

A Brief History of the McHenry Public Library

1836

McHenry was settled.

August 10, 1872

McHenry was incorporated as a village.

May 15, 1923

McHenry was incorporated as a city.

February 27, 1936

A small lending library opened in a room of the McHenry High School, presently McHenry East High School. The idea for the library was fostered by Mrs. C. W. (Gretta) Goodell with the support of the McHenry Mothers' Club, later known as the McHenry Woman's Club.

The library moved to the city hall after a few years when the High School needed the space the library was using.

June 7, 1943

The McHenry City Council adopted an ordinance establishing the McHenry Public Library. Mrs. Goodell served as chairman of the library board with Mrs. C. J. Reihansperger serving as secretary-treasurer. Mrs. Goodell served as library director until 1960. Mrs. Lon Smith, Miss Rita Martin, and Mrs. Robert Winkel assisted her.

January 1946

McHenry Mayor R. I. Overton appointed the first library board. The nine members were Mrs. Goodell (President), Mrs. Reihansperger (Secretary-Treasurer), Mrs. George Kramer, Mrs. Clarence (Lillian) Anglese, Mrs. A. I. (Frances) Froehlich, Mrs. C. H. Duker, Mrs. Fred Ferwerda, Earl R. Walsh, and George Freund.

August 11, 1951

The Library Board purchased the William Tesch residence, 1011 North Green Street, for \$4,700. The building is believed to be the oldest residence in McHenry, built in 1835.

September 27, 1953

The renovated Tesch residence opened as the McHenry Public Library with 3,460 books and 600 registered borrowers. Norbert Mauch of the Alexander Lumber Company and Gerald Steinbach of the McHenry Lumber Company volunteered their time and acted as architects for the remodeling.

The city established a building fund soon after this to allow for future expansion at this site. Mr. William Bolger, city alderman and Library Board President was instrumental in the drive to raise funds for an addition. A \$9,000 bequest was received from the estate of Mr. Andrew Worwick and the McHenry Rotary Club raised \$10,000 in one week in April 1964 in order to pay the \$35,000.

1960

Mrs. June Stuart became the second director of the McHenry Public Library when Mrs. Goodell retired. Mrs. Dorothy Uttich was her assistant.

November 1, 1964

The Tonyan Construction Company completed construction on the addition to the library. Architect Warren Kuhlman designed the addition.

January 10, 1965

The community celebrated the dedication of the renovated and expanded library. The library housed a collection of 10,000 books on three levels with a new parking lot for eight cars.

1967

McHenry Public Library joined the Northern Illinois Library System and began offering interlibrary loan.

1973

The library purchased the Willis Schreiner property at 3605 West Main Street next to the existing building on the west side.

Architect Bill Ewald drew up plans for an extension of the library building, which would cost \$190,000.

November 7, 1976

The library hosted the dedication of the renovated and expanded building. The addition added 5,115 square feet to the existing 3,591 square foot building. The 1965 addition became the Children's Room. A local history room was included in the new building.

1981

The library purchased the personal collection of June Barrickman to form the core of its genealogical collection. This was an achievement that Library Director June Stuart was especially proud of.

April 1984

The library began publishing its newsletter *The Preface*.

July 1986

Mrs. June Stuart retired as Library Director and was replaced by Julia Johnas. Johnas, who was the third director in the library's history, was also the first director to have a Masters of Library Science degree. Mrs. Stewart's assistants Dorothy Uttich and Avis Gan had retired the previous year.

Later this year, the library began circulating videocassettes and audiocassettes in addition to books and magazines.

July 1, 1987

The library ceased to be a city library and became a district library. This change came through the efforts of board member Gary Schaefer and library attorney Dan Curran and involved a Board resolution, a City Council ordinance, and a court order. As a result, the library became a separate taxing body and an independent governmental unit.

January 12, 1988

An ordinance passed by the library's board came into effect expanding the library service boundaries from the McHenry city limits to the boundaries of High School District 156

excluding those areas served by McHenry Nunda Public Library District and Johnsburg Public Library District. The expansion more than doubled the library's population from 13,536 city residents to 27,547 district residents and expanded the size of the district to approximately 37 square miles. The district serves all of McCullom Lake and Holiday Hills, the eastern half of Wonder Lake, and small sections of Bull Valley, Lakemoor, and Island Lake.

July 1989

The library left the Northern Illinois Library System (NILS) to become a member of the North Suburban Library System (NSLS). Soon after this, the library joined the Cooperative Computer Services (CCS) consortium to take advantage of its shared automation system. The library began using the automated circulation system the following year once all library materials had been entered into the shared catalog.

March 20, 1990

Voters defeated a referendum for a bond issue to raise \$4,300,000 to build a new library building on 11.3 acres on Green Street near the McHenry Municipal Center. The architectural firm Wendt Cedarholm Tippens designed the planned building.

May 1991

Arlene Kaspik became the fourth director in the history of the McHenry Public Library.

September 14, 1993

The Library Board of Trustees voted to hire a consultant to conduct a site feasibility study for using the Althoff Building at 809 North Front Street as a library. The site's previous tenants were Follett Software.

August 31, 1994

The first staff computers were connected to the Internet.

October 1994

Althoff Industries began renovating the former site of the Follett Software Company preparing it for sale to the library.

January 19, 1995

The library closed on the purchase of the building at 809 North Front Street owned by Althoff Industries after the owner had renovated it. The building was purchased for \$1.85 million dollars. The library agreed to provide a 25% down payment and mortgaged the remaining 75%. In order to make the down payment, the library sold its existing building to School District 15 for \$156,000 and sold its undeveloped 10.5-acre property on Green Street.

April 20, 1995

The library at 1011 North Green Street closed its doors for the last time.

June 7, 1995

The library held a Grand Opening for the new library building at 809 North Front Street. The library portion of the building is approximately 28,000 square feet with 20,000 square feet of warehouse space. The architectural firm of Engberg Anderson of Milwaukee designed the library.

April 16, 1996

McHenry Public Library's Internet homepage made its debut.

November 1998

The library went to referendum to increase operating funds and was defeated.

April 13, 1999

The library referendum was passed to increase the millage rate for operating funds.

July 1999

The library began circulating Spanish language books.

2001

The library began offering public access to the Internet.

December 2001

CCS (Cooperative Computer Services) consortium changed automation systems, migrating from GEAC to Sirsi, in order to provide a graphical interface for the on-line public library catalogs.

July 2004

Library pays off mortgage on 809 N. Front St. six years early, due to strong financial management and passage of an operating fund referendum in 1999.

Fall 2004

Library hires a space planning consultant to look at the best use of existing space and to help the board and staff review their options for expansion.

January 17, 2006

The library approved a contract with the architectural firm Nagle Hartray Danker Kagan McKay Penney Architects, Ltd. to prepare a long-term plan for possible library expansion. Community tours and focus groups followed.

June 30, 2007

Library Director Arlene Kaspik retired and Assistant Director Bill Edminster was appointed Interim Director.

November 2007

James C. Scholtz was hired as the fifth director in McHenry Public Library's history.

December 2007

Library purchases property adjacent to building to the north for \$804,825, increasing library's total property to about four acres.

November 2008

Building Referendum does not pass; Board later approves \$2.5 million building remodel/renovation.

January 2010

Expansion begins on existing library, adding roughly 5, 800 square feet.

April 2010

Renovation begins in main library and front lobby area.

September 2010

Construction ends and library celebrates with Grand Reopening/75th Anniversary celebration during the first week of October.

This timeline is based in part on research done by Julia A. Johnas in September 1988 and Mary Amstadt in March 2003.