

Short History of the Arcanum Public Library

In 1904 a local literary organization, The Criterion Club purchased books for their club with the vision and intention of forming a library.

In 1910 the Arcanum Public Library Association was formed and by 1911 a location had been found. The Library opened on the second floor above the John Smith Company Store on West George Street. The officers of the association were: J.A. Smith-President, Nelle Eichelberger-Vice President, George T. Riegle-Secretary, and Arabella Sigerfoos-Treasurer. The selected Mr. O.E. Strader as the first library director.

In 1913 the Arcanum School Board appropriated funds for the Arcanum Public Library and appointed seven trustees to serve for terms of seven years. The first Trustees were: C.A. Rosser-President, Fred Cline-Vice President, Pearl Miller-Secretary, and members Mrs. J.H. Sheperd, J.A. Smith, Mrs. Ernestine Wilkinson, and Rev. A.M. Pence.

In 1923 the Arcanum Public Library was classified as a School District Library under state statute and received funds derived from intangible taxes. The Library is still classified as a School District Library, as are most public libraries in the state.

The Library has been housed in a number of locations over the years including the T.D. Smith building, the Baily Motors building, which was also the first public school building, the second floor of the Weisenbarger building, where in 1959 a fire completely destroyed the library. A very generous outpouring of money, books, and materials from the across the community, county and state allowed the Library to continue to serve the community out of borrowed rooms and garages until a permanent location could be secured.

Finally in 1963 the Board of Trustees was able to purchase the Ivestor House on North Street to establish a permanent home for the Library. After a year of updates to the historic house the Library was ready for business in 1964.

By the late 1970's it was obvious that the building could no longer house the growing collection. It was decided to add an addition to the North side of building that would increase shelf space as well as provide work and office space for the staff. The Hanes addition was dedicated October 12, 1980.

Through the 1980's the Library continued to grow and expand services, adding records for circulation as well as a computer for public use. The Library had again outgrown its space by the early 90's and it was decided that another larger addition was need and a large two-story addition was added to the North West corner of the building. A groundbreaking was held August 15, 1994 and after a year of construction the new addition was dedicated September 10, 1995.

The Library had its Centennial Celebration on the front lawn June 12, 2011, where State Representative Richard Adams and State Senator William Beagle read a proclamation honoring the Library's Centennial from the Ohio House of Representatives.