

HISTORY OF THE MILFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

In the fall of 1907, the Columbian Reading Circle spearheaded the formation of the Milford Public Library Associates. The first location for the new library was in the waiting room of the Winona Interurban station, which was in the Hotel Milford. Eighty volumes were borrowed from the state and the community held a “book shower”. Miss Arilla Arnold donated her services as the librarian. In 1908, the city voted a levy of three cents. Those first few years the library was located in several locations.

In May of 1916, the library board purchased the ground where the library now stands. Later that same year, the board was finally assured of \$10,000 from the Andrew Carnegie Fund, and a contract was drawn up with Milford, Van Buren, and East Jefferson Townships, whereby all future maintenance and support would be provided by these taxing units. The Carnegie obligation ended with the building fund. The cornerstone for the original building was laid April 12, 1918, and the grand opening was held in January 1919.

Dorothea Groves, later Kerlin, was hired in 1926 and remained in that position until 1973. During her years of service, the collection grew to 18,000 volumes and the library became a community center. A basement meeting room housed such groups as the Farm Bureau, Grange, American Legion, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Conservation Club, Town Board, a kindergarten, and during W.W. II, a Red Cross work place. In the 1970’s, children’s programming was started and Milford’s sesquicentennial year, 1986, saw the refurbishing and redecorating of the library. Programs have been provided to the nursing home, day care centers, senior citizens, schools and service clubs. In addition, summer and winter reading programs, story hours, adult reading tutors and several workshops have been offered.

The 1995 building expansion added 4,409 square feet to the existing building, more than doubling its space at a cost of \$1.2 million. It was the first Milford building to have an elevator making it fully accessible to the handicapped. A Multi-Purpose Room, with accommodations for approximately 60 people, is available for public use.

Today, the library’s on-line computer catalog can access over 37,600 items – books, periodicals, CD’s, CD-Roms, DVD’s, videos, etc. found in the library. The library has internet access (including wireless) for public use. It serves a population of 4597 (4013 in Van Buren Township and 584 in rural East Jefferson Township). The Library continues to grow and expand its resources to keep up with the technological advances of the 21st century.