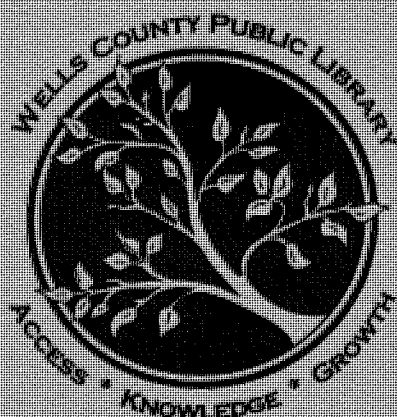


# **WELLS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY**

**A CENTURY OF SERVICE  
1902 – 2002**



**100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY EDITION  
MAY 2002**

*THE WELLS COUNTY PUBLIC  
LIBRARY*

*A CENTURY OF SERVICE*

*1902—2002*

**PUBLISHED TO COMMEMORATE  
THE  
ONE-HUNDRETH ANNIVERSARY**

**LIBRARY BOARD AS NOW CONSTITUTED**

Mr. Edward J. Shestak, President  
Mr. Graig P. Stettner, Vice-President  
Mrs. Julie Meitzler, Secretary  
Mr. Steve R. Gerber, Treasurer  
Mrs. Jackie Chaney  
Mrs. Kim Pace  
Mrs. Shirley Thomas

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**MRS. STEPHANIE DAVIS, LIBRARY DIRECTOR**

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Edited and written by Amy G. Greiner

*ANNIVERSARY DATE, MAY 15, 2002*

## PRELUDE TO OUR LIBRARY

***WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT IN A LIBRARY THAN ANYTHING ELSE—THAN EVERYTHING ELSE—IS THE FACT THAT IT EXISTS.*** Archibald MacLeish

The fact that a free public library exists is evidence that a society values democracy, knowledge and culture. If knowledge is power, as many believe, a library's presence in a community enables the citizenry to be productive and effective in their many endeavors.

The people of Bluffton and Wells County have been involved with libraries for one hundred sixty five years. In 1837—the year Wells County was founded—officials established a library fund derived from ten percent of the proceeds from the sale of lots in Bluffton. The county officials organized a library in 1853. During the next twenty-seven years, twelve Library Board meetings were recorded, with the county officials serving as the first board members. The County Recorder, W. M. Bulger, performed the duties of the librarian during the first year of the library's existence.

A year later, in 1854, Mr. Sebastian Keely became the first appointed librarian with a salary of \$20.00 per year to be paid quarterly. One of his responsibilities would have been to enforce the following fines as directed in the Bylaws:

For every dirt or grease spot one half inch in diameter, not less than two, nor more than five per cent of the price of the book; for every dirt or grease stain of one inch in diameter, not less than five nor more than ten per cent; for every leaf turned down, one per cent; for every word torn out or obliterated, not less than five nor more than ten per cent. In all fines assessed in this section there shall be allowed an appeal to the Board of Trustees at their annual meeting.

If this directive were still applicable in our present era of mega-bookstores and libraries with on-site cafes, one can only imagine

the manpower that would be required to apprehend all coffee cup drippers.

***WHATEVER THE COST OF OUR LIBRARIES, THE PRICE IS CHEAP COMPARED TO THAT OF AN IGNORANT NATION.***  
Walter Cronkite

In 1855, Bluffton received an unexpected windfall from the estate of William Maclure of New Harmony, Indiana. Mr. Maclure, in addition to having a great fortune, also had a great desire to disseminate culture through the establishment of libraries. It is not known just how much of his fortune he devoted to this work before his death, but it was quite a large amount. In his will he left the sum of \$80,000 to be disseminated in \$500.00 blocks. His plan was to donate the money for the purchase of books to any club of organized workingmen with suitable room and facilities for using the books. In all, one hundred sixty-six libraries were established in this way. Of this number, one hundred forty-four were in the State of Indiana—in eighty-nine of the ninety-two counties. Thanks to Maclure's generosity, two hundred fourteen books were added to the Bluffton library collection.

***IN THE CASE OF GOOD BOOKS, THE POINT IS NOT TO SEE HOW MANY OF THEM YOU CAN GET THROUGH, BUT RATHER HOW MANY CAN GET THROUGH TO YOU.***  
Mortimer Jerome Adler

During the school year of 1881-82, when P. A. Allen was superintendent of the Bluffton schools, the two hundred fourteen books from the Maclure collection were combined with the ninety-three books from the Bluffton High School Library.

The Bluffton School Library from the beginning was housed in one of the upper rooms of the old Central School building. When the high school building was completed in 1890 the books were transferred to a room specially planned for the library on the second floor of that building.

The collection grew steadily over the years, financed by entertainments and voluntary weekly dime collections from the

pupils who had a mind to give. Within five years, the statistics show that the collection was increased by five hundred books.

The raising of money by collections and entertainments became quite burdensome so a small library tax was authorized in 1892. The next year rules were adopted to allow the Library to be open to the public a few hours each week, even though it was maintained by the city schools.



***PUBLIC LIBRARIES HAVE BEEN A MAINSTAY OF MY LIFE. THEY REPRESENT AN INDIVIDUAL'S RIGHT TO ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE; THEY ARE THE SINEWS THAT BIND CIVILIZED SOCIETIES THE WORLD OVER. WITHOUT LIBRARIES, I WOULD BE A PAUPER, INTELLECTUALLY AND SPIRITUALLY.***

James A. Michener

## THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

***THERE IS NOT SUCH A CRADLE OF DEMOCRACY UPON THE EARTH AS THE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY, THIS REPUBLIC OF LETTERS, WHERE NEITHER RANK, OFFICE, NOR WEALTH RECEIVES THE SLIGHTEST CONSIDERATION.*** Andrew Carnegie

The Bluffton Public Library had its beginning May 15, 1902, when a seven member Library Board met in the home of Mrs. James P. Hale for the purpose of organizing a public library. Mr. Charles C. Deam was selected as the first Library Board President. At the same meeting the Board set the tax levy at four-tenths of a mil on the dollar and employed Miss Bertha Craven as the librarian at a salary of \$240 per year.

The Library was first housed in the southeast basement room of the Court House; soon afterwards, it was moved to the northwest corner room. The early Library Board minutes contain the following account of one of the first Board meetings:

The Library Board met to put the room in order, do the inside janitor work, furnish the light trimmings, (and) care for the books belonging to the library.

Because the early twentieth century was the era of Andrew Carnegie's philanthropy to public libraries, the secretary of the Library Board was instructed to write to other cities in the state that had Carnegie Libraries to obtain information concerning the method of application for these funds.

After obtaining this information, the secretary and twenty or more other prominent citizens wrote to Mr. Carnegie to request money for a library. Mr. Carnegie's reply follows:

No. 2 East 91<sup>st</sup> St.  
New York, New York  
January 13, 1903

Mrs. Delia W. Hale, Sec'y,  
Bluffton, Indiana

Madam: Responding to your communication in  
behalf of Bluffton:

If the city agrees by resolution of Council to  
maintain a Free Public Library at a cost of not less than  
One Thousand Dollars a year, and provide a suitable site  
for the building, Mr. Carnegie will be pleased to furnish  
Ten Thousand Dollars to erect a Free Public Library  
Building for Bluffton.

Respectfully yours,  
James Bertram, Private Secretary

After the promise of money, the Board considered three  
locations for the proposed Library building. The Mary E. Stoddard  
property on West Washington Street was chosen as the best site  
and it was purchased for \$2,975.

In accordance with Mr. Carnegie's wishes, the Library  
trustees forwarded a certified copy of the ordinance passed by the  
Common Council of Bluffton guaranteeing \$1500 annually for the  
support and maintenance of the Library. This was sent to Mr.  
Carnegie on March 27, 1903.

The Board members' next action was to confer with  
architects about the plans and specifications for the erection of a  
library building. The Board spent an evening with each of the three  
architects who had submitted plans and after careful study, the  
members decided to use those submitted by Cuno Kibile.

The Library Board sent a copy of these plans and  
specifications to Mr. Carnegie with a request that he contribute  
\$2,000 more than he had first promised. He responded by  
increasing the amount of his gift from \$10,000 to \$13,000.

In addition to the Carnegie donation, the citizens of Bluffton gave \$5,909.20, the result of three subscription campaigns. The total amount received was \$18,909.20 with which the lot was purchased, the building erected, and the interior furnishings acquired.

## COST OF THE LIBRARY BUILDING

### RECEIVED

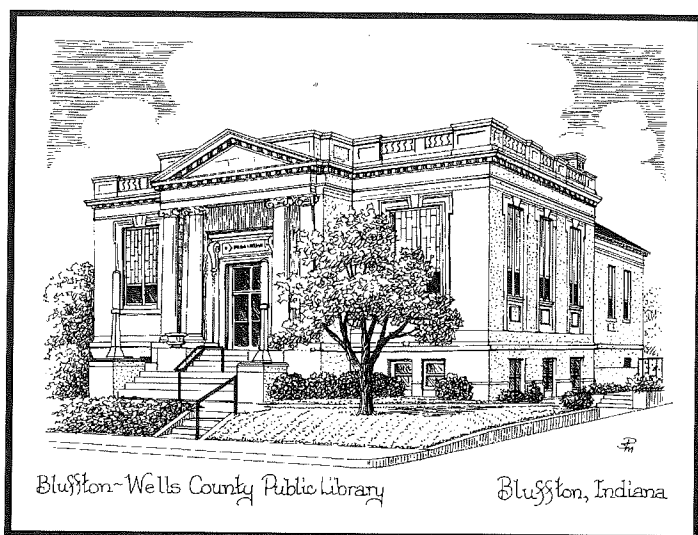
From Andrew Carnegie -----	\$13,000.00
Subscriptions by citizens -----	5,909.20

### EXPENDED

Purchase Price of lot -----	\$ 2,975.00
Fred Illingsworth & Co. Contract -----	12,962.00
Extras Allowed -----	101.20
Hardware furnished by Board -----	177.80
Architect fees -----	358.20
Decorating -----	350.00
Electric Light Fixtures -----	265.00
Heating Plant -----	810.00
Furniture -----	584.00
Metal Book Stacks -----	326.00
	\$18,909.20

Five bids were received for the construction of the building. The lowest bidder, Fred Illingsworth and Company, was granted the contract. After two and one-half years of planning and construction, the Library was opened to the public on May 15, 1905. An art exhibit and open house were featured on that date.





During those early years the Library Board had an active role in the selection of books and magazines. The minutes for April 5, 1906, state that each Board member was asked to submit a list of 25 books that he thought should be included in the Library.

The basement of the new Library did not house books until 1940. Before that time it was used by a girls' gymnastics class, the Women's Guild from the Reformed Church, a cooking class, the Health and Holiness Club, and the Domestic Science Club. During one school year, Miss Gray's kindergarten class also used this room.

Library service was soon extended to people outside of the Bluffton City limits. In 1912, the Library Board granted permission to all students of the Bluffton High School to use the library whether they were residents of Bluffton or not. Harrison Township later levied a tax to support the library. Then, in 1914, Lancaster and Liberty Townships became part of the taxing district, thus enabling their residents to use the library. By 1924, library privileges had been extended to all county high school students.

The citizens in these townships benefited from book stations that were established in Poneto, Liberty Center, Murray, and Craigville. These stations were usually in a room of one of the

resident's homes. The person manning the station was paid one cent for each book that was loaned.

In 1914, the Bluffton Library was one of several that participated in a series of five lectures (one per month) sponsored by the Public Library Commission. These scholarly talks were well received by the Bluffton citizenry.

***A LIBRARY IS NOT A LUXURY BUT ONE OF THE NECESSITIES OF LIFE.*** Harriet Beecher Stowe

During World War I, the Library Board wanted to do its part in the war effort. The Library War Council was established to provide libraries for soldiers. The librarian, Board members, and interested citizens comprised this council whose goal was to raise money equal to five per cent of each township's population. It was recorded that \$519 had been raised for this purpose.

During the depression years, circulation decreased only slightly, even though there was an exodus from the county. Because many people were jobless, they had more time to use the Library.

The Depression necessitated many changes in the Library. The number of magazine subscriptions was reduced, which prompted Board members to donate their personal copies. The phone extension was removed and the staff rebound books thus saving the Library considerable expenses.

It was also necessary to reduce staff salaries by ten to fifteen percent in 1932 and again in 1935. The Library used the government assistance programs to alleviate the financial crunch. Civil Works Project workers repaired the floors and walls in the basement and inventoried the collection. The WPA also provided a mending and cleaning woman.

During this time the Librarian placed new books on a rental shelf and patrons paid a small fee to borrow them. When a book was paid for, it was placed on the open shelves.

Mrs. Julia Caylor and Miss Elizabeth Patton attended a Board meeting November 11, 1935, representing the Bay View, Foltz, and Delphic Circle literary clubs. Since these organizations

were concerned about the lack of funds for new books, they presented a plan of a canvass and a Tag Day among the local citizens for additional funds. The Board approved the venture, and the amount collected was \$275.

The possibility of a county library was discussed as early as July 1920, when a motion was made to take the necessary steps to set up a county library. This resolution was taken to the County Commissioners, but they took no action at this time. The Board's minutes note that in April 1924, Miss D. T. Northey of the Indiana Library Commission spent several days in the county evaluating the feasibility of a county system. She found the school principals, the county superintendent, and the county agent favorable to the proposal. During the twenty-fifth anniversary year, C. E. Sturgis was appointed by the Board to pursue the county library idea.

In 1936, the Board again discussed a county library, deciding that they would cooperate if arrangements could be made with the county-taxing units. The Board voted to file with the County Commissioners for the purpose of opening the library to all citizens of Wells County. The townships would pay a tax of five cents on each \$100 of taxable property. The Library would be open to the county when each township filed a petition in favor of this action. On March 4, 1937, it was reported in the minutes that all township petitions had been filed with the County Commissioners. Nothing more could be done until the county tax levy was assured.

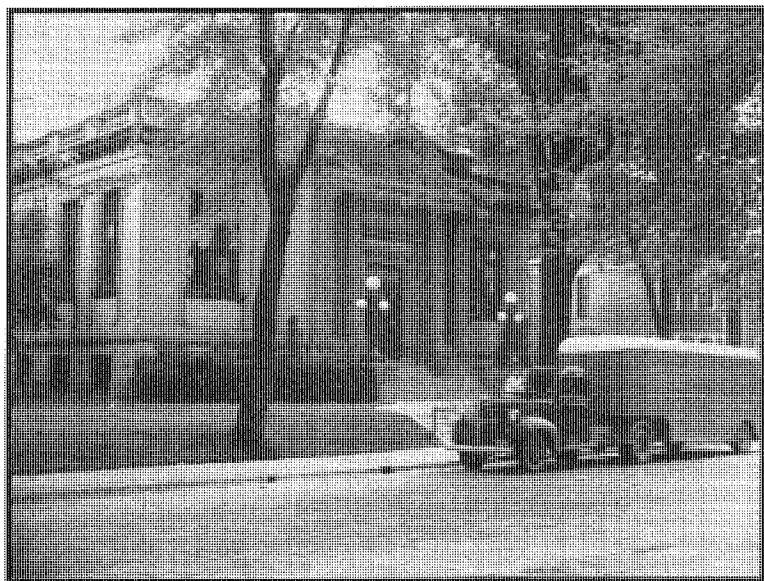
***PERHAPS NO PLACE IN ANY COMMUNITY IS SO TOTALLY DEMOCRATIC AS THE TOWN LIBRARY. THE ONLY ENTRANCE REQUIREMENT IS INTEREST.***

Lady Bird Johnson

In November 1937, a two cents levy was approved for the townships, and the Library was opened to the county.

With the county system established, book collections were then provided to the county schools. The Library mailed books to patrons until locations for book stations were in operation. Applications for borrowers' cards were also made by mail. Stations were eventually opened at Uniondale, Ossian and McNatt, which were each open ten hours per week.

On June 1, 1939, the Board met to discuss the best way to meet the needs of the county. A "book wagon of the closed type" or book trailer was favored. Later that year a twenty-foot semi-trailer, pulled by a one-half ton pick-up truck, was purchased from Sylvan Tonner. The trailer featured three skylights and ventilators on the roof. It held approximately 2,000 books.



The book trailer was the pride of the community. It was displayed during Street Fair and was on exhibition at the American Rural Life Convention at Purdue. Articles and pictures about the book trailer appeared in "Library Journal" and "Wilson Library Bulletin"—two of the leading professional publications in the field of library science.

Circulation increased by fifty percent with the addition of the book trailer, since one-half of the cardholders resided outside of the Bluffton city limits. By 1951, seventy-seven percent of the total circulation figure was attributed to the county residents.

World War II brought no major changes in library practices or procedures. However, the Library had to apply for a "Certificate of War Necessity" from the Office of Defense Transportation to obtain the needed gas and tires for the book trailer.

The early 1950's saw the library expanding its services. The record library was started through a donation by the Kiwanis Club of Bluffton; therefore, a listening room was established in the basement and the Pan Hellenic organization donated a record player.

The Library received films from the Britannica Corporation for circulation and later participated in the formation of the Indiana Film Circuit. The microfilming of the Bluffton newspapers was another project of the 1950's. During the latter part of the decade, the Library offered a writing class, featuring Bluffton author, Peggy Goodin.

In the early 1960's, the lack of stack and storage area became a major problem. The Library Board authorized a construction program, which consisted of a two-floor addition to the rear of the original Carnegie building that more than doubled the area of the Library. Wells County service clubs, sororities, Cub Scout packs, and PTA's contributed money to allay part of the \$104,000 cost.

In 1965, the former residence of Dr. C. H. Mead, which adjoined the Library to the east, was purchased by the Library for future expansion. The Historical Society used the building as their museum until 1975, when they purchased their own building at 420 West Market Street. The newly formed Creative Arts Council obtained permission to use the former Mead building as their headquarters.

### ***I CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT BOOKS.* Thomas Jefferson**

In 1970, a self-contained bookmobile replaced the book trailer, which had been in operation for thirty-two years. It was twenty-nine feet long and featured air-conditioning. The new unit was a single unit vehicle like a school bus rather than the common truck rig style having a separate cab and chassis. The cost of the new unit was \$29,180 and it arrived in Bluffton on September 30, 1970, just in time to begin the busy school schedule.

Because of its many stops throughout the county and its stops at the schools, up to 40 percent of the library's circulation was handled by the mobile unit. Head librarian at that time,

Elizabeth Mason, pointed out that the bookmobile with its three thousand five hundred books aboard served as a branch library to towns and schools throughout the county. It made regular stops at Craigville, Keystone, Kingsland, Liberty Center, McNatt, Mt. Zion, Murray, Ossian, Petroleum, Poneto, Tocsin, Uniondale, Vera Cruz, and Zanesville.

Large Print books—with letters nearly ¼" high—were added to the collection in 1970. *Kon-Tiki*, (Heyerdahl), *Travels with Charley* (Steinbeck), *My Brother Michael* (Stewart), *Catcher in the Rye* (Salinger), and the *Book of Psalms*, along with thirty other fiction and classic books, were purchased for the new collection.

Other improvements in the mid-1970's included the installation of automated charging machines and the establishment of an Indiana Room for genealogical research.

Charles Joray, a Berne native, came to the library in 1975 to serve as the new Director, the first time a man had held that position in Wells County. Mr. Joray had previously been the Director at the Hartford City Public Library.

The library commemorated our country's bicentennial in 1976 by offering a lecture series, "United States History Through Art," presented by Mrs. Sandy (James) Fitzpatrick of Washington D. C. Her lecture featured representative art works from America's two hundred years of existence and was presented to the county high school students and to the community.

The following year, 1977, the Library celebrated seventy-five years of continuous service to the community. The Fort Wayne Philharmonic's Percussion Trio and Brass Quintet performed at all the county schools and at the library. Crystal Thrasher, Wells County author, conducted a writer's workshop for all aspiring authors. There were receptions, tours, book reviews, special displays and giveaways. The birthday celebration continued from May 2 to May 6.



A new, sparkling white bookmobile with a colorful "Books" logo arrived at the library in January 1979. This third and final bookmobile, a converted recreational vehicle, was more spacious and serviceable than its predecessors. It served the residents of the county until 1991 before it was retired. Because of mounting repair costs, greater mobility of patrons, and vast improvements in school libraries, the bookmobile was no longer considered a viable or economically sound service.

In the summer of 1979, residents of the county benefited from a National Endowment for the Humanities Grant awarded to the library for a Summer Humanist in Residence. Dr. James Pictor from St. Francis College conducted a six-week course on American fiction. The enlightening and enjoyable sessions were well attended. In fact, due to popular demand, he reprised his role the following summer.

Before the decade ended, services were further extended when a branch library was opened in downtown Ossian. An Open House was held on December 8, 1979 to introduce the storefront facility to northern Wells county residents. Susan Dailey, who is the current Branch Librarian at Ossian, was also the first librarian at the Branch. (She worked in Children's Services at the Main Library between her two stints as Branch Manager.)

***HOW MANY A MAN HAS DATED A NEW ERA IN HIS LIFE  
FROM THE READING OF A BOOK.*** Henry David Thoreau

A new decade dawned and, along with it, new services premiered at the library.

The Art Print collection debuted in April 1981. Patrons were able to select from among 180 custom framed art reproductions. Several styles were represented: old masters, impressionistic, photo-realism, and abstract.

The following month, through a new Homebound Service, library employees began delivering materials to any county resident who was physically unable to use the library facility.

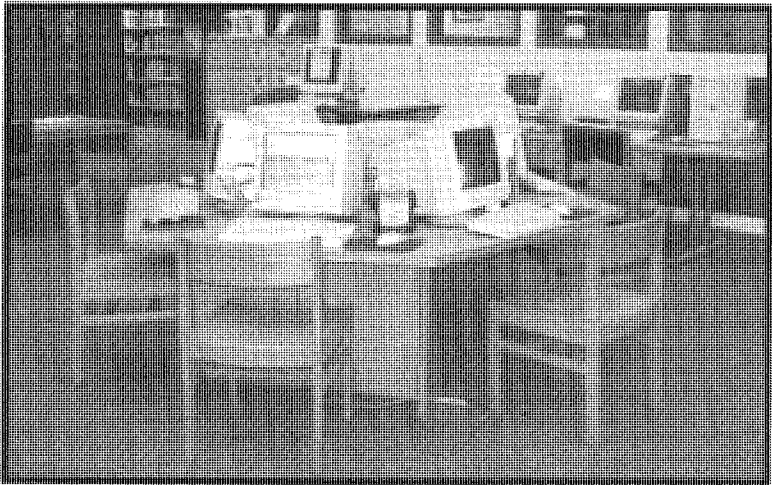
The decade of the 80's saw several installments of a popular "Wee Care" program. Professionals from a wide variety of backgrounds presented valuable information to new parents. Topics such as children's eye care, dentistry, health; kids and pets, and kids and loss were covered in separate sessions. While their parents were gathering helpful information, the children were entertained in Storytime sessions.

A new video format was just beginning to sweep the county—videocassette recorders. Since many homes did not yet own their own VCR, patrons were able to check out a machine from the library. Until the time when nearly everyone owned a VCR, this was a very popular service, with waiting times for a machine of up to one month. Although the library no longer lends machines, lending videos is still a very popular service. The collection has grown to include over 6000 educational and entertainment videos—this from an initial holding of thirty-six tapes.

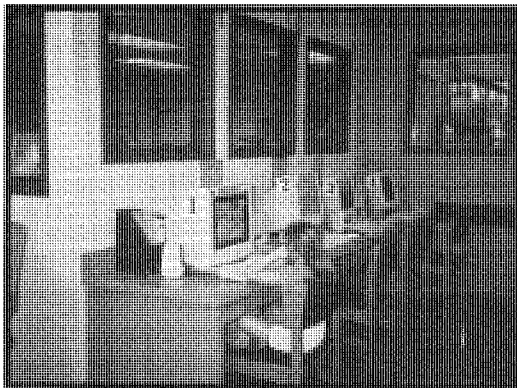
***TIME AND TIDE WAIT FOR NO MAN.*** William Bradford

In the mid 1980's, the library entered the computer age when it installed an automated circulation system. Service to the patrons and tracking of materials vastly improved. Since that time, the Wells County Public Library has either kept pace or it has been a step ahead of the library community when it comes to computer technology.





The card catalog is on-line and accessible through the Internet as is our Web page. We are connected to the schools through dedicated lines and wireless transmissions. Our work computers are networked. Our patrons have access to CD ROM databases and the Internet at the library. We have made a commitment to keep current with the technology of the day, providing our patrons with ever-expanding options.



Citizens of Zanesville in northwest Wells County petitioned the Library Board for a branch facility in their town. In May 1986, after enthusiastic volunteers dedicated many hours toward making their dream a reality, a new branch library was opened in Zanesville. (It subsequently closed in 1990 as demographics shifted.)

***A FRIEND MAY WELL BE RECKONED THE MASTERPIECE  
OF NATURE.*** Ralph Waldo Emerson

One of the most helpful and long lasting benefits to the county's library system materialized on June 23, 1988 when the Friends of the Library became an official organization.

A handful of dedicated patrons spearheaded the movement to make this dream a reality for the library staff. Three men contributed a great deal of time and effort to the undertaking. They were the first president of the Friends, Dr. Don Dian; the first recipient of "Friend of the Year," Mr. Richard Wilkey; and the first and only treasurer the Friends organization has ever known, Mr. Ed Goetz.

Friends of the Library is a national, non-profit group comprised of non-staff members whose purpose is to assist local libraries with raising funds, volunteering, and assisting with other projects.

Over the years, their assistance has been invaluable to the library and its endeavors. Primarily through book sales, the Friends have raised enough money to support a wide variety of special programs, author visits, and both the winter and summer reading programs.

***IF THERE IS NO STRUGGLE, THERE IS NO PROGRESS.***  
Frederick Douglas

The end of the decade was a time of great expectations and a time of turmoil. The fact that the library was bursting at the seams and expansion was a necessity was not questioned. Nearly everything else was. Should the stately Carnegie building be saved as an historical monument with an addition tastefully incorporated to the east? Should an all-new library be built on the south bank of the Wabash River where space and parking were non-issues, and the library could make a positive statement about our community values to those entering our town from the north? Should the new building be erected on the former jail lot? Was it important to keep the library in its downtown location and not desert the central city? Should we build a showcase library, pursue a tax saving, budget building, or hammer out a compromise?

As Library Director, Marilyn Hite, her staff, the Library Board, and interested citizens struggled with building issues, people found themselves allying with one group or another, each believing strongly in its vision for the library's future. Even the Library Board found itself split, first in favor of a new building on the Wabash River site and then, after personnel changes, in favor of a new building on Washington Street at the site of the former jail.

After many months of controversy, divisive meetings, plans adopted, pursued, and then ultimately rejected, a compromise was finally achieved and the county was ready to move forward in their pursuit of an all-new, modern library. The former jail lot on Washington Street was to be the new home for the 24,000 square foot, \$2.6 million dollar library. In the process, Director Hite offered her letter of resignation stating that she was leaving her position to pursue new opportunities in the field of library service. Her departure deeply saddened the staff and the Board.

Contractors (all from Fort Wayne, IN) were named for the project. They were: General Contractor—Hamilton Hunter for \$1,199,225; Mechanical and Fire Protection—Shambaugh & Sons for \$456,186; and Electrical—A. Hattersley for \$198,242. Ron Menze from Archonics, Inc. was the architect. These officials, along with a crowd of county, city, and library officials were all present for the Ground Breaking Ceremony held on a warm afternoon at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 28, 1990. The history-making event beat, but not by much, a torrential summer storm, complete with flashing lightning bolts, rolling thunder, and two and a half inches of rain.

### ***NOTHING HAPPENS UNLESS FIRST A DREAM.***

Carl Sandburg

While plans were progressing for the new Main Library, improvements for the Ossian Branch were also underway. The entire quarter block on the northwest corner of Jefferson and Mill Streets in Ossian was acquired for \$95,000 in 1989, with the hopes of building a new branch facility in that location. Because there was a need to wait until the Main Library project was completed, the stately, ex-Sherwood Hunter house (on-site in Ossian) was

remodeled and brought up to code to serve as an interim facility. Its elegant, old home ambience, complete with intricate and beautiful woodwork, served the people of Ossian and vicinity well for five years.

The new library in Bluffton was officially dedicated at 2:00 p.m. August 25, 1991. The dedication was held even though the materials and some of the furnishings were not in place, in order to achieve the goal of a one-year construction timetable. State Senator, Larry Macklin, the main speaker at the event, credited the "very rich heritage" of Bluffton and Wells County as one of the primary reasons for making the goal of a new library facility a reality. He congratulated all for their dedication and perseverance.

General Contractor, Hamilton Hunter, presented the key to the new library to Beryl J. Gray, Library Board President. Flowers were presented to Library Director, Barbara Elliott, and each of the staff members for superlative work done for the building program and for the progress and service of the library.

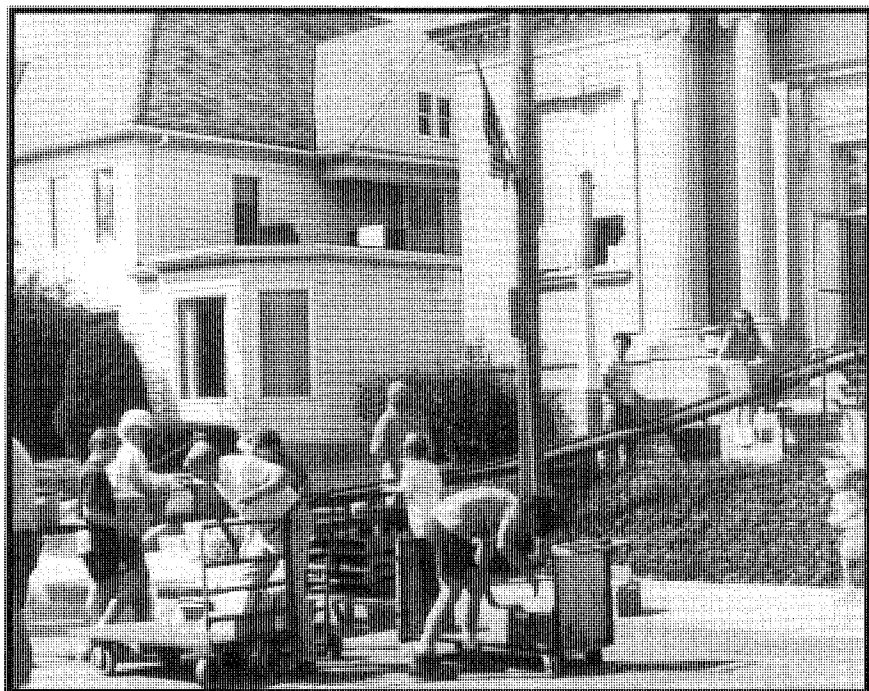
Following comments from several officials, everyone was invited inside to see for himself or herself the spacious and beautiful new facility.

The final step necessary before the library could be opened to the public was a gargantuan moving task. Eighty thousand library books, plus all of the other materials necessary for the operation of a modern library, needed to travel across the street in an orderly fashion.

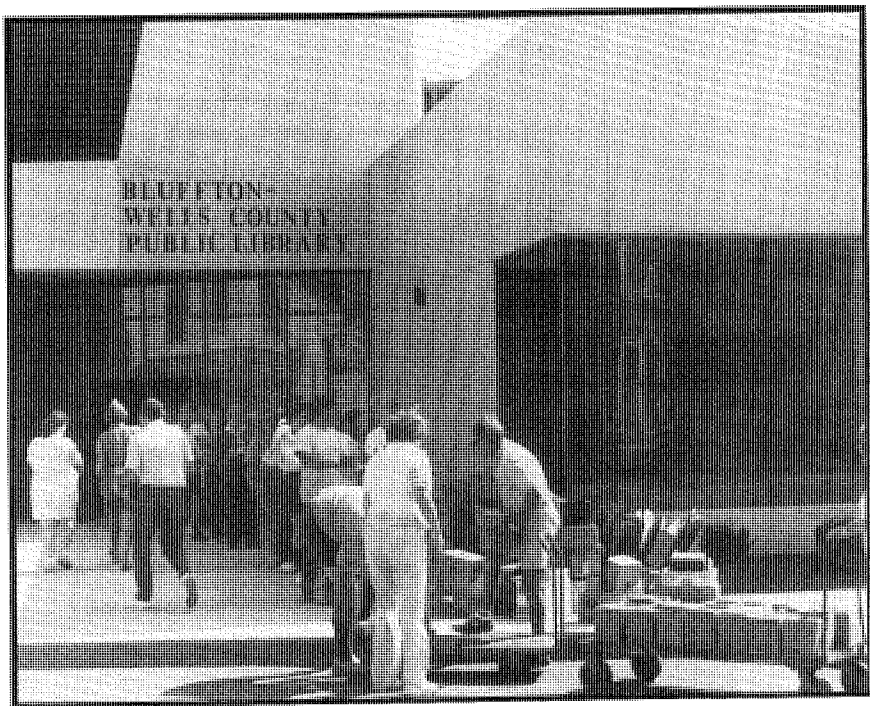
The staff, along with hired movers, had carted much of the equipment, furniture, supplies and materials across the street in the weeks preceding moving day, which arrived on a sunny Saturday morning, September 7, 1991.

Two hundred ninety six volunteers participated in the well-orchestrated move. The Friends of the Library, stationed under a large tent erected in the grassy lot to the east of the Carnegie building, played an integral part in checking people in and assigning tasks.

Eagle Scout candidate, Jason Gerdorn, had chosen the library move as his community service project. Under the direction of Library Director, Barbara Elliott, Jason arranged for scouts to assist with the physical aspects of the move. He had also made arrangements for food and beverages to refuel the workers.



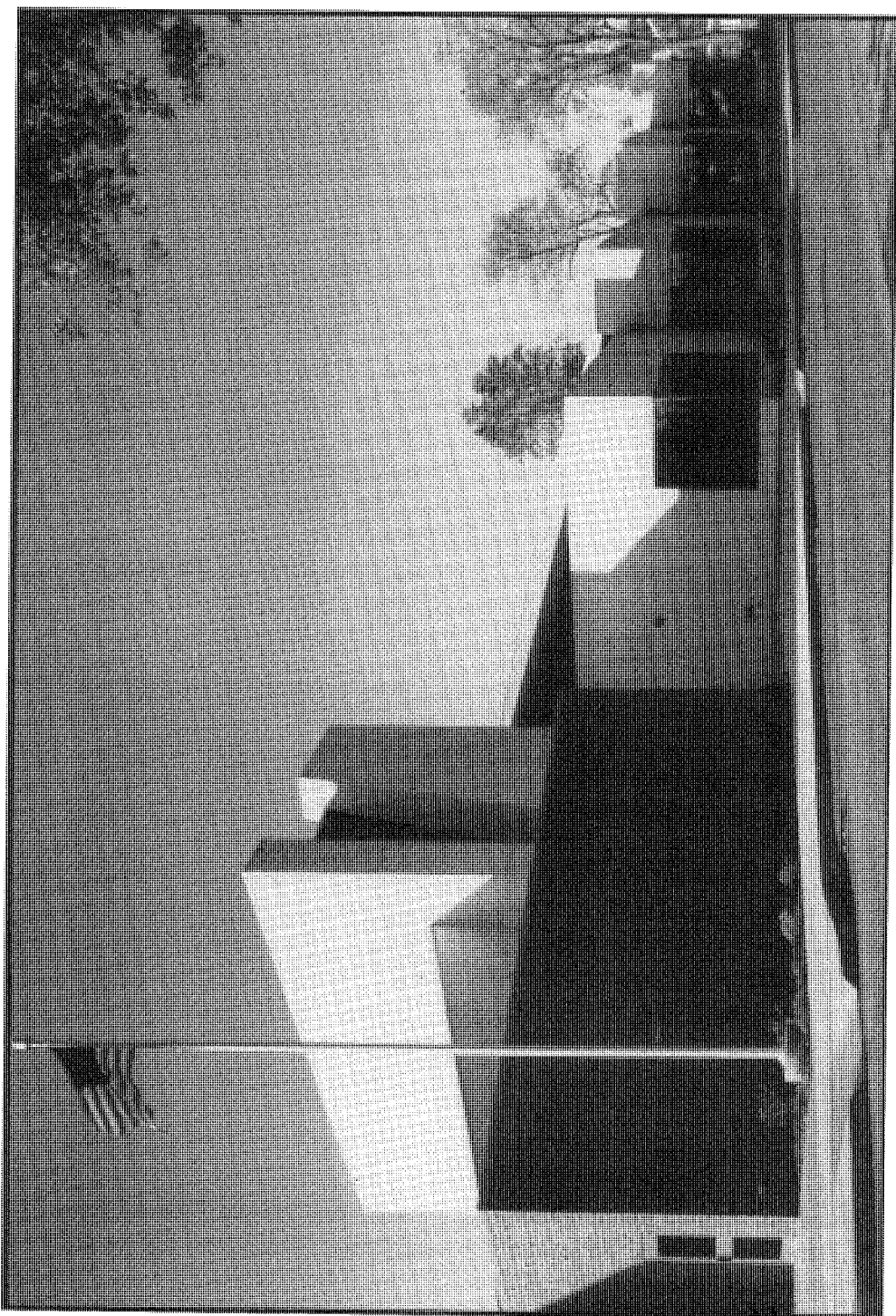
A conveyor belt ran from the stacks area of the old Carnegie, past the Circulation Desk, down the stairs to the front doors and then out the doors and down two flights of steps to the street. At this point the book brigade of volunteers took over with book carts, biceps, and back muscles. With this army of competent assistants the move exceeded all expectations and actually was wrapped up in dramatic success three hours ahead of the projected completion time.



The new library officially opened its doors for business at 9:00 a.m., Tuesday, September 24, 1991. Nearly four weeks later, a third "special event" day was held to herald the new library (in addition to the Dedication and Moving Day experiences).

The public was invited to attend an Open House on Sunday, October 20, 1991 to view the new library, complete with its furnishings, materials and equipment in operating form.

Over five hundred guests marveled at the new facility as they enjoyed refreshments provided by the Friends of the Library. After a decade of dreaming, planning, compromising, and diligent work, an all new, modern, one story, accessible-to-all library stood in downtown Bluffton, a testimony to this community's values.



## ***VISION IS THE ART OF SEEING THINGS INVISIBLE.***

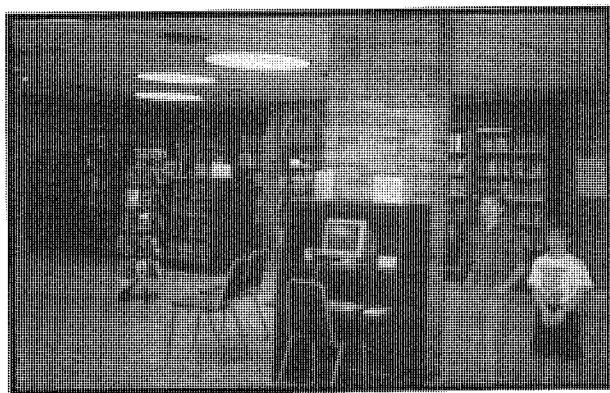
Jonathan Swift

The decade of expansion was just beginning for Wells County residents. Once the need for a new central library was met, people began to focus on the southern part of the county and what could be done to better serve the people there.

The residents welcomed a pioneering solution. A Library Services and Construction grant from the Indiana Library and Historical Board was awarded to the Wells Co. Public Library to be used for a microwave transmission of the Library's On-Line Catalog to a shared Branch located directly outside the high school's library.

This was the first time wireless transmission had been used to carry library data to a remote area. The library's on-line catalog was thus made available to the Southern Wells students.

The school and library entered into a cooperative agreement whereby the school would provide space for a small library branch in exchange for use of the catalog during the day. The Southern Wells Branch would be open at least two nights a week to serve both adults and children during non-school hours.



A ribbon-cutting ceremony and Open House was held on Sunday, May 2, 1993 to salute the new facility and the spirit of cooperation between the school and library. Terry Burns was named Branch Manager for the innovative library and she is still serving in that capacity today.



Once the central and the southern parts of the County were well situated, it was time to move north to Ossian where the residents had been patiently waiting their turn for major library improvements.

Due to happy circumstances, the looming library project in Ossian would cost the taxpayers no additional funds. Money conserved from the Main Library construction project plus money donated specifically for construction and/or capital improvement would pay the full costs for the new Ossian Branch.

The Library Board accepted Hamilton Hunter's low bid of \$248,000 on the 3,750 ft. facility to be built on the northwest corner of Jefferson and Mill Streets in Ossian. (Mr. Hunter was the general contractor for the Main Library project in Bluffton.)

The ground breaking ceremony for the Ossian Branch was held at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 31 and a little over a year later on Sunday, November 14, 1994 the new facility was dedicated followed by an Open House for the public. With the new Ossian Branch building came extended evening hours, elimination of the lunchtime closing, additional staff, and enhanced services.



By the mid 90's, an important and fervently hoped for goal had been achieved. Every citizen in Wells County had access to a modern, full-service library facility along with the educational, informational, and entertainment benefits that accompanied its presence.



***A GOOD HEAD AND A GOOD HEART ARE ALWAYS A FORMIDABLE COMBINATION.*** Nelson Mandela

On April 8, 1994 an exceptional honor was bestowed upon Library Director, Barbara Elliott. During a Library Federation luncheon in Indianapolis, she was named Outstanding Librarian for the state of Indiana. This award is presented annually to recognize individuals who have contributed to the excellence of Indiana libraries and who have given distinguished service to the profession.

Several letters of nomination had been submitted on her behalf, including letters from the Library Board and from the library staff. A reception was held in her honor at the library so that local supporters could express their congratulations and pride in Mrs. Elliott's achievement.

A year later, at an Open House celebrating her retirement and illustrious career in the library field, the Library Board named Barbara "Director Emeritus."

***EVERYTHING CHANGES BUT CHANGE ITSELF.  
EVERYTHING FLOWS AND NOTHING REMAINS THE  
SAME...YOU CANNOT STEP TWICE INTO THE SAME  
RIVER, FOR OTHER WATERS AND YET OTHERS GO  
FLOWING EVER ON. Heraclitus***

At the end of the nineties, as we approached a new decade, a new century, and, most significantly, a new millennium, the emphasis subtly shifted from construction to enhanced services in other areas.

Programming has grown dramatically over the years. Beginning at birth and continuing to adulthood, every single age group is now targeted with customized programming.



The position of Young Adult Librarian was added so that our teen patrons would have a staff member specifically focused on their needs. This is an age of natural attrition for library users, so we want to encourage our teens to remain loyal to their library habit.

Winter Reading Programs, Family Reading Programs, Teen Reading Programs, and Summer Reading Programs encourage and reward reading at all age levels throughout the year.



As we celebrate our centennial, we are able to do things never dreamed of by patrons in 1902. We can listen to professionally produced books on cassettes and CD's, we can watch video tapes and DVD's, we can access a variety of CD ROM databases to find phone numbers, study Indiana laws, chart a trip from door to door, investigate American businesses, research medical information, consider colleges, and examine poetry (and much, much more.) Often a keyword is all that is necessary to find the information we are seeking.

The library has a computer available for people with disabilities. On this computer, the keys come equipped with the Braille alphabet, the monitor enlarges images, and the sound card has the ability to read text to a patron.

Internet stations are available where patrons can search an immense network of information or instantly mail a friend electronically. The library has a website where patrons can search the library's holdings from the comfort of their homes and place reserves on materials they wish to check out.

The vast variety of materials available to today's patrons would have seemed positively preposterous to Wells County residents one hundred years ago. Imagine—nearly 90,000 books, 130 art prints, 2,000 musical cassettes and CD's and an equal number of audio books, subscriptions to over 350 magazines and newspapers and more than 6,000 videos—all available to any Wells County citizen with a library card.

As we look forward to the next one hundred years, we can anticipate changes as enormous as the ones library users have experienced during the previous one hundred years. Will libraries become all digital? Will people, passionate about their books and reading, be unwilling to relinquish the fragrance of paper and ink, the tactile experience of holding a book in their hands and turning its pages? Will the library, with its roots back to ancient times, survive technology, indeed embrace it and evolve with it?

In 2102 will Wells County citizens still cherish a place where they can meet communally with other kindred spirits, and yet be alone with their own imaginations and with the thoughts and words of all those who have come before? Will this warehouse of human memory be revered well into the next century? We believe, most emphatically, that it will.

At the dawn of this new millennium (and at the end of this history) let us each remember the words of Malcolm Forbes:

***THE RICHEST PERSON IN THE WORLD, IN FACT ALL THE RICHES IN THE WORLD—COULDN'T PROVIDE YOU WITH ANYTHING LIKE THE ENDLESS, INCREDIBLE LOOT AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY. YOU CAN MEASURE THE AWARENESS, THE BREADTH AND THE WISDOM OF A CIVILIZATION, A NATION, A PEOPLE, BY THE PRIORITY GIVEN TO PRESERVING THESE REPOSITORIES OF ALL THAT WE ARE, ALL THAT WE WERE, OR WILL BE.***

## LIBRARY DIRECTORS

*IT IS EASY TO GET A THOUSAND SOLDIERS, BUT  
DIFFICULT TO GET A GENERAL.* Chinese Proverb

**1902-1909—MISS BERTHA CRAVEN**, a daughter of Mr. And Mrs. J. H. Craven of Miller Street in Bluffton, was in charge of the library that was housed in the high school building. When the Bluffton Public Library was established, she was employed as the first librarian. She resigned to marry Homer D. Baker, who was a superintendent of the W. B. Brown Chandelier Company.

**1909-1911—MISS MARY ROTHERMAL** resided in Bluffton for all of her pre-married life. She was the daughter of Mr. And Mrs. Albert Z. Rothermal of East South Street. She resigned her position to marry Mr. Ralph Silver of Wooster, Ohio, who was working as a newspaperman for the Birmingham Age-Herald in Birmingham, Alabama.

**1911-1912—MISS ISOBEL DUBOIS** was born in Newpaltz, New York, and graduated from the Library Department of Drexel Institute of Art, Science and Industry in Philadelphia. Prior to coming to Bluffton, she worked at the Newpaltz Normal School Library. She resigned to accept a position at the South Side Library in Fort Wayne.

**1912-1919—MISS NANNIE JAYNE** was born in Queensville, Jennings County, Indiana, and graduated from North Vernon High School. She was a teacher for many years before obtaining her library training in Indianapolis. She served in the Alexandria Library before coming to Bluffton. Miss Jayne was stricken with illness in August 1918, from which she never recovered. She died March 28, 1919.

**1919-1938—MRS. IDA ASHBAUCHER**, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Mast, was born in Rockcreek Township in 1867. She was graduated from Bluffton High School, Terre Haute Normal School, and attended the Bluffton Business College. Prior

to her work in the library, she worked as a cashier in a store, a teacher, a secretary in a law office, and as the deputy recorder for Wells County. Upon the death of her husband, Benjamin Ashbacher in 1914, she began work as an assistant librarian. She was appointed head librarian in 1919 and served in that position until 1938, when she again worked as assistant librarian until her retirement in 1941 at the age of seventy-four.

**1938-1940—MISS MARGUERTIA McDONALD** was a native of British Columbia, Canada, and later became a naturalized citizen of the United States. She attended the library school at the University of Wisconsin and served as librarian at the Whitewater, Wisconsin Public Library and reference librarian at the Seattle Public library before coming to this city. She resigned to accept a position in the West.

**1940-1944—MISS ELSA STRASSWEG** lived in Evansville, Indiana, where she was in charge of the county work at the Evansville library. She resigned that position to continue her education in library science at the St. Louis Library School. After the completion of her training, she accepted the job as head librarian here. She resigned the Bluffton position to accept the job of director of the New Albany-Floyd County Public Library.

**1944-1966—MISS CLARA STURGIS** was a daughter of Dr. Charles and Anna Deam Sturgis of Bluffton. She graduated from Bluffton High School and DePauw University, later returning to DePauw as a teacher of French and Spanish. She joined the Bluffton Library staff in 1941 as a reference librarian and accepted the head librarian position three years later. She retired at the age of seventy in 1966.

**1966-1975—MRS. ELIZABETH MASON** is a native of Huntsville in Randolph County, Indiana. She graduated from Lynn High School and Purdue University and received a Master's Degree in Library Science from Indiana University. Mrs. Mason's previous library work before coming to Bluffton included library director of the Winchester Public Library and reference librarian at

Richmond's Morrisson-Reeve Library. She retired from the Bluffton-Wells County Public Library in July 1975.

**1975-1981—MR. CHARLES JORAY** was born in Bluffton but spent his childhood in Berne. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from Ball State University and a Master of Library Science Degree from Indiana University. Prior to coming to Bluffton, he held positions as assistant medical librarian at the Marion County General Hospital and head librarian at the Hartford City Public Library. Charles left the Wells County Public Library to accept the position of Director at Kokomo-Howard Public Library, where he is still serving today.

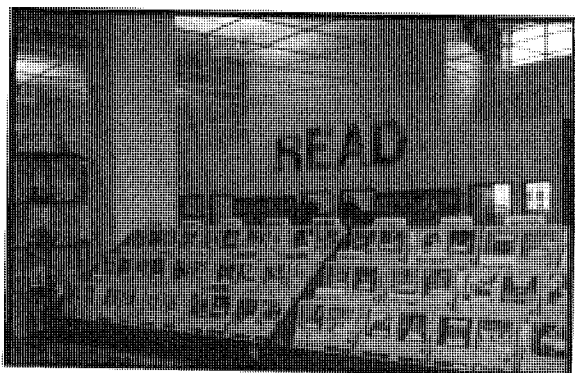
**1982-1989—MISS MARILYN HITE** was a graduate of Spencer High School in Spencer, IN. Marilyn received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Indiana University and, subsequently, her Masters of Library Science also from IU. Marilyn came to Bluffton in 1978 to serve as Children's and Outreach Librarian. Under her leadership, the children's and outreach programs significantly expanded. Upon Mr. Joray's resignation, Miss Hite was named Director of the Wells Co. Public Library in April 1982. She prepared much of the groundwork for the arduous building project for the new library. Amid great praise and commendation for her outstanding work for the library, Marilyn resigned in 1989 to pursue career opportunities in Ohio.

**1989-1995—MRS. BARBARA ELLIOTT** was a Bluffton native where she graduated valedictorian of her high school. She graduated with a chemistry degree from Indiana University, Summa Cum Laude. Barbara set up and operated a medium-size technical library in the fields of chemistry, metallurgy and ceramics for the Uranium Division of the Mallenckrodt Chemical Company in St. Louis. When she moved back to Indiana, Mrs. Elliott worked in the St. Francis College Library in Fort Wayne. She then returned to Indiana University to earn her Masters of Library Science Degree in 1979. She began her tenure at the Wells Co. Public Library as the Reference and Adult Services Librarian, became Assistant Director in 1982, and then in 1989 was named Director, a position she held until her retirement in 1995.



**1995-1997—MR. JOHN CASTLEMAN** was raised on a farm near Monroeville, IN. John graduated from Monroeville High School (which later became Heritage High School.) He received a teaching degree from Ball State University and a Masters in Library Science at Indiana University. Prior to coming to Bluffton, he was Director of libraries in Crown Point, IN and in the North Madison County Library in Elwood, IN. He resigned in 1997.

**1997- — MRS. STEPHANIE DAVIS** was born in Indianapolis where she graduated from St. Mary Academy. She earned her undergraduate degree in math education and psychology and a master's degree in guidance and counseling from Ball State University. Stephanie taught math at New Palestine High School before moving with her family to Bluffton in 1977. She divided her time among substitute teaching, involvement in service organizations, volunteering, and caring for her three children. Her library career began in 1986 when Stephanie began working in Children's Services. She was named Interim Director in 1997 and then became Co-Director with Sara Gartin (who is currently Systems Director) in 1999. Sara, who holds the requisite Masters in Library Science degree, graciously served in that capacity until Stephanie completed her MLS from Indiana University (a state requirement for her position.) Stephanie was named Director in 2001 and holds that position today.



Looking across the CD collection in the Main Library's concourse toward the Young Adult alcove and the "READ" fabric art, created and constructed by staff member, Cindy Burchell

## THE WELLS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY STAFF AT THE TIME OF THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Director:	Stephanie Davis
Systems Director:	Sara Gartin
Administrative Services:	Valerie Gall Earla Sue Rogers
Reference:	Vi Tester Robin Barton Jo Elzey
Audio-Visual:	Doris Hoffer
Children's Services:	Amy Greiner Teresa Dustman Cindy Burchell Crissy Boxell Tami Fiechter
Circulation:	Nancy Lowe Sharon Moriarity Angela Pfister Pamela Powell Cynthia Wolfe
Technical Services:	Judy Maxwell Leah Baumgartner Elizabeth Bayless Carolyn Gilbert Rose Lindblom
Young Adult Services:	Jennifer Martin

Ossian Branch

Susan Dailey  
Julie Christian  
Angela Jaworski  
Char Milton  
Bonnie Ramsey  
Lou Ann Winans

Southern Wells  
Branch:

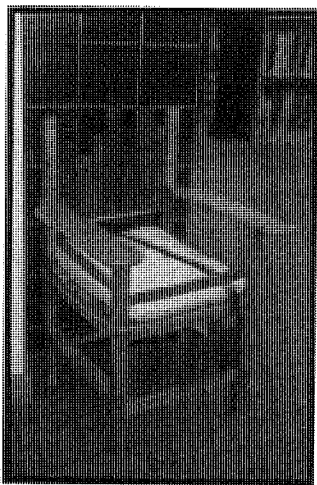
Terry Burns  
Carolyn Engle

Pages:

Michelle Fiechter  
Lora Kieser  
Robert Neuenschwander  
Jill Schwartz

Maintenance:

Ben Habegger  
Mary Ellen McEvoy



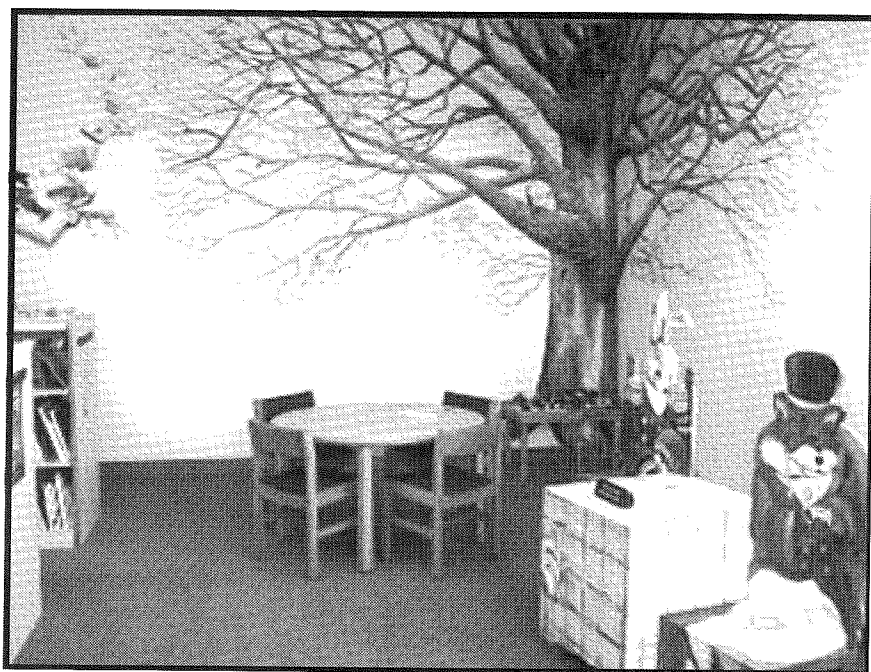
The library chair, "Pause to Read," created by gifted patron Oscar Heyne and talented staff members Cindy Burchell, Stephanie Davis, and Teresa Dustman, won an "Artistic Merit Award" in the *Celebration of Chairs* contest on July 12, 2001.

## LIBRARY BOARD MEMBERS 1902-2002

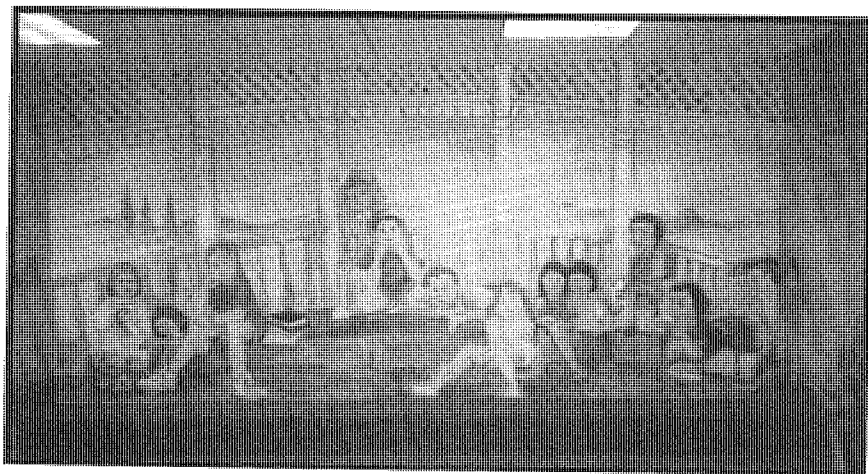
Mr. Samuel E. Hitchcock 1902 - 1912  
Mrs. Belle (Dana) Brown 1902 - 1905  
Mrs. May (W. H) Eichhorn 1902 - 1932  
Mrs. Delia (James P.) Hale 1902 - 1903  
Mr. William Henry Tribolet 1902 - 1911  
Mrs. Jennie (Abram) Simmons 1902 - 1932  
Mr. Charles C. Deam 1902 (six months)  
Mr. Jacob W. Goodyear 1902 - 1905  
Mr. James P. Hale 1903 - 1914  
Mrs. Bertha (W. A.) Wirt 1905 - 1907  
Dr. Arthur E. Springsted 1905 - 1908  
Mrs. Catherine (Marcellus) Alexander 1907 - 1917  
Col. W. L. Kiger 1908-1932  
Mr. P. A. Allen 1911 - 1942  
Mr. Charles G. Dailey 1912 - 1925  
Judge Charles E. Sturgis 1914 - 1938  
Mr. T. Marion Buckner 1915 - 1919  
Mr. Frank Heckathorn 1915 - 1918  
Mrs. Emma (Martin W.) Walbert 1917 - 1938  
Mr. George Tribolet 1925 (one month)  
Mr. J. Frank Meyers 1925 - 1938  
Mrs. Eunice (Max) Markley 1932 - 1958  
Mrs. Edna (W. H. Frazier 1932 - 1941  
Mr. Charles G. Park 1938 - 1949  
Mr. A. Walter Hamilton 1938 - 1944  
Mrs. Katherine (Joseph) Eichhorn 1938 - 1944  
Mr. William Thoma 1938 - 1967  
Mrs. Marie (Alfred) Girod 1938 - 1964  
Mr. Charles Hogg 1938 - 1949  
Mrs. Esther Sweeney Eltzroth 1938 - 1947  
Miss Maro Morris 1939 - 1941  
Miss Margaret Powers 1941 - 1962  
Mrs. Beth (Ray) Fryback 1941 - 1958  
Mr. Lyle R. Willey 1942 - 1962  
Mr. John P. Thompson 1944 - 1952  
Mrs. Lois (Lloyd M.) Cline 1944 - 1951  
Miss Bertha Garrett 1947 - 1966

Dr. H. B. Annis 1949 – 1954  
Mr. Ralph Baker 1949 – 1965  
Mrs. Cleme (Deane) Reynolds 1951 – 1961  
Judge Joseph F Eichhorn 1952 – 1962  
Mr. David S. Thompson, Jr. 1954 – 1967  
Mrs. Nina Jane (Raymond) Meyer 1958 – 1966  
Mrs. Edna (Lloyd C.) Lieurance 1958 – 1967  
Mr. Richard Swisher 1960 – 1969  
Mrs. Barbara (James) Barbieri 1961 – 1976  
Mr. Ned Carnall 1962 – 1968  
Mrs. Jeanne (Albert C.) Bevier 1962 – 1968  
Mrs. Judy (Robert) Haggard 1964 – 1973  
Mr. Asbury Walker 1965 – 1966  
Mrs. Sara Kindlesparger (Clyde) Brown 1966 – 1973  
Mrs. Carolyn (John) Edris 1966 – 1978  
Mrs. Joan (Don) Strehler 1967 (7 months)  
Mrs. Mary Alice Eisaman 1968 – 1972  
Mr. Robert McKinley 1968 – 1974  
Mr. Howard Rich 1969 – 1977  
Mrs. Elizabeth (Glen) O'Laverty 1972 – 1983  
Mr. William Gentis 1973 – 1981  
Mrs. Catherine (Marshall) Rix 1974 – 1982  
Mrs. Anna (Charles) Fulhart 1976 – 1988  
Mr. Charles Day 1976 – 1988  
Mr. Donald Skinner 1977 – 1981  
Ms. Mary Alice Eisaman 1978 – 1986  
Mr. Daniel Gordon 1981 – 1989  
Mrs. Carol (Don) Engle 1981 – 1985  
Mr. David Haecker 1982 – 1986  
Mr. Richard B. Monroe 1982 – 1986  
Mrs. Beryl J. (Marion) Gray 1983 – 1993  
Mrs. Caroline (Steve) Newell 1983 – 1987  
Mr. Kent Sprunger 1984 – 1987  
Ms. Kathryn E. Heaston 1986 – 1990  
Mr. James W. Foster 1990 – 2000  
Mrs. Dorothy A. (William) Gitlin 1988 – 1992  
Mr. Duane L. Miller 1990 – 1997  
Mr. Ted K. Smith 1990 – 1994  
Mr. Alfred J. Norris 1990 – 1992

Ms. Beverly Buckner 1991 – 1995  
Mrs. Joan (Lamoine) Nusbaumer 1992 – 1994  
Mrs. Jean (Beverly) Blessing 1992 - 1996  
Mrs. Hallie (Dwight) Pace 1993 - 1997  
Mrs. Barbara (Jon) Brown 1994 – 1998  
Mrs. Dorothy W. (Richard) Wilkey 1994 – 1998  
Mr. Edward J. Shestak 1995 –  
Mrs. Karen (Kay) Dunn 1997 – 2001  
Mr. Steve Gerber 1997 –  
Mrs. Janice (Robert) Williams 1997 – 2001  
Mrs. Shirley (Tom) Thomas 1998 –  
Mrs. Julie (Michael) Meitzler 1998 –  
Mr. Graig P. Stettner 2000 –  
Mrs. Jackie (Michael) Chaney 2001 –  
Mrs. Kim (Robert) Pace 2001 –



Children's Room, Main Library



Mural of children in Story Hour Room, Main Library



Story book characters come to life at the Ossian Branch.

Murals and whimsical furniture created for the children at the Main Library and at the Ossian Branch by local artist, Mrs. Nancy (Steve) Wagner.