



Ford City  
Public Library  
a history  
1945 - 1975



G.R.  
MANTINI

## HISTORY OF THE FORD CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY 1945 TO 1975

Ford City now has a new public library. A long-awaited dream has finally come true. The dedication, faith, and continued sacrifice of our people have been rewarded. We can all be proud of our achievement. The quest for a new library goes back to the turn of the century.

Our founder John B. Ford, in keeping with his philanthropic ventures in other communities where he had industrial plants, built a library at 614 Third Avenue for the people of Ford City. It was built shortly before he sold his interests in the PPG organization here in 1897. Unfortunately those to whom he sold his interests peddled the new library building for use as a store. Over the years the building has been used by a number of businesses, and has passed to a number of different owners. It is now owned by Gerard Folta, and is being used for the storage of furniture and as an auto repair and service center. Too bad the old Captain's dream was not carried through!

Disappointed, but not defeated, our people pooled their efforts to build a new public high school, purchased the very latest educational materials, and hired the very best teachers and administrators. A library was included in the new structure. This was in 1909. Improvements have been made over the years so that today Ford City High School has one of the finest library facilities and professional staffs in Pennsylvania. The dream for a public library didn't die, it was merely channeled temporarily in another direction.

New life was pumped into the dream when in October 1944 Mrs. D.L. Rose Faulx wrote a letter to the editor of the Daily Leader Times in Kittanning appealing for our people to take steps to create a public library here. As one can see, her letter presented this community with a tremendous challenge.

### OPEN LETTER DAILY LEADER TIMES---OCTOBER 1944

To the people of Ford City:

Today Ford City is facing one of its greatest problems--- the need of an organized recreation center for its young people.

Fifty years ago, when this town was being made, and the glass industry getting started, Captain John B. Ford built, and gave to the town a fine brick building, to be used as a public library. For a number of years the building stood empty, until a merchant used it as a general store, and since his passing, it is empty again and being ruined by destructive idlers, who seem to enjoy smashing windows and breaking in the front.

Below it are well cared for PPG tennis courts, and above an empty space of ground of equal size, which could be reclaimed for outdoor recreation, and to which our energetic Boy Scouts, with their able leaders would no doubt lend a hand. The building itself could be a combined Public Library, Community Center, and a small-scale U.S.O. for we have servicemen here too.

Mrs. Faulx followed up her letter by talking to people on the street, voiced her opinions to her friends and neighbors, and did all that she could to plant the seed. The efforts of this good widow did not go unnoticed. On December 11, 1944, the Ford City Kiwanis Club accepted the challenge.

Kiwanis-President John Fisher presided at a public meeting in the auditorium of Ford City High School. Warren Shumaker, Ike Lefkosky, and Louis C. Gregory of the Kiwanis Community Service Committee lent their support. These influential, public-minded citizens were impressive. Those at the meeting decided the people of Ford City needed a library, books should be collected, committees chosen, and a drive for \$10,000 dollars should be launched as soon as possible. The Kiwanis Club gave a \$500 dollar donation that night to get the drive underway. John P. Badura, a banker, President of the Ford City School Board, and civic leader was unanimously chosen treasurer.

The drive for funds officially began on February 8, 1945. Sixty-two volunteers assigned by Joe Vent began knocking on the doors of the town. The hearts and purses of our people opened wide. Two hundred fifty contributors donated \$5.00 or more. PPG gave \$2,500, Ford City Kiwanis gave \$800, Ford City Eagles Aerie 606 gave \$615, Elger gave \$500, Glassworker's Local 14 gave \$500, and the children of the Ford City Public Schools gave \$137.50. Saint John's Lutheran Church donated \$104 to purchase a \$2.00 book for each of the fifty-two members of their congregation serving in our armed forces in World War II. Donations arrived almost daily from our town's service men and women. The drive was a community effort. On April 14, 1945, just six months after Mrs. Faulx's letter appeared in the paper, the Ford City Eagles Club Aerie 606, a very active community-minded organization, put the drive "over-the-top" with a donation of \$615 dollars. Two months later, on June 19, 1945 the voters of Ford City approved a one-half mill tax referendum for library support by a vote of 883 to 277. Our people had now spoken. They wanted a public library, and they were more than willing to pay for its support. The dream was fast becoming a reality.

On July 3, 1945 Ford City Borough Council appointed fifteen residents as a Permanent Library Committee to operate a free public library in Ford City. Those appointed were John M. Fisher, Louis C. Gregory, Charles Stewart, Rev. Paul M. Scholl, Ralph W. Utley, John P. Badura, Joseph Kamer, George Sanko, Andrew Bielski, Walter Folcik, Mrs. Mary Zaludny, Rev. Wendel A. Wuenstel, Miss Betty

Weaver, councilman Dr. Louis P. Rearick, and of course, Mrs. Rose Faulx. Ford City Borough Council accepted the responsibility of financially caring for a public library on this date, and still continues to do so.

At their organization meeting on August 1, 1945, John M. Fisher was chosen President, Rev. Wendell A. Wuenstel Vice President, Miss Betty Weaver Secretary, and John P. Badura Treasurer. The Constitution and By-Law Committee included Rev. Paul M. Scholl, Mrs. Rose Faulz, Joseph Kamer, Mrs. Mary Zaludny, George Sanko, and Walter Folchik. The Housing and Fixtures Committee included Charles Stewart, Dr. Louis P. Rearick, Rev. Wendell A. Wuenstel, and Louis C. Gregory. The Book Committee consisted of Ralph Utley, Rev. Paul M. Scholl, Andrew Bielski, Miss Betty Weaver, and librarian Mrs. Ethel Sheldon. Members of the Temporary Finance Committee were Rev. Wendell A. Wuenstel, John Fisher, Miss Betty Weaver, Dr. Louis P. Rearick, and John P. Badura. These committees began functioning immediately.

Suitable quarters for a library posed possibly the biggest challenge to this early committee. Funds to buy or build were not available, nor were building materials because of the war effort. So, free or rented quarters had to be obtained. On September 29, 1945 The Ford City Borough Council gave the Permanent Library Committee permission to use a vacant apartment in the Borough-owned "Philadelphia Block" at 938 Third Avenue. The Council also offered to remodel the building. Largely through the efforts of John P. Badura, President of the Ford City School Board, two vacant rooms in the basement of the Ford City Elementary School at 1101 Fourth Avenue were made available free-of-charge by the Ford City School Board. The rooms were officially accepted on March 5, 1946. The library now had a "home."

Mrs. Ethel Sheldon was hired as librarian on March 29, 1946, and the drive to collect books began on April 30th. The basement of the Ford Memorial Methodist Church was chosen as the collection center. Within ninety days 2,500 books had been donated with Rev. S.F. Anuskiewicz of St. Francis de Paul Church being the largest donor with 146. Miss Ida Falsetti was hired as an assistant librarian and Carolyn Kocisek was hired to help in cataloguing the books. Open house was held on August 26, 1946, and the doors of our first public library opened for business a day later on August 27th. Our people were all very proud that day, and rightly so. Their dream had come true. None was happier than Mrs. Rose Faulx.

The library was successful from the very beginning. 1,008 persons became members, and 19,150 books circulated that first year. Probably the most successful venture was the Saturday morning Children's Story Hour of Miss Betty Weaver, member of the Library Board and English teacher at Ford City High School.

The second year saw the organizing of a successful Vacation Reading Club and the rise in library membership to 1,300. An essay contest was held for students of all schools in Ford City with Donetta Barbour and Helen Folchik taking first and second place in the highschool division, and Leonard Davis and John F. Englert winning in the junior high division. The essays were entitled "What Our Public Library Means To Our Community." Quite a bit of interest in the library was generated by this contest.

After two years of successful operation, the Ford City Public Library was asked to vacate its quarters in the school by July 1, 1949. Increased enrollment at the school caused a need for the two rooms. At first Ford City Borough Council considered building a quonset-type library building on the cleared site once known as the "Philadelphia Block." It was to cost the Council \$15,000 dollars, measure 32 feet wide and 96 feet long, and would have been built by the Great Lakes Steel Corporation of Detroit, Michigan. Instead, they announced on June 7, 1949 that they had signed a two-year lease on the Guido Donati Building at 315 Ford Street, a building recently occupied by the Joe Vent Appliance Company. Borough employees remodeled the building, and the Ford City Public Library opened in its second "home" on June 27, 1949. On October 6, 1949 Mrs. Nell Willets organized the Friends of the Library, an organization dedicated to making the public aware of what a public library has to offer a community. The officers elected were Miss Alice Steiner President, Mrs. John Reitler Vice President, and Mrs. Mildred Cunningham Secretary-Treasurer. These "Friends" continued to work for a new library, particularly one of its most active members, Mrs. Rose Faulx.

The dream for a new library was given a much needed boost on October 24, 1950. The Ford City Youth Recreation Organization sent the library board a \$500 dollar donation. Mary Jane Reich, treasurer of the organization, stated in her letter that the \$500 donation "was to be used as a nucleus for a fund to erect a library building in Ford City, and a suitable placque be hung in the library in memory of Layden Wills (1924-1947)." Layden had been a very active member in their organization. So, young people, in their desire to honor a nice, young, Ford City boy, started the fund-raising drive that has been climaxed twenty-five years later with our new debt-free library. The placque honoring Layden Wills is proudly displayed for all to see. Yes, the wishes of this young group have been fulfilled, and Layden will always be remembered.

April 1950 saw the organization of the Ford City Lions Club with Dr. Ted Rupert as its first president. From its very beginning the Lions have been extremely active in community projects, particularly with the Ford City Public Library. They have been a true friend these past twenty-five years, and they were most anxious to join forces with the Library Board and Friends of the Library to actively work to raise sufficient monies to build and maintain a new library. Impetus came from Library Board President Louis C. Gregory on May 31, 1951.

President Gregory appointed a committee of Dr. Ted Rupert, William Kracht, Mrs. Rose Faulx, Miss Alice Steiner, Frank Cechvalay, and Ralph Stewart to investigate various fund-raising projects for building a new library. Lion member Joseph Jackson purchased the building housing the library and promised not to raise the rent. He has kept that promise for these past twenty-four years.

On November 14, 1951 Lion President Pete Fundyga appointed Ralph Stewart, C.C. Rosenberger, John Mikula, John Stroud, Charles Lefton, and James Minter to a committee to help formulate a plan of action. Frank Colonna was Lion Chairman that year that brought the Duquesne Tamburitzens to town for a library benefit. The library building fund rose to \$1,126.85. Throughout the fifties and sixties the Lions worked diligently to raise money for the library. Their efforts to date have netted the library approximately \$11,000 dollars.

Ford City Borough Council has been another friend of the library. Not only has the Council provided the bulk of the funds to operate the library since it opened in 1946, but its members have worked diligently to find it suitable quarters. On December 5, 1966 the Council purchased the old Elwood Garage adjoining the borough building on 10th Street for \$35,000 dollars. The Council gave three of the four lots, 66 feet wide and 106 feet long, to the library board as a site on which to build a new library. On July 13, 1967 John F. Englert, a Councilman and teacher from Ford City High School, called a public hearing at the CU Club on Sixth Avenue for the purpose of "getting a group together" to build a new library. He was chosen to act as General Chairman.

Joseph Myers, Supervisor of Library Construction Grants in the Bureau of Library Development in Harrisburg was asked to speak at a meeting of officials of Ford City and surrounding municipalities at the CU Club on August 2, 1967 for the purpose of having a community library built in Ford City. The library was to have area-wide financial support. Only Manorville Borough joined with Ford City, and has been a member ever since. Mrs. Myers recommended that we build a separate building from the municipal building, one with at least 4,000 square feet, and a price tag of about \$150,000 dollars. He offered to help in any way that he could, and, together with librarian Mrs. Jane Sheldon who filled out the application, he later succeeded in obtaining for us a State Grant of \$25,000 dollars for furnishings. He also provided us with free architectural services when the Council was contemplating purchasing and remodeling the Rox Serraco Building on Ninth Street as a library.

At another public meeting called by Mr. Englert at the CU Club on August 10, 1967 Mrs. Betty Hellman was asked to lead a ladies house-to-house campaign to raise funds. The ladies march was very successful. The Ford City Kiwanis Club gave \$500, the Ford City Eagles pledged \$1,000, the Ford City High School Key Club sold the remaining Ford City 75th Anniversary Books and gave almost \$1,000 to the drive. An anonymous donor stepped forward and contributed a sum of \$50,600 dollars. Eighty-five persons gave \$100 dollars each to become lifetime members of the Ford City Public Library Century Club. John Gavran of PPG Industries announced that the PPG Foundation would donate \$15,000 dollars over a three year period. On December 3, 1973 the Kiwanis sponsored Ford City High School Key Club gave \$43.01 from the proceeds of a dance to put the library fund one penny over the \$100,000 dollar mark. The ladies deserve a lot of credit for a job well done.

The Ford City Public Library Board then hired the Henry Shaffer Lumber Company of West Kittanning to build a new library for approximately \$120,000 dollars. This price was to include plumbing, heating, air conditioning, electrical, and general construction. Library construction was to begin just as soon as fine weather arrived.

At their regular monthly meeting on March 13, 1974 the Ford City Borough Council moved the site of the new library from beside the new municipal building on Tenth Street to the corner of Twelfth Street and Fourth Avenue. The Ford City Community Center, formerly the First Baptist Church, had burned to the ground on February 4th thus leaving the town with a vacant lot fifty feet wide and one hundred forty feet long. The lot was owned by the town since it

was purchased by the Ford City Borough Council, known as the Renaissance Council, in 1972 for \$12,500 dollars. The Borough Council was paid \$31,000 dollars insurance, of which \$8,992 was later loaned to the Library Board to pay off the new library building, and \$4,600 paid to Ace Demolition of Pittsburgh to remove the gutted church from the lot. The ground-breaking ceremony took place on June 22, 1974.

In June the Lion's Club gave another \$1,000 dollars, Mellon Bank gave \$725, People's Bank gave \$500, the Eagles gave the \$1,000 they had pledged earlier, and the Ford City Business and Professional Association gave the \$2,400 dollars they had made with a car raffle. Ladies under the direction of Library Board members Madge Weber and Maryjo Wojton successfully collected house-to-house in the community and brought the fund to within \$10,000 dollars of the necessary \$145,000. The Board of County Commissioners, Mr. Grover Myers, Dean P. Wyant, and Ott K. Heilman, next came through with a contribution of \$5,000 from their federal-revenue-sharing funds. Finally, on Saint Patrick's Day, March 17, 1975, the Wallace-Murray Foundation (Elger), through their local plant manager Chester Davies, announced a contribution of \$4,800 to put the library drive "over-the-top". The announcement called for an immediate donation of \$1,200 and a \$1,200 dollar contribution in 1976, 1977, and 1978. This generous gift allows us to open a debt-free library.

Our library, truly "a poor man's university," could not have been built, nor could a library service been successfully operated here since 1945 if a large number of citizens, through great personal sacrifice and by the grace of God, had not taken an interest and worked so hard. This library building is a fitting tribute to each and every one of them. The personal financial sacrifices of the older people in this community toward this project was remarkable. One old couple gave \$2,500 to start a maintenance fund.

#### THE PERMANENT LIBRARY COMMITTEE

Louis C. Gregory	Charles Stewart	Rev. Paul M. Scholl
Ralph W. Utley	John M. Fisher	John P. Badura
Joseph Kamer	George Sanko	Mrs. Rose Faulx
Andrew Bielski	Walter Folcik	Mrs. Mary Zaludny
Rev. Wendel A. Wuenstel	Miss Betty Weaver	Dr. Louis P. Rearick

#### MEMBERS OF THE LIBRARY BOARD: 1945-1975

Frank Alcibiade	Donald Grossman	Rev. Paul M. Scholl
John P. Badura	Thomas J. Jansen	Charles Stewart
Andrew Bielski	Joseph Kamer	Ralph Utrey
Frank Bucko	William Kracht	Charles Wakefield
Mrs. Catherine Carberry	Eugene Law	Fred Walbert, Jr.
Rev. Louis Doychak	Joseph Lunz	Miss Betty Weaver
John F. Englert	Alfred November	Madge Weber
Mrs. Rose Faulx	Rev. Matthias Pfeil	Mrs. Nell Willets
John M. Fisher	Dr. Louis P. Rearick	Mrs. Maryjo Wojton
Walter Folcik	Dr. Ted Rupert	Rev. Wendel A. Wuenstel
Louis C. Gregory	George Sanko	Mrs. Mary Zaludny

COUNCILMEN OF FORD CITY: 1945-1975

Walter Bowser  
Emil Graue  
George C. Kettl  
Chester Gurski  
Moses Pliscof  
Ralph Stewart  
Michael J. Charney  
Ralph Brookhouser  
Victor Caruso  
John F. Englert  
William Monroe  
Fred Watson

Dominic F. Cannon  
Dr. Lewis P. Rearick  
Steve Ziegler  
Metro Turko  
Walter Folcik  
Charles Sanders  
Michael Panchik  
Stanley Schaffer  
Nick Relich  
Donald Grossman  
Thomas J. Jansen  
Stanley Gladysiewski

Zigmond Cieply  
Fred Burdette  
Leo Valasek  
Theodore Claypool  
Edward J. Kozak  
Walter Czekanski  
Olin Grieb  
Joseph Trimarchi  
Vincent Perpich  
Ivan Peck  
John Zanetti  
Fred Walbert, Jr.

MAYORS OF FORD CITY: 1945-1975

Ferdinand Reisinger  
Frank Lux, Sr.

Ralph Shedwick  
John H. Hand

Frank Bucko

HOUSE TO HOUSE WORKERS: 1945-1975

John Fisher  
John P. Badura  
Joe Vent  
Rev. A.D. Johnson  
John H. Stovall  
Mrs. W.L. Brookhouser  
Mrs. George Simensky  
Helen H. Cannon  
Caroline Kosicek  
Mrs. John Halas  
Mrs. Mary Protz  
Millie Milito  
Mrs. Ruth Horan  
Miss Martha Troyan  
Mrs. Rose Faulx  
Mrs. David Beuth  
Peter Tamsik, Jr.  
Pauline Petronchek  
Hessie Rhines  
Ella Vogt  
Olga Hricik  
Anna Marie Rhin  
Mrs. Rose Esposito  
Ruth Harosky  
Kirby G. Seward  
Randal Pendleton  
Mrs. M.R. Sheldon  
Miss Betty Weaver  
Mrs. Henry M. McCue  
Mrs. James Cunningham  
Anita Marshall  
Sophie Gladysiewski  
Elma Saloum

Mrs. W.D. Sellers  
William Binder  
Mary Ann Bielski  
Mrs. Ruth Burdette  
Charlotte Frerotte  
Dorothy Ann Winslow  
Marion Weaver  
J.O. Burton  
Mary Smolik  
Mrs. Leon D. Mead  
Mrs. J.E. Michaux  
Mrs. Jack Miltz  
Mrs. D.I. Fair  
Mrs. George Harrison  
Ray Augustine  
Catherine Allensworth  
Sandy Bryant  
Mrs. Ralph Thomas  
Mrs. James Vitale  
Anna Reitingner  
Wilhelmina Kovalovsky  
Dolores Sanko  
Mrs. John Talliere  
Genevieve Cymbar  
Joseph J. Kamer  
Antoinette Milito  
Margie Ortman  
Mrs. Ray Christy  
Helen Carey  
Lena Liberto  
Joanne Germy  
Anita Goyda  
Mrs. Sadie Folta

Martha Maus  
Andy Grajciar  
Frank Bucko  
Betty Hileman  
Chrissy Vorpe  
Bev. Kovelovsky  
Mary Hand  
Kathleen Gardner  
M. Edwards  
Julia Fields  
Sophie Thornton  
Helen Mora  
Marilyn Cieply  
Ruby Szul  
Bev. Hutchison  
Pat Pepper  
Vera Brandstetter  
Alice Ware  
Olga Moore  
Judy Nickleach  
Mrs. Eugene Shaffer  
Ethel Baranee  
Annabella Halas  
Lillian Miller  
Lovie Cross  
Madeline Hulings  
Kate Stanko  
Janet Breuer  
Mrs. Clyde Burdette  
Mrs. John F. Englert  
Susan M. Englert  
Mary Goyda  
Betty Pechan

Maryjo Woyton  
Madge Weber  
Pauline Bernot  
Anna Folta  
Sandra Lysakowski  
Claire Schaeffer  
Louis Faulx  
Antoinette Falsetti  
Eileen Capizzi  
Margaret Brown  
Agnes Pavlekovsky  
Dorothy Slovensky  
Mae Pavlik  
Arlene Zanetti  
Betty Mikula  
Cass Faulx  
Rose Gladysiewski  
Debbie Kovac  
Jennie Sadeski  
Marge Pivarnik  
Helen Zboran  
Lorraine McMillan  
Agnes McArdle  
Josephine Russell  
Joanne Walbert  
Kay Smerick  
Marcelle Smith  
Cheryl Dinko  
Jean Valek  
Gen McGregor  
Monica Englert  
Lilian Petro



## PRESENT LIBRARY BOARD

Walter Folcik  
 Roger Faulx  
 Madge Weber

William Kracht  
 Eugene Law  
 Dr. Ted Rupert

Fred Walbert, Jr.  
 Mrs. Maryjo Wojton

## LIBRARIANS

Mrs. Ethel Sheldon  
 1946-1950

Mrs. Maude Armstrong  
 1950-1955

Mrs. Jane Sheldon  
 1955-1975

## ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS

Ida Falsetti  
 Mrs. Patricia Lewis

Mrs. Gwynne Bierkamper  
 Mrs. Kathleen Stepp

Mrs. Joanne Germy  
 Mrs. Jane Sheldon

## VOLUNTEERS

Mrs. Anita Marshall  
 Mrs. Elizabeth Rubel  
 Denise Dunn

Mrs. Jane Rupert  
 Kathleen Lefchik  
 Florence Placha

Mrs. Gladys Marshall  
 Debra Kovac  
 Mrs. Joanne Germy

Senior Girl Scout Troop #72 1,400 hours under direction of Mrs. Gloria Robertson

If we have missed anyone we are sorry. Uncommon and anonymous support for our library and the services it has provided these past thirty years has been the common thing.