Ford City Public Library
a History
1945 - 1975
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 $2.99 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 Faulx, Joseph Kamer, Mrs. Mary Zaludny, George Sanko, and Walter Folchik. The Housing and Fixtures Committee included Charles Stewart, Dr. Louis P. Rearick, Rev. Wendel 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. Anuszkiwicz 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 1,330. An essay contest was held for students of all schools in Ford City with Donette Barch 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 plaque 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 plaque 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 Cechvallah, 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 Minteer 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. Engler, 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 Memorielle Borough joined with Ford City, and has been a member ever since. Mr. 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 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. Engler at the CU Club on August 10, 1967 Mrs. Betty Heiman 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 grounds-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**

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<th>Louis C. Gregory</th>
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<td>Ralph W. Utley</td>
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<td>Dr. Louis P. Rearick</td>
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**MEMBERS OF THE LIBRARY BOARD:**

1945-1975

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<th>Frank Alcibiade</th>
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<td>William Kracht</td>
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<td>Mrs. Catherine Carberry</td>
<td>Eugene Lew</td>
<td>Fred Walbert, Jr.</td>
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<td>Rev. Louis Doychak</td>
<td>Joseph Lunz</td>
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<td>John F. Englert</td>
<td>Alfred November</td>
<td>Madge Weber</td>
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<td>Mrs. Rose Faulx</td>
<td>Rev. Matthias Pfell</td>
<td>Mrs. Neil Willets</td>
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<td>John M. Fisher</td>
<td>Dr. Louis P. Rearick</td>
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<td>George Sanko</td>
<td>Mrs. Mary Zaludny</td>
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COUNCILMEN OF FORD CITY: 1945-1975

Dominic F. Cannon
Dr. Lewis P. Rearick
Steve Ziegler
Metro Turko
Walter Folcik
Charles Sanders
Michael Panchik
Stanley Schaffer
Nick Raich
Donald Grossman
Thomas J. Jansen
Stanley Gladysiewski
Zigmund 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 Reisgen
Frank Lux, Sr.

Ralph Shedwick
Frank Bucko

J. H. Hand

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 Miltito
Mrs. Ruth Horan
Miss Martha Troyan
Mrs. Rose Fauix
Mrs. David Beuth
Peter Temski, Jr.
Pauline Petroncek
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 Fertotte
Dorothy Ann Winslow
Marion Weaver
J.O. Burton
Mary Smolik
Mrs. Leon D. Mead
Mrs. J.E. Michaux
Mrs. Jack Miltz
Mrs. D.L. Fair
Mrs. George Harrison
Ray Augustine
Catherine Allensworth
Sandy Bryant
Mrs. Ralph Thomas
Mrs. James Vitale
Anna Reitinger
Wilhelmina Kovalovsky
Dolores Sanko
Mrs. John Talliere
Genevieve Cymbara
Joseph J. Kamer
Antoinette Miltito
Margie Ortman
Mrs. Ray Christy
Helen Carey
Lena Liberto
Joanne Germy
Anita Goyda
Mrs. Sadie Foltta

Martha Maus
Andy Grajciar
Frank Bucko
Betty Hileman
Chrisy Verpe
Bev. Kovalovsky
Mary Hand
Kathleen Gardner
M. Edwards
Julia Fields
Sophie Thornton
Helen Mora
Marilyn Cieply
Ruby Szul
Bev. Hatchison
Pat Pepper
Vera Brandstetter
Alice Ware
Olga Moore
Judy Nickleach
Mrs. Eugene Shaffer
Ethel Baranec
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 Foltta
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 Mc Ardle
Josephine Russell
Joanne Walbert
Kay Smerick
Marcelle Smith
Cheryl Dinko
Jean Valek


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
Senior Girl Scout Troop #72

Mrs. Jane Rupert
Kathleen Lefchik
Florence Placha
1,400 hours under direction of Mrs. Gloria Robertson

Debra Kovac
Mrs. Joanne Germy

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.