

BALDWINSVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

since 1948

“What do you envision the library will be like in 20, 30, or even 50 years from now?” That is an often-asked and difficult question to answer. In 1948 no one could have envisioned the types of services and variety of formats for providing information that patrons have access to in 2005. Who ever would have thought when the library installed the first telephone so that patrons could put books on reserve and be notified when the book came in that someday patrons would be able to put books on reserve using a computer in the library or at home? No matter what services are offered and what changes take place in the library, one key component of the library that will never change is the people. As it was so clearly stated by Librarian Helen Wright in the early 1950’s , the library is not “books, it is people.” a building with books is a warehouse; a building with people helping other people to use the books or other resources is a library. The role of the library is to

provide people with a place to obtain information, find pleasure reading, and gather together to share ideas. No matter what shape the library takes in the future, it would not have been possible without the hard work of those who took a dream and turned it into reality.

In the fall of 1946 the Baldwinsville Travelers Club formed a library committee to investigate establishing a library in the village. The headline in the April 24, 1947 issue of *The Messenger* read, “Travelers Club Proposed Start of Public Library.” The article stated “Steps taken by the Baldwinsville Travelers Club in pioneering a movement to establish a public library in the community were made public by the club’s library investigation committee. Members of the club have been asked to inaugurate a fund for a library by submitting contributions at the club’s next meeting May 9.”

The article included a complete report on the findings of the committee including recommendations on budget, collection size, and schedule of hours. Thus the work began to turn the dream of a public library in Baldwinsville into a reality. The library opened its doors for the first time on January 6, 1948 in two rooms of the Lysander Town Building, formerly a



trolley station. The library was open for service three days a week for a total of 20 1/2 hours. Total operating budget was \$4,000 for salaries, books, supplies, furniture and rent.

The January 8, 1948 messenger stated, 'book lovers were charmed by the wide selection of interesting books and the peaceful atmosphere of the new Baldwinville Library which opened officially Tuesday at 2 PM in the rear room of the Town of Lysander building on East Genesee Street. Baskets of flowers provided by the Travelers Club, merchants of the village and Mrs. Marion Baker, florist, added to the pleasant, fresh decoration of the reading room. Over

1,000 volumes are placed on the departmentalized shelves of the library and have been made conveniently available to book borrowers by Mrs. Ruth Connell, librarian and Mrs. Helen Wright, assistant librarian."



The first board in charge of running the library included: Winifred Fuess, Marie Bucci, Ruth Connell, librarian, Helen Wright, Asst. librarian, L. Pearl Palmer, M.D. Stafford, Olin Haydon, Oscar Brown, Charles W. Baker

In February of 1953 the Friends of the Library was organized as the result of committee initiative of the Baldwinsville Travelers Club. The organization was formed to provide financial support and promote community interest in the library.



As the library grew, the need for a larger facility became apparent. On November 13, 1956 the library opened its doors at 17 Charlotte Street in a renovated house. The library continued to grow and flourish in its new home. At this location the library had a memorial rose and flower garden. This was completely funded by

private donation and maintained by Rev. Harry B. Reddick, retired pastor of the Methodist Church.



In 1961 the Onondaga Library System (now the Onondaga County Public Library System) was organized. Albert J. Palmer, member of the library board was named as our representative to its first board. Membership in this system allowed the Baldwinsville Library to cooperate and share service with other libraries, including one card good at all member libraries and interlibrary loan in addition to book processing, printing and consultant services from the system headquarters.

On May 7, 1974 the voters of Baldwinsville approved a proposal to become a school district public library. The became, and still is, financed by taxpayers in the Baldwinsville Central School District. Before that the library subsisted on donations. Every May was Support Your Library Month. During that time the library board pleaded with the public to help fund the library. One year donation were so low that the library hours had to be curtailed. And still the library grew.



Once again it was time to consider a larger facility. In 1975 the library moved to the former Woolworth's store at 43 Oswego Street.

By the early nineties the library had grown in terms of usage and the variety of services being offered, which included access to books, pamphlets, audiotapes, videotapes, microfilm, CD-ROM reference tools. Other library services included story times for ages 3 months to 8 years, reading clubs, lectures, baby-sitting classes, children's programs, events for young adults, and a microcomputer area. In 1993, the Baldwinville Public Library became the first library in Onondaga County to offer public access to the Internet.

The library board of trustees determined that the Oswego Street facility was no longer adequate for the



increased use of the library and the changes in technology. In the Fall of 1993 a public referendum was overwhelmingly passed for the purpose of constructing a new facility. On October 29, 1994, the community gathered at the Oswego Street location and paraded to the East Genesee Street location where everyone used their shovels to break ground. Thus construction began on a 20,700 square foot building, which was the first

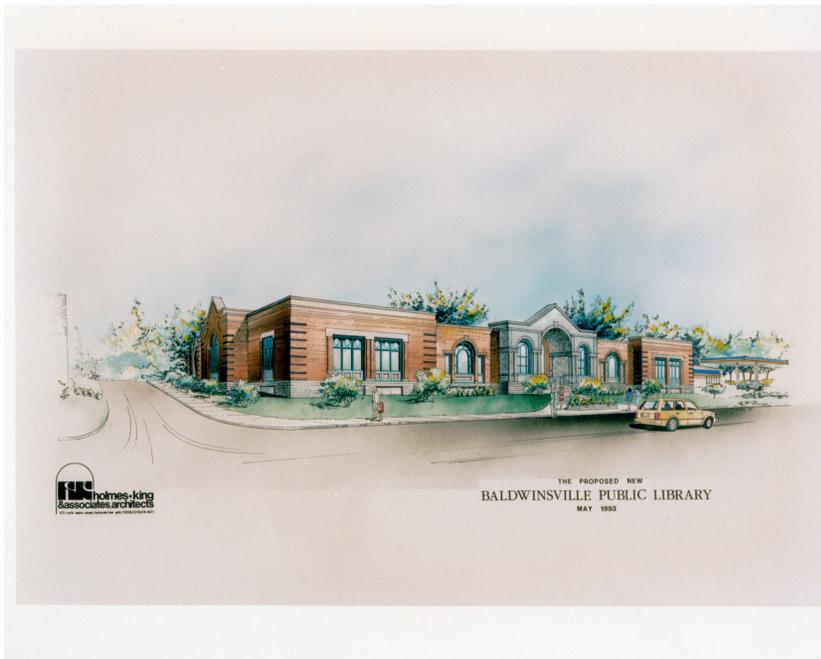


building in Baldwinsville designed specifically for use as a library.

October 29, 1995 was an exciting day as over 2,500 people participated in the Grand Opening of the new library at 33 East Genesee Street.

This facility provides additional meeting space, quiet study areas, a computer lab, a reference desk, and is wired to accommodate new technology. There is a community art gallery that features local professional and amateur artists. In addition to the 20,700 square feet there is a basement, which will allow for expansion in a number of ways. In addition to providing informational and recreational materials in a variety of formats, the library maintains a local history room. The local history collection contains historical and genealogical information about Baldwinsville, Clay, Lysander, and Van Buren. It is continually being enhanced so that information about the past, as well as current events, may be preserved for future generations.

The Female Charitable Society purchased equipment in memory of Ruth Connell, the first librarian. They gave the library a large type computer with access to the Internet and the library catalog, as well as word-processing, spreadsheet and database programs, which is available for use by library patrons. The computer has speech software, a large print keyboard, a large screen, and a magnifier for print materials.



In 1996, with the installation a local area network and an Internet upgrade from a dial-up connection to a lease line, the library was able to launch a web-page. Eventually the library was able to purchase database subscriptions to full text magazine indexes, encyclopedias, and business/financial directories that people could use in the library. In recent years the library catalog and many of the database subscriptions have been made available for home use via the Internet. All that is needed is an Onondaga county Public Library card and pin number.

While people can still walk in to the library or call for assistance with a reference question, people now have additional options of sending a question via e-mail or chatting live with a librarian 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The computer lab has grown from three computers and an electric typewriter to eight PCs complete with CD drives and CD burners. It is possible to do word processing and create databases, spreadsheets, signs, invitations, etc. The Internet connection has been upgraded to a high-speed connection, a color scanner, and a color laser printer.

The Friends of the Library and the Baldwinsville Travelers Club donated the funds needed to purchase a laptop, video projector, and presentation panel. The equipment allows projection of videos, DVDs, computer, and 3D images onto a movie screen.

With the assistance of a special legislative grant from Assemblyman William Mongrelly, the library has upgraded the network server. The upgrade also includes wireless service which allows people to sit anywhere in the library and access the Internet on their laptop.

The library continues to look at new technology and how it can be integrated with traditional library services. Recent additions to the collection include books-on-CD, DVDs, and described videos for people with visual impairments. coming soon will be the ability to download audio books to home computers and MP3 players.

The library continues to offer tours to school and community groups. Librarians are also available to visit schools and speak to community groups. The library offers a wide variety of programs and resources

for all ages. They are designed to provide community residents with activities which support their pursuit of personal, educational, and professional interests, as well as cultural, recreational, and leisure activities.

Many services that the library offers today in a building designed as a library would never have been envisioned when the library first opened in the trolley station in 1948. Thus the question “What do you envision the library will be like 20,30 or even 50 years from now?” is still hard to answer. However, for today, we can thank those who came before us for having the vision to establish the library and help it to continue evolving as it responds to the needs of the community. Let us celebrate the remarkable opportunities afforded to all in the modern library and look with anticipation to the promise of the future.



This history is dedicated to the memory of Ruth Connell, Baldwinsville Public Library's first librarian.

History prepared for the 10th anniversary celebration of the library at 33 East Genesee Street on October 30, 2005 by Meg Van Patten and Bonnie Kesselstein