolds became Librarian and FPL moved to the Bown Block on the west side of South Main St. In 1906, FPL moved into a larger room in the Bown Block (demolished in 1977 with urban renewal.)

- 1906** Ida M. Cheesbrough became Librarian, serving through August of 1921. Absolute (permanent) FPL Charter granted June 28, by the Regents of the University of the State of New York. The original document is in the Raymond F. Buchanan Board Room at FPL.
- 1914-15** Chamber of Commerce sought Carnegie Corporation money for a new library. Voters approved the local share of the cost but rejected all proposed sites, so Carnegie support had to be relinquished.
- 1917** FPL moved to a frame house at 18 Perrin Street, which the School District owned. This site was "home" for 61 years!
- 1921-23** Helen DeLand later described this as "a short period of confusion with many helpers" until Helen B. Fuller was appointed Librarian in 1922.
- 1923** Miss Helen Parce DeLand was appointed FPL Librarian.
- 1924** Miss DeLand now also became F.H.S. Librarian when the new West Avenue school opened. The two libraries were combined under a single board.
- ca.1928** Elma Nau Gaffney began "helping out". She became a member of the Library Board in 1931.
- 1933-35** Miss DeLand was ill and could not continue in both library positions. Mrs. Gaffney was FPL's Acting Librarian.
- 1929** Robert Douglas gave 500 shares of Certo stock to the Library Building Fund. Henry A. Martin's design was chosen. The Depression plunged the stock's value until there was not enough money to build a new library. Plans were shelved temporarily.
- 1932** Anticipating the demolition and replacement of the house at 18 Perrin St., FPL moved to temporary quarters in the Schummer's Block on West Avenue.
- 1936** Mrs. Gaffney's appointment as Librarian became effective. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) approved our new public library building as a project. Henry Martin's plans were used; Mrs. Gaffney was construction manager.
- 1938** The new 18 Perrin Street library was officially opened on March 5. Carl Peters' mural is a prominent feature.
- 1945** Mrs. Gaffney worked in California from March until November. Helen Myers Martin served as interim Librarian.
- 1952** New Absolute Charter as part of Perinton Central School District No. 1. The original is in the FPL Director's office.
- 1953** FPL joined the Monroe County Library System. Mrs. Gaffney had played a very important part in its creation.
- 1962** Recreation / Meeting Room re-modeled and became the Children's Room. Mrs. Parce Hannan was Children's Librarian.
- 1968** Mrs. Gaffney retired after nearly 40 years with FPL. She was an FPL volunteer at least until 1978. She died in 1980. Raymond F. Buchanan was appointed Director. FPL was growing rapidly because of the burgeoning suburban population.
- 1972** Proposal to relocate to a site (once again) on E. Church St., where fire station currently stands. Voted down, but decision made in 1976 to lease space in the new urban renewal

building on S. Main Street.

- 1978** Volunteers moved the library, box by box, to its new home in the Village Landing. Official opening: March 20.
- 1991** A major renovation was completed. The Library had been closed for six weeks.
- 1993** Card catalog replaced by CARL, a Monroe County-wide computer system.
- 1995** A centennial reception was held on November 21, and a commemorative plaque was placed on the building at 18 Perrin St., now the Fairport Historical Museum.
- 1996** FPL expanded once more, but this time could remain at the same location. A much larger Children's Room and a Quiet Room were created. FPL reopened April 11.
- 2000** Ray Buchanan retired after 32 years of service as Director. Betsy Gilbert is our current Director. She came to FPL from the Rochester Regional Library Council across Main St.
- 2004** FPL surveyed its community to assess service, space & location priorities.
- 2005** The Small Business Resource Center, est'd. 2001, renamed to honor Seymour Rudin.
- 2008** No decision yet on FPL expansion.

Version 2.0, March 2008, by Roger W. Nelson, Fairport NY. Based on personal interviews, several earlier histories and previous timeline notes by Sue Roberts and by Jane Maher.