

Juniata County Library

1966-2016

Compiled by Jane Cannon Mort

Books and their public availability have been an important part of life in Juniata County since the 1800s, when the Delaware Township Literary Society had its own book collection.

In early grade schools and high schools, each classroom had a few books. Sam Long had a bookshop in Mifflin, and in Mifflintown, two drugstores had rental libraries where, for two cents a day, you could read fairly recent fiction and biographies.

By the late 1930s, the Twin Boroughs Women's Club started a library in their meeting room in a house next to the Juniata River Bridge in Mifflintown.

When Juniata High School opened its doors in 1936, a school library was established, run by librarians who also taught English classes. The first full time librarian at the school was Myra Rodgers Glace.

When East Juniata High School opened in 1953, Ruth Cramer Waters — remember that name — was the librarian. In 1970, she succeeded Glace at Juniata, until her retirement in 1980. But that's not all she did.

The first attempt to establish a county library came in the 1950s, in an effort spearheaded by Mrs. Karl Guss Sr. and Mrs. Clark Robinson. After all the groundwork was laid, the Juniata County Commissioners turned the project down, refusing to fund it. So, the idea was abandoned, but just for a few years.

In 1966, County Commissioners Ralph Meiser, Jesse Fry and Blair Lauver were persuaded to establish a county library, and did so by adopting a resolution on March 21 of that year.

The first library board was headed by John Anstine, and included Dr. Eugene Sausser as vice president, Ruth Cramer Waters as secretary, Mark Delbaugh as treasurer. Remaining members were Mrs. Karl Guss, John Henry Jr., and Brooks Kerchner. The library was run by a board of seven residents from throughout the county, with funding from the county, state, separate municipalities in the county and private gifts and fundraising efforts, and is also a United Way of Mifflin-Juniata community partner. The board expanded to nine members in 2016, in an effort to increase diversity.

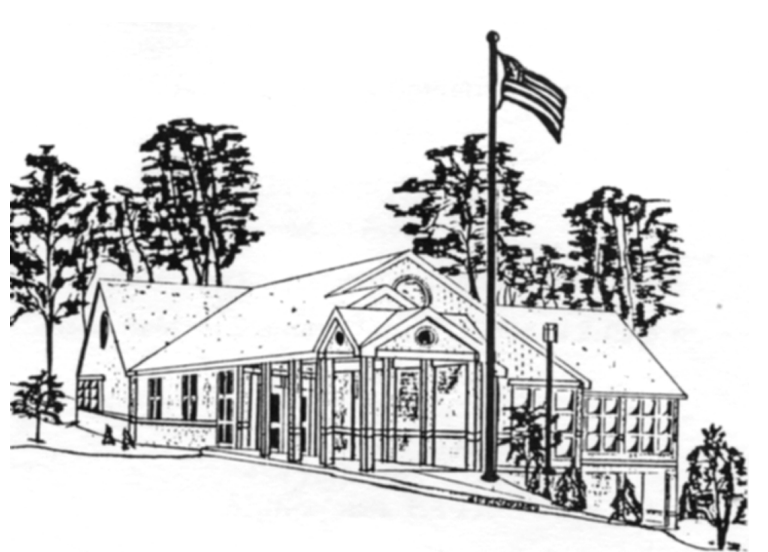
Site chosen

The site for the library was chosen: a few rented rooms in the former Park Plaza Hotel at the corner of Main and Lemon streets in Mifflintown.

And the first librarian was named — Ruth Cramer Waters, who took on the part time position in addition to continuing to serve as school librarian at East Juniata.

Remember the Twin Boroughs Women's Club that started a library in their meeting room in the 1930s? That same club donated money to pay for furniture for the children's room, as well as the books that were left from their own collection once the county library was established.

The first three library cards were issued on Nov. 26, 1966, to Commissioners Meiser, Lauver and Fry, during



Juniata County Library At-a-glance

Mission: The Juniata County Library offers free services and opportunities enabling all members of our diverse community to explore ideas, the power of information, and the joy of reading. The Library has a special mission to young children and their caregivers to encourage a love of reading and learning.

Address:
498 Jefferson Street
Mifflintown, PA 17059

Phone:
(717) 436-6378
(717) 436-5053 (fax)

Website:
www.juniatalibrary.org

Hours:
Monday: 10 a.m.-7 p.m.
Tuesday: 10 a.m.-7 p.m.
Wednesday: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Thursday: 10 a.m.-7 p.m.
Friday: 10 a.m.- 7 p.m.
Saturday: 9 a.m.- 4 p.m.
Sunday: Closed

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The Juniata County Library is a United Way of Mifflin-Juniata community partner.

dedication ceremonies for the brand new Juniata County Library.

In the library's first month of operation, there were 458 borrowers and 1,044 books in circulation. Commissioner Meiser predicted when the library opened that it would take four years to reach 2,000 patrons. In fact, four years later, the library had 4,000 patrons and monthly circulation of more than 4,000 books and records. The 4,000 patrons, in 1970, represented about one-fourth of the population of the county (16,000-17,000).

In 1970, Waters tendered her resignation as librarian, with the explanation that the job had become too extensive to be handled on a part-time basis. Ellen Robinson Chack was chosen as the first full time librarian. She served until 1974.

A new home?

Five years after the library was established, it looked as though it might have a larger, permanent home just across the street.

An article in the weekly newspaper, *The Juniata Sentinel*, stated that Mrs. Robert L. Bousum, of 26 N. Main St., Mifflintown, had offered one side of her double dwelling to the Juniata County Commissioners as a memorial gift in honor of the late Mr. and Mrs. R. Louis Bousum, and Mr. Robert L. Bousum.

At the same time, Mrs. Bousum announced that at her death, the residence she occupied, adjoining the proposed library site, would also be a gift for library purposes.

The deed was drawn for the property, and was accepted by the commissioners.

A few months later, after receiving and studying reports from an architect, an engineer and a group from the State Library, the library board regretfully acknowledged that there was not enough space in the building to gain state approval to house the library. Therefore, in a meeting that included Mrs. Bousum, representatives from the county commissioners and the library board, it was decided that the library would remain in its current location, and the Bousum property would not be used for library purposes until Mrs. Bousum no longer cared to occupy the adjoining house. Then the entire structure could be renovated or rebuilt with suitable additions made to make adequate space and modern facilities for a county library.

The commissioners retained possession of the gift deed, although Mrs. Bousum would have control of the property to rent as an apartment and/or office space, and on which she would pay property taxes.

It was thought that eventually the entire building, with a ground area of more than 12,000 square feet, would be available for the library, although that never happened.

In the meantime, the young library continued to thrive and grow in the rooms it occupied in the former hotel on Main Street in Mifflintown. And books were not the only items shared.

By 1970, the library was promoting its Record Room, located in the front of the building, where visitors could listen to records on site or borrow them for home listening.

The library also promoted its collection of "talking books," available on records or tapes in a wide variety of titles. They were available to: people who were legally blind; permanently or temporarily handicapped persons who were either unable to read conventional newspaper print with normal corrective lenses, or not able to read comfortably; permanently or temporarily physically handicapped persons unable, by cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, stroke, glaucoma or muscle or nerve disorders; all institutions, including hospitals, homes and agencies serving the aforementioned individuals.

By 1971, the Juniata County Library offered patrons books, magazines, newspapers, records and films from its own collection, as well as borrowing from the collections of other libraries. But the library also desired to offer a file of local resources — listing people in Juniata County who had special skills, or knowledge about hobbies or interests about which they knew a great deal. The library attempted to locate anyone with a special interest to act as a re-

source person, then, when other people interested in the same skill or topic inquired, the library would be able to put them in touch with the resource person.

During her tenure as librarian, Chack also took to the airwaves to promote the library, reading children's stories on radio station WJUN. In December, 1970, she read "The Tailor of Gloucester," by Beatrix Potter, a Christmas story for children, over the air. In July 1972, Chack, and her husband, Alan, presented the first children's story program on Radio WJUN.

Efforts were also made to reach out to readers in the far corners of the county who, perhaps, had little opportunity to come to town to visit the facility.

Reaching out to readers

It was under Chack's leadership in 1972 that the library opened a branch in a trailer at Seven Stars, and began a mail order delivery service for residents of the southern section of the county.

In May 1972, it was reported in local newspapers that the library received a grant from the Pennsylvania State Library to fund a two-year, experimental project to improve rural library services in the county.

Since Juniata County is a long, narrow county, and the library was located in the center, it was recognized that some people who wished to use the library had to make long trips by car to obtain library materials.

The grant provided for the establishment of two separate programs to serve the far ends of Juniata County:

1. A Reading Center housed in a trailer beside the Troup Brothers store in Seven Stars would serve the northern end of the county. The center was to contain a selection of books that could be borrowed or used in the trailer. The library had hoped to open the center by the end of June or beginning of July 1972, but the opening had to be delayed because the trailer, set to be delivered to Seven Stars from Williamsport, suffered water damage from flooding caused by Tropical Storm Agnes.

2. Mail Order Delivery Service to serve the southern, East Waterford end of the county through a program to loan paperback books by mail to people in rural areas.

The two programs were to be studies to determine which method best served the needs of people in a rural area.

The same tropical storm that caused the delay in the opening of the library branch in Seven Stars resulted in a special notice for library patrons in Juniata County, published in local newspapers in 1972: "We ask that all flood damaged books and materials belonging to the Juniata County Library be returned. Also please report the loss of any library materials that were swept away by the flood waters. We are not charging any fines or costs for such materials."

By October, 1972, the library opened its "branch" in a 12-foot-by-45-foot trailer set on rent-free space in the corner of the Troup Brothers and Benner Store parking lot in Seven Stars to service patrons from Richfield, East Salem, Seven Stars and other areas of the north end of Juniata County. Opening day was Oct. 28, 1972.

Close to 100 patrons came to the library trailer on its opening day, compared to 50 patrons who went to the main branch on that same date. Some 40 new patrons signed up for library cards, bringing the total number of borrowers at the Juniata County Library to one-third of the county population.

At the same time, BOOKS-BY-MAIL catalogs were mailed to residents of East Waterford, Honey Grove, McCoysville and other areas in the south end of Juniata County for implementation of the new Mail Order Delivery Library Service. The catalogs listed books for all ages that patrons could order and have mailed to them from the State Library in Harrisburg.

First expansion

Even with its branch in Seven Stars and its mail order service, the Juniata County Library needed more space, so in 1973, it nearly doubled in size by renting additional adjoining space on the ground floor of the former Park Plaza Hotel. The new arrangement created a larger children's room, with lower bookshelves, more space for movie viewing, and more space for displays.

The expansion was finished by October 1973, and also included a reading room, a separate reference room with tables and chairs, and more bookshelves. To celebrate, there was an impromptu open house.

But, despite the additional space, six months later, Chack, in an interview with the *Lewistown Sentinel*, spoke openly about the need for a new library building.

She talked about how the library, in order to reach its full potential, would need more space.

"I'd like to see it become a clearinghouse for all sorts of things. I'd like it to put people in touch with other people, to bring people together with similar interests or people who are curious about what someone else may be doing," Chack said.

Chack envisioned a new library with open space. "As it is now, we have to clear out a room for movies, for meetings, for anything where you've gathered a sizeable group together."

Meanwhile, 1974 was the beginning of the end for the Seven Stars branch. The *Harrisburg Patriot-News* reported in July, 1974, that "patrons of the Juniata County Library branch in Seven Stars are mounting a spirited drive to retain the facility, which is threatened with closing because a special grant is drying up and no additional funding is in sight."

The branch served nearly 500 patrons from eastern Juniata County and nearby counties. The branch was scheduled to close in December 1974, but got a reprieve until 1977.

The mail order service that was also a part of the two-year project to improve library services in rural areas also concluded, but would be later taken over by the Huntingdon County Library, then by the Juniata County Library itself.

Chack's tenure as librarian ended in 1974. The *Juniata Sentinel* reported, on Dec. 11, 1974, that: "The Library Board votes to dismiss Ellen Chack as its librarian, saying it acted in response to a list of 22 grievances concerning library procedures, effective Feb. 3, 1975."

Kathy Delbaugh Bowman, East Juniata High School librarian, was appointed as an advisor for several months, then, in March, 1975, Marianne Wise, of Lewistown, was hired as the new librarian for the Juniata County Library and Seven Stars Mobile Unit.

In 1975, with Wise at the helm, the library contracted with the Huntingdon County Library to provide mail order delivery service to county residents south of the Juniata River. This program, along with the Seven Stars branch, was discontinued in the spring of 1977, but the patrons were not forgotten.

The services were replaced by the Mail-A-Book Program, operated out of a room in the Juniata County Courthouse. In 1980, 5,834 books were mailed to patrons under this program.

In addition, two deposit stations were established in 1980, one in the Tri-Counties Bank in Richfield, and the other in Long's Store in East Waterford. Some 1,384 books were checked out from these stations in 1980.

10 years old

In 1976, when the library celebrated its 10th anniversary, it was still evolving in a number of ways.

Wise resigned as library director in July, 1976, announcing her plans to move to Philadelphia with her husband. Blane Dessy, of Pittsburgh, then became the Juniata County Library's first male director, serving until 1979. He was succeeded by Margaret Bauer.

In 1976, Dessy expressed an interest in the formation of a Friends of the Library group, an organization that would come and go over the years, but today is an important arm of the library's support and fundraising effort.

That year also saw the introduction of a story hour for preschoolers at the library, as well as the donation of a massive collection of post cards from the estate of Dr. Percy Deckard, of Richfield, who was a world traveler.

The library's 10th anniversary celebration included a week of films, pre-school activities and an open house. Printed invitations went out to various library and public officials, and a scrapbook at the library holds a printed card of congratulations from President Jimmy Carter.

In 1976, patrons borrowed 23,050 adult books, 4,338 juvenile books, 5,568 easy books, and used 491 magazines, listened to 1,139 records, received 76 interlibrary loans; 12 groups and classes toured the library; and 28 film programs and book reviews were presented by the library.

Budget struggles in 1977 finally resulted in the closure of the Seven Stars branch, but readers in the outlying areas of the county were not forgotten. In February 1977, library officials announced that it would begin its own books-by-mail program to cover the area formerly served by the Seven Stars branch, and the area being served by the Huntingdon Library mail order delivery program. Another library-by-mail service was launched for residents of Brookline Manor Convalescent Home and other shut-ins in the county who were unable to personally visit the library in Mifflintown.

The library's new free book lending by mail service, Mail-A-Book, began on Sept. 30, 1977, made possible by funding from the county commissioners.

The children's program continued to grow in 1977, with a live theater production, under the direction of Nancy Benner at Dessy's request. Productions took place at the Mifflintown playground, as well as Monroe Elementary School in Richfield and at the East Waterford carnival grounds.

A milestone was reached in 1978 relating to yet another example of the library's outreach efforts: Library Clerk Mary Leeper presented her 300th book review at area convalescent home.

By this time, the Friends of the Library group was up and running, and holding used book sales in the basement of Westminster Presbyterian Church to raise funds for the library.

Ruth Cramer Waters, one of the library's founders, was honored by the Library Board in the summer of 1978, with a dinner and party in the Tuscarora Room, recognizing her years of service as the facility's first librarian, then as a board member, including five years as president.

The following year, the issue of the need for more space came up again.

Second expansion

An article published on Feb. 14, 1979, *The Times of Port Royal*, reported that the library was looking for new quarters, having outgrown its facilities in the former Park Plaza Hotel.

The article acknowledged that the library had already expanded to nearly double its original space, but was continuing to grow at a rapid pace, and needed more space.

The closing of the trailer in the Seven Stars branch required more space to house the books that had been shelved there, the article states, also pointing out that the library was running its successful Mail-A-Book program from the basement of the county courthouse.

In its 12 years of operation, the library had issued close to 10,000 library borrowing cards, and that number did not include several hundred patrons who used Mail-A-Book services.

New and expanded services to the citizens of Juniata County were also resulting in overcrowding at the library. For example, a highly successful children's hour required the moving of all center floor bookshelves into the main desk area.

Other new services included a film program series for the patrons, which were getting good turnouts.

The article explained that the library board had been searching for additional space for several years. The possibility of moving the library to the basement of the Courthouse Annex building was

not favored by the State Library Board, even though the library could have saved money on rent by using a county-owned facility rather than renting from a private owner.

The board also considered the Mifflintown borough building, which had the disadvantage of being in the flood plain. Another possibility was the construction of a new building altogether.

Proximity to downtown Mifflintown was a major consideration, as opposed to construction of a new building near the shopping centers on the hill in Walker Township.

At that time, the library had about 30,000 volumes and, because of the space limitations, duplicates and books that weren't taken out very often had to be stored in the basement of the hotel building.

Library officials acknowledged that new construction was far-fetched due to funding being virtually non-existent. They did mention the possibility of acquiring the old Mifflintown Elementary School, which at the time housed Bohn Furniture, and renovating it, which would require fundraising. Another idea was to construct a new library on part of the Schweyer Run site where there were plans for a joint recreation site by Fermanagh Township and Mifflintown borough.

An article published in The Juniata Sentinel a few weeks later further explained some of the research the library board did to find larger quarters for the facility.

Board representative Walter Williams told the county commissioners that the board sought the advice of a qualified person to inspect the Bohn Furniture building on Fourth Street, Mifflintown, to determine if it was feasible to purchase the building for a library. The results showed that the purchase was not favorable due to the extensive costs that would be required to meet specifications for a public building.

The board then approached Ronald Clark, who owned the building in which the library was located, and inquired about the possibility of obtaining more space for library use. They learned that the library could gain 745 square feet of space with the removal of several partitions. Rent would increase about \$100 per month. The board agreed and signed another three-year lease.

In September 1979, Dessy resigned as library director to take the same position at the Mifflin County Library. Margaret Bauer, of Bradford County, was named to replace Dessy.

The 1980s

Tours of the expanded facility were the highlight of an open house at the library in April 1980.

At the same time, two new deposit stations were opened — one at Long's Store in East Waterford, and one at the Tri-County Bank in Richfield. People could check out books by signing a card in the back of each book. No library card was needed. The collection was changed once a month. Another deposit station was added in June 1981 at the Russell National Bank in Thompsettown.

Also in 1980, the Friends of the Juniata County Library held an organizational meeting, and John Anstine was elected president; the library's hours expanded, opening at 10 a.m. instead of noon; and the Mifflin and Juniata county libraries applied for a grant to conduct an adult literacy program.

The Friends took the lead in planning the library's 15th anniversary celebration in 1981. The special guest was the Penn State Nittany Lion. The next year, the Junior Friends of the Juniata County Library was formed, organized by Brenda Funk, newly hired children's library assistant.

The year 1982 was the year the Juniata County Library joined the computer age, with the installation of an Atari 800 microcomputer with two disk drives, a cassette recorder and printer. First, staff was trained to install software, then the computer was made available for the public to use during the hours the library was open. The Juniata County Library was the first in the district, which included four libraries in six counties, to install a computer, and one of only a handful of libraries in Pennsylvania to have a computer for

patron use.

In addition to being installed for patron use, the computer was used by the library staff for bookkeeping and inventory purposes.

Initially, the library had three computer programs — Hangman, My First Alphabet and Conversational Spanish. Personal Finance and Touch Typing were ordered and other programs were being considered.

In a newspaper article, Library Director Margaret Bauer said there were a number of reasons why the Board of Trustees voted to purchase a computer for the library:

"Among these reasons is the fact that children in the county schools are being introduced to the computer this year, and it was felt that the library could offer a place where children could come and practice what they've learned. The school district presently has 22 Atari 800 computers," she said.

"In addition, having a microcomputer in the library provides a place where adults can become 'computer literate,' that is, parents and other interested adults can gain computer experience at the library," she added.

"Computer programs can also educate adults and children, which is one of the primary reasons the library exists - to provide for the educational, informational and recreational needs of Juniata County," Bauer concluded.

The library's computer was purchased locally, from Radio Hut, at a cost of \$2,700.

While the library continued to offer more and more services to the people of Juniata County, it became more and more apparent that a new facility was needed.

Planning for a new building

In September, 1982, the library board received a grant from the Federal Library Service and Construction Act Title I to develop a five-year plan for the facility. In May, 1983, Juniata County Commissioners Ronald Shearer and Richard Kerstetter met with Library Director Bauer to discuss the possibility of applying for a federal grant to construct a new library, because the space the library occupied at that time was just too small.

With that, the planning started in earnest. The library developed goals and objectives in a five-year plan that included building a new library. The board's decisions were based on nearly 400 responses to a user survey.

In September, 1983, the county considered purchasing about three acres of land along T392, the road between Route 35 and Cedar Spring Road in the area of the Juniata County Industrial Park in Fermanagh Township, as the site for the construction of a new library, but it would not come to be.

That same month, Director Bauer resigned because she was moving to Ohio, and Jean Aurand, who had been administrative assistant at the library for 10 years, was named acting director. It would not be the last time Aurand would step in during a search for a new director. After a five-month search, Teresa Isadora was named the new library director.

In September, 1984, the library board established a New Building Committee.

In 1985, services offered by the local facility continued to expand when the Juniata County Library became one of 150 libraries in 22 counties participating in "Access Pennsylvania," a system that allowed people to borrow materials from any library participating in the program.

In early 1985, the commissioners began to coordinate efforts through SEDA-Council of Governments to put together a funding package for the project. The aim was to finance the construction entirely through grant money. Later in 1985, the commissioners were told that the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs was willing to contribute \$220,688 in 1984 Community Development Block Grant funds.

These CDBG funds depended on receipt of \$274,052 in Pennsylvania State Library Board grant funds. In addition, the commissioners sought 1985 CDBG funds, in their role as liaisons for the funds.

In September, 1985, the library also became a non-profit organization. The move was applauded by the commissioners. As Commissioner Shearer put it at the time, "Their going non-profit has simplified the red tape."

After abandoning the thoughts of the Cedar Spring Road site for a new library, efforts became concentrated on what would become the current site — situated between the baseball field and fitness trail at the Mifflintown Playground, owned by Mifflintown Borough.

The hope in January, 1986, was to start construction at the playground site on April 1 that year, a date determined by the belief that the state library money offer came with a 90-day deadline, after it was earmarked, for construction to start. In all, \$274,052 was expected from the state library board, along with two fiscal years of CDBG funds — \$220,688 and \$115,000.

A concern arose in February, 1986, when DCA expressed reservations about the timetable in using the CDBG grant money, which DCA oversees. The problem mainly involved the 1985 CDBG funds of \$115,000, which would be received after construction started.

"I think it can be resolved," consultant William Seigel, of SEDACOG, told the commissioners. "But I want you to be aware there is a timing problem."

If DCA could not understand the timetable, Shearer told Seigel at the time, "then the whole project will have to be scrapped."

In addition, the \$15,000 land purchase price was not included in the 1984 grant application, which involved the original Cedar Spring Road site. Shearer believed the library board would have to pay for the purchase of the land.

State College architect Fred Fernsler unveiled his design for the new library in late February 1986. Library board members, at a Feb. 27 meeting, expressed concerns to Fernsler about construction costs.

Fernsler said the estimate of \$630,000 included a checklist of features that could be removed to lower costs. He set \$485,000 as the target. Bid opening was scheduled for March 21, 1986.

In early March, 1986, Mifflintown Borough Council approved the sale of the land at the playground for \$15,000, with two conditions: the parking lot in front of the proposed site and the road running beside the proposed site leading toward a fitness trail installed in 1985 would not be sold by borough council as long as the library was in use; and the library would be responsible for maintaining the parking lot.

The library board's biggest headache came on March 21, as construction bids far exceeded the amount of funding that was available. The lowest base bid was \$816,905, about \$200,000 more than the \$609,740 available in grants.

The cost concerned the library board, and infuriated the commissioners. After the bids were opened in the courtroom of the county courthouse, Shearer walked over to the H. Brown Fry Building. Standing outside the Fry building, Shearer was so upset that he trembled, according to newspaper reports.

"Too high. Quote, unquote," Shearer said.

"We can't afford it," added Commissioner John P. Henry, standing beside Shearer.

So, library officials began to discuss options.

Library Director Isadora told the commissioners that she had been told by a state library official that the 90-day deadline for construction would not begin until a contract was signed, which provided some relief from the pressure of meeting the deadlines or risk losing funding.

Delays, delays, delays

On April 1, 1986, the day that had been designated as the start date for construction of the new library, Shearer and his fellow commissioners agreed they wanted the new library redesigned and rebid.

On April 10, library board members again looked at options. They discussed the possibility of reducing the size of the new building in an effort to reduce costs. The state library, however, insisted on at least 10,000 square feet, so the library would not outgrow its new space too quickly.

The commissioners also told the library board that they would not designate any additional CDBG funds for the project.

Later in the month, library officials and the commissioners met with Charles Peguese, from the state, to discuss the dilemma.

Commissioners Henry and Richard Kerstetter suggested an excavated basement, saying it would increase space at a minimal cost.

Peguese liked the basement idea, and said he would do everything possible to get the library built, including extending the 90-day start-of-construction deadline, if necessary.

But, the library board nixed the basement idea at a meeting on May 8, 1986. The board also rejected the previous bids, and proceeded with former plans, setting a second bid opening for later in the summer.

At the May meeting, Fernsler said a review of the basement, which he had once favored, showed a related cost of \$72,000. So he suggested, instead, a bay that would also meet the space requirements, but at a cost of \$42,000.

His new estimate, after deleting some items in the building, came in at \$612,000. There would be additional costs of \$40,000 for architect and engineering fees, and \$15,000 for the purchase of land.

Commissioner Shearer agreed to the bay idea, as long as costs matched the grant allocations, but the total amount of funding from grants was \$609,740.

Meanwhile, Mifflintown Borough Council, which was also considering the construction of a new borough building, remained agreeable to sell the land for \$15,000.

But the decision to nix the basement did not set well with Commissioner Kerstetter, who found it hard to believe that the basement would cost \$72,000.

The county takes over

By July 10, 1986, the commissioners offered to assume responsibility for the library project.

Commissioner Shearer addressed the library board: "Somehow we have to get the project within the pocketbook, and we think we have an alternative."

Commissioner Kerstetter told the board that the commissioners had a guarantee from another architectural firm that if costs exceeded available grant funding, the firm would not receive its fee. That firm, Crabtree, Rohrbaugh and Associates, also agreed to work on the project, at no extra cost, until funding was secured.

The commissioners offered terms to the library board, including that the library would lease the building from the county for \$1 per year.

The library board considered the offer and terms, then informed the commissioners, by letter, on Aug. 26, 1986, that the board was turning the project over to them.

"The board of trustees has accepted the recommendation of the Building Committee, and voted to accept your offer to assume responsibility of constructing a new library," the letter, signed by board member Richard Reiss, stated. "We look forward to assisting your endeavors in whatever way we can."

The commissioners then set a timetable that called for construc-

tion to start in the spring of 1987.

But, the next month, library officials asked the commissioners to put the takeover on hold. They told the commissioners that they were considering using an existing building as a possible library, as Roller Junction was for sale.

The commissioners agreed, setting an Oct. 16, 1986, deadline for a final decision by the library board. On Sept. 30, and again through a letter, the commissioners were formally informed that the idea of using the existing building had not worked out, and that the project was back in the hands of the commissioners.

The commissioners contacted Crabtree, Rohrbaugh and Associates to discuss a contract, and once the contract was signed, the commissioners viewed the project as theirs.

On Oct. 28, 1986, the commissioners, whose job it is to allocate CDBG funding for the county, agreed to designate an additional \$17,402 to the project from excess 1986 CDBG funds. While the commissioners continued to believe that the project would meet the available funding, they designated the extra amount on an "if needed," basis, stating it could be used for other costs associated with the new library, such as for furnishings.

In early November, 1986, Mifflintown Borough Council began work on its new municipal building, in anticipation of receiving the \$15,000 for the land.

In the meantime, the library celebrated its 20th anniversary in mid-November, 1986, with an open house at the Mifflintown Firehall. It was noted that in 20 years, the library had expanded from two rooms in the Park Plaza Hotel offering patrons 1,300 books, to a 4,300 square foot space in the same building, and 31,000 books. Patrons also had access to four videocassette players, 100 videocassettes, audio cassette tapes, records, a photocopier and a micro-computer. Services included: Mail-A-Book, adult literacy program, films, children's programs and interlibrary loans.

By February, 1987, David Maule, of Crabtree, Rohrbaugh and Associates, said he anticipated that construction of the new library would begin in April, and take no longer than four months to complete.

The library would have a first floor and a basement, Maule explained. Most library activities would take place on the first floor, with the basement to be used as a public meeting room and storage area. About half of the basement would be used initially, with the remaining space available for future expansion.

Plans called for the new building to have a wood and steel frame, with an exterior of brick. The parking area would be in front.

Commissioner Shearer said the design "certainly looks like Juniata County architecture."

Maule, from Crabtree, Rohrbaugh and Associates, indicated the design should entice bids by local construction companies, since local contractors would be able to do this type of work.

Land purchased for new library

On March 9, 1987, as the project appeared to be moving toward fruition, the commissioners purchased the .66 acre from Mifflintown Borough, paying \$15,000 for the land.

And the library board began fundraising efforts.

The library board formally turned over the state library grant to the commissioners after about \$17,000 had been paid to Fernsler and for other expenses. The commissioners no longer insisted that the board pay for the land. Instead, Juniata Business and Industry made a \$15,000 donation to the commissioners for the purchase of the land for the new library.

JB I stated its position in a news release:

"In making the presentation, the board members of JB I noted the importance of having a quality library in the community. Not only does a library provide valuable services to the community, but it is also an item of interest to businesses which may be looking to lo-

cate in the area."

JB I said that because the county was near the center of the state, had a good road system, boasted water and sewage disposal services, possessed quality schools and recreation areas, and had land available for sale, a "modern library building helps to round out the attractiveness of Juniata County."

By the time of the donation, the April construction date had been extended. The commissioners, meeting with Douglas Rohrbaugh on April 7, 1987, set bid opening for 2 p.m. on May 5. The architect informed the commissioners that he continued to wait for documents related to hourly rates for workers building the library, and the wait could force an extension of the bid opening date.

Eventually, the bid opening was extended, to May 26, but it was a good thing because the delay enabled more contractors to become familiar with the special requirements of a publicly-funded project and prepare bids for the project.

Bids were opened on May 26, 1987. Jay Fulkroad & Sons was the low bidder for the general construction work, with a bid of \$456,759.

Other low bidders were: Robert P. Lepley, \$53,340, for electric work; Robert Johnson Plumbing and Heating, \$42,900, for heating, ventilation and air conditioning; Johnson, \$27,336, for plumbing work.

The base bids from the three low bidders, all from Juniata and Mifflin counties, totaled \$580,335, less than grant funding on hand, but not by much.

Despite the bids coming in under budget, the commissioners were not happy. Fulkroad projected an additional \$57,000 for a fully excavated and finished basement. At this point, the commissioners believed they would have to forget the basement idea and go with original plans.

In addition to the general construction base bids, documents contained 10 alternates. Six of the alternates added costs to the project; the other four reduced costs.

The commissioners had no plans to commit more CDBG funds to the project, with Shearer stated, "Deep down we feel we have committed enough."

What to remove and what to retain had to be decided.

The commissioners believed that some of the items that could be deleted, such as landscaping and putting up a flagpole, could be completed by community groups.

On June 2, 1987, the library board turned over the remaining half of the state library money, plus almost \$6,000 gained as interest, to the commissioners.

At that time, there was about \$582,000 in funding available for the project, which was about \$2,000 more than the base bids.

"She's close, guys," Commissioner Shearer said at an early June meeting of the commissioners. "Dang close," Commissioner Kerstetter added.

The commissioners then signed letters of intent signifying their plans to award the project to the low bidders. Later in the month, the commissioners signed an agreement with the state library for \$137,026 of the earmarked grant money.

Ground is broken

On June 22, 1987, the commissioners gave the three contractors the go-ahead to begin work, setting July 1 as the start date. Ground was broken at the playground site on June 22.

On July 6, Fulkroad started construction. Job conferences, to update the status of construction and to solve problems, became routine.

The library project also became a point each of the incumbent commissioners noted in seeking re-election in 1987.

The commissioners, still intent on a fully excavated basement, also asked Fulkroad how much it would cost. Fulkroad said it

would be \$19,000, if unfinished. The commissioners went with it, stating that the library could complete and expand into the area when necessary.

During this time, the library board continued fundraising efforts aimed at furnishing the inside of the library.

By the fall of 1987, the commissioners, despite earlier statements, agreed to add more money to the library project.

On Nov. 8, after the three incumbents were re-elected, the commissioners said they hoped to add about \$16,000 to the project from 1987 CDBG funds. Actually, a total of \$15,644 was allocated to the library project from money remaining after other county projects were funded.

So, by the end of 1987, the commissioners had earmarked 1985 and 1986 CDBG funds, state library funding, and \$17,402 in higher-than-projected CDBG funding to the library project. By adding 1987 CDBG funds, the money on hand was in the \$640,000 range.

A completion date of January, 1988, was forecast.

While the completion date was not met, a recognizable building was taking shape.

Throughout early 1988, the commissioners approved various changes, as well as help from various local groups. Landscaping was done by Yoder Landscaping, of Richfield, made possible through contributions from Edna Kennedy, in memory of her late husband, A. Lee Kennedy, and Pomona Grange No. 35, Mahantango Grange No. 2087, Tuscarora Grange No. 774, Walker Grange No. 786 and Turbett Grange No. 781.

The new, 50-foot aluminum flagpole was erected by David Barnes Construction of Thompsonstown, and purchased with funds provided by the Juniata County Veterans Council and donated to the library.

By May, 1988, the move from the old to the new library began. Movers from American Library Consultants moved more than 31,000 books and other items across Mifflintown. The Long Island, New York, company specialized in relocating libraries.

Door open to the public

On May 25, 1988, the doors of the new library building opened to the public, while minor work continued and paving was under way.

As of late May, 1988, a total of \$654,831.83 had been allocated for the construction of the new library. Of that total, about \$12,000 had been gained in interest — the nearly \$6,000 from when the library had a portion of the state library money, and through a similar investment of the money made by the commissioners. The interest money was approved for use in the project.

By late May, work done by Fulkroad amounted to \$476,562.76, exceeding the original bid due to changes approved by the commissioners during construction. The projected final cost of the library was \$644,441, including about \$44,000 for the architectural firm's fee.

Funds raised by the Friends of the Juniata County Library was used to buy shelving and most of the other furnishings for the new building. More than \$58,000 had been contributed to the Furnish the Library campaign by more than 500 individuals, businesses and organizations by the time the new building opened.

Although enough money had been donated for the purchase of necessary shelving and furniture, the campaign hadn't ended at the time the new building opened. The "wish list" for additional items was long: a new book drop, drapes, a commercial vacuum cleaner, appliances for the staff room, desk chairs, additional specialty shelving, file cabinets, a computer, typewriters, lockers, signs, tables and chairs for the meeting room, a dictionary-atlas stand, and a few other items.

The new library building at 498 Jefferson Street, Mifflintown, is

13,444 square feet, including a portion of the basement that was left for future expansion. The books to be borrowed are shelved on the first floor, as well as the audiovisual room, children's rooms, offices, main circulation desk and restrooms. The library board also invited local artists and craftsmen to exhibit their work at the new library, a tradition that continues today.

The basement features a community room, Mail-A-Book program, book repair area, technical processing room, a staff room and a large storage space that became known as "the dungeon."

The Juniata County Historical Society, led by its president — who just happened to be Ruth Cramer Waters — voted even before the new building was completed to move its archives from the Tuscarora Academy and the third floor of the Juniata County Courthouse to the lower level of the new library.

Joining Director Isadora on the library staff at the time the new building opened were full time employees Mary Ellen Dolin, inter-library loan clerk, and Chris Kepner, clerk.

Part-time employees included: Jean Aurand, assistant director; Sue Copenhaver, children's librarian; Connie Hohol, technical processing clerk; Aileen Bender, who conducted senior citizen programs; Virginia Swartz, Mail-A-Book coordinator; Helen Myers, clerical worker who also repaired books; Carl Scott, maintenance man; Margaret Hosler, literacy program coordinator; Ann Harshbarger and Faith Hosler, literacy program clerical workers; Laura Primak, work-study student from Susquehanna University; and Barbara Barnett, who was in charge of overdue items.

To celebrate the new library, the commissioners and library board invited the public to a dedication and open house on Sunday afternoon, June 12, 1988.

The ceremony included:

- Welcome by Commissioner Kerstetter;
- Invocation by Rev. Claud Baublitz;
- Dedication of the flagpole and flag raising ceremony by the Juniata County Veterans Council;
- Presentation to state Sen. William J. Moore by Commissioner Chairman Shearer;
- Library building project summary by Commissioner Kerstetter;
- Juniata County Library past and present by Commissioner Henry;
- Remarks by Elizabeth A. Funk, library development adviser, State Library of PA;
- A message from the Juniata County Library Board from John G. Robinson, board president;
- Closing remarks by Commissioner Shearer;
- Ribbon cutting by the Juniata County Library Board;
- Tours by the Juniata County Library staff.

At the time of the dedication of the new building, library board members were: Robinson; Roy Leister Jr., vice president; Alton Steward, treasurer; Mary Page, secretary; Catherine Fitzgerald; Linda Bahorik; and Clarence Hibbs.

The Fundraising Committee included: Lucy Lehman, honorary chairman, Richard Burkholder, chairman, Leister, Jeffrey Funk, Steven V. Manbeck, Thomas Gainer, Steward, John B. Anstine Sr., Nancy Benner and William Hubler Jr.

During the dedication ceremony, Mifflintown Borough Council and Mifflintown Lions Club were thanked by the commissioners for their cooperation in site acquisition and development.

With the completion of its new home, the library's services continued to grow.

In October, 1988, the Inter-Library Loan Service was using a telefacsimile machine (aka fax) it had acquired in 1985 from the district library center in Bellefonte, to get books from anywhere in the United States for local library patrons. Mary Ellen Dolin was the inter-library loan director, as well as the library's deposit station manager, delivering books to Long's Store in East Waterford, Locust Grove Retirement Village near Mifflin, Brookline Manor

Nursing Home near Mifflintown, Honaman House in Thompsonstown and the Zendt Home and Northern Central Bank in Richfield.

In 1989, Chris Graybill, a Boy Scout from Cocolamus, promoted and supported the library's Literacy Program, directed by Barb Inch, as his Eagle Scout project.

Just weeks before the library hosted an open house to celebrate its first year in its new building, the facility became one of 13 libraries in four counties to commit to gaining improved access to all library holdings in the district through a computerized compact-disc cataloging system that would be operational by the end of the year. The system would eventually replace the traditional card catalog system.

Community support

Time and again community support has been an important part of keeping the local library viable, and even with the new building, support continued to grow.

In July, 1989, a four-mile run in Mifflintown organized by the Juniata Valley Striders took place to benefit the library, and in 1990, the first Library Liberty Weekend took place at the Mifflintown airport to raise funds for the local facility. Events included a Country Legend concert, fireworks, and a walk and run, with proceeds to be used for the completion of the lower level of the library to house the literacy program.

Library Liberty Weekend grew to include an air show and airplane rides, and was a popular summer event until it came to an end due to liability insurance issues.

Tom Hipple became the library's seventh director when he took the position in September of 1990. He had worked at the library in 1981 and 1982, then went back to school for his master's degree, which he earned in 1983. He was the director at the St. Mary's Public Library, but missed the McCoysville area, where he mother lived, so he took the position at the library in Mifflintown. His wife, Sue Hipple, became the children's librarian in 1995.

The Juniata County Library continued to keep up with the latest technology when, in September, 1991, the library upgraded to a new, computer-based circulation tracking system. All materials were bar-coded, and bar-coded cards were issued to all patrons. The local library was the last library in the district to maintain a card catalog; the last cards were added to its drawers in 1995.

The next year, a satellite dish was installed next to the ball field adjacent to the library's parking lot by the state library system, which had designated the Juniata County Library as a continuing education site.

In 1993, Henry Saner organized a book sale as his Eagle Scout project.

Open houses to celebrate milestones at the library continued in 1996, with a week-long event to mark the facility's 30-year anniversary. Festivities included library tours, refreshments, special evening programs, a kids night and a teddy bear contest.

The facility not only circulates materials, it has a community room available for public meetings, and rooms for the Juniata County Literacy Program and the Juniata County Historical Society, which are housed in the building, but operate as separate entities.

The literacy program, however, was discontinued at the library in September, 1999. The literacy council disbanded in the early 1990s, but the program was incorporated into the Community Services Block Grant program, and the library became the "legal entity" for the literacy program, meaning that the library signed off on the grant, using its tax identification number, bookkeeping and payroll accounts.

The library board decided to eliminate the program due to accounting recommendations and administrative issues, shifting the responsibility for the program to the county commissioners.

Internet service was introduced at the library in 1997; in 2002 the library added four more computer stations for patrons thanks, in part, to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. In 2003, the library closed for a week for the installation of a new computer system that would allow patrons with computers access in their homes to search for items at the library and put holds on books.

The library continued offering its services to the community, which, in turn, responded with support of fundraising efforts, especially in more recent years, with dwindling funding from the state.

The Friends initiated a basket auction in 2009 at the Mifflintown firehall, that proved to be a tremendous success and a lot of fun for those who participated.

In the meantime, Library Director Lisa Galico spoke out at a meeting of the Juniata County Rotary Club about funding cuts looming from the state. Funding from the state and county represented about 80 percent of the total funding for the library. Drastic cuts from those sources would effect staff, hours, service and new materials budgets, she said.

The public was urged to donate gently used books, DVDs and music CDs for the annual book sale; join the Friends of the Library; use goodsearch.com as their online search engine, which donated a penny to the library for each search; and contact government representatives and asking them not to cut funding for libraries.

In 2010, the board instituted a small fee for DVD rentals, in an ongoing effort to increase funding. The Giving Vine and Plant a Subscription programs were initiated, to inspire increased donations.

Repairs and renovations

The "new" library building was 22 years old, when, in 2010, it sustained groundwater damage to the walls on the lower level, and the county did extensive work to correct the problem.

Late in 2010, Matthew Godissart became the director after Galico left the position to further her education and seek a position in academia.

Godissart immediately began efforts to involve teens more fully in the library, working to set up a Teen Advisory Committee, dedicating and furnishing a space in the library just for teens, and working with Michael Cavanaugh, whose 2012 Eagle Scout project involved building new shelving for the library's magazine collection.

In 2011, big cuts in state funding resulted in an increased effort for local fundraising, with the Friends group leading the way.

The stepped-up fundraising efforts, in addition to keen attention by the board and Finance Committee in managing the library's investment accounts, enabled the library continue to make improvements.

For example, in 2011, the Friends provided \$3,500 to replace the shades in the children's room, eliminating cords that were potentially dangerous to the library's youngest patrons.

In 2012, the library was the grateful recipient of a large bequest that enabled extensive renovations to the upstairs and downstairs bathrooms. The project made the restrooms ADA compliant, and included a new main entryway and adjustments to the grade on a portion of the parking lot in front of the building.

Godissart resigned as director in May, 2013, and Brady Clemens was hired as his replacement.

The sign at the intersection of Jefferson and Cross streets in Mifflintown was installed in 2013. It was a collective gift from several sources.

The sheet of plastic used to make the sign was purchased by Kathy Bowman and her mother. The design was drawn by local illustrator and former library employee Winslow Pels, with input from sign maker Billy Ellis, of B&C Signs, in Center. Ellis carved

the design into the layers of plastic to give the sign a striking depth. Pels painted the layers, which Ellis then assembled into the finished sign.

The sign was then given to the craftsmen at Fences and More in the Juniata County Industrial Park. They designed and constructed the frame and supports. They also installed the sign. The work was coordinated by the Friends of the Juniata County Library.

By the end of 2013, a reduction in the hours the library would be open was necessary in order to balance the budget for the following year. Director Clemens told the board that a tally of patrons revealed that there are fewer visitors to the library during the last hour of the day than in the first hour of the day, so the last hour would be the best one to cut. The board voted to approve the new hours as of Jan. 1, 2014.

Continuing the challenge of funding the library after drastic reductions in support from the state, the Juniata County Library received an overwhelming response from the community to a spring 2014 fundraiser needed to sustain services at the local facility.

The library received more than \$20,300 from local individuals, businesses and municipalities responding to a mailing that went out in early May of that year. The appeal stated that the library was seeking to raise \$6,000 to fund the library's children's programs, new purchases of books and computer equipment and improvements to the community room.

An article published in *The Sentinel*, Lewistown, explained the success of the fund drive.

"We've really been overwhelmed by the generosity we've seen during this fund drive," Library Director Brady Clemens said. "These donations show how much people value having a library in their community, and we appreciate each and every one."

Among the donations was \$10,000 from Mifflintown resident Alan Chack. Many people who made donations did so in memory of or in honor of a loved one, and that's exactly what Chack did.

"I've wanted to do this for my wife for a long time," Chack said. His wife, Ellen Robinson Chack, was the local library's first full-time director, serving in that position from 1970 to 1974. Ellen's mother, Evelyn Robinson, was a children's librarian and also served as librarian at Lewistown High School for many years. Ellen followed in her mother's footsteps, earning a master's degree in library science from Drexel University, as well as a post master's Certificate of Advanced Study, concentrating on medical librarianship and law librarianship, also from Drexel.

Before her tenure at the Juniata County Library, Ellen worked at the Washington, D.C. Public Library, at both the Takoma Park and Georgetown branches, then went to Philadelphia to do private research for a British architect scholar working in the United States.

From there, she joined the New York Public Library System, serving as a reference librarian in the Donnell Public Library and in the Municipal Reference Library.

After her time at the Juniata library, Ellen worked as section chief and head librarian in the Office of the Attorney General of Pennsylvania, until 2002.

While her career may have led her out of the children's room, children's books have always had a special place in Ellen's life.

"I've always been crazy about children's books," she said

"She's been collecting children's books ever since I met her," husband Alan said.

It was Ellen's love for children's books that led Alan to react when he learned the library needed more funds — especially for the children's program — this year due to continued funding cuts at the state level.

The Chack donation has already made a difference, facilitating an adjustment to the 2014 budget to increase allocations for children's book purchases, as well as audio-visual materials and program supplies for the children's room. The funds will be used to update the children's book collection and to purchase supplies

needed to provide meaningful programs for children for many years.

To acknowledge Ellen's librarianship and interest in children's literature, a plaque has been installed in the children's room with the inscription:

The Ellen Robinson Chack Children's Collection

Juniata County Library Director 1970-1974

"Open a book and let the magic begin."

In addition, a large donation from the family of Diane Napoli enabled the library to purchase some new shelving in the following year.

In October, 2014, Clemens accepted the position of district consultant at Schlow Library in State College, with his last day set for Nov. 25, 2014. The board once again found itself in search of a new director, and by February, 2015, offered the job to Vince Giordano.

More building upgrades occurred in 2015: the replacement of the ceiling lights by the county; new furniture for patrons purchased by the Friends; the installation of additional electrical outlets across the main floor of the library; and plans for shelving in the Book Sale Room and the removal of the stage behind the library by Boy Scouts from McAlisterville as an Eagle Scout project; the 1987 phone system was upgraded; internet bandwidth was increased; and wifi was expanded to the entire library, as well as the lower level.

50 years

The Juniata County Library entered its 50th year with kind words from the county commissioners in January 2016.

"We have a small, very healthy library," Commissioner Alice Gray said.

The end-of-the-year report for 2015 shows that the library had 55,000 visits, and 153 programs that involved more than 3,000 participants, and receives strong financial support from the state, the county and the United Way.

"It is a very vibrant, viable library, and I feel that we need to acknowledge as much. It's a happening place," she said.

In February, 2016, library patrons gained free electronic access to full-text documents from more than 17,000 credible sources of information and pinpoint relevant legal content for a wide range of research projects.

This accessibility came about when the county commissioners approved a contract with LexisNexis for legal reference subscription services that includes the placement of a personal computer at the library with access to the public. The county is required to have a law library, and this system satisfies that mandate, replacing sets of books that require a lot of storage space and costly updates.

Upgrades in the lower level of the library included new furnishings for the community room and the addition of another room that can be used by the public for community events.

In March, 2016, the library added a self-checkout station for its patrons. Through its integrated library system, SPARK by Evergreen, patrons may go to the self-checkout station and check out books, or renew books that are to on hold for another patron, by themselves.

Fifty years after first opening its doors, the Juniata County Library serves 9,670 patrons, and offers 48,339 items to lend (as of June 22, 2016).

The board of trustees, the staff, the patrons and Friends are celebrating the library's 50th anniversary this year with programs, interactive events, contests, challenges and celebrations meant to encourage reading and enhance the experience of visiting the local library.

At the same time, the current library officials and supporters are remembering the past with tributes to 50-year employee Virginia Swartz, and, of course, the incredible Ruth Cramer Waters, who got it all started so many years ago.

Juniata County Library

Timeline

1966 — March 21. Juniata County Commissioners Ralph Meiser, Jesse Fry and Blair Lauver adopt a resolution to establish a county library.

1966 — November 26. The first three library cards are issued to the three commissioners.

1970 — Ruth Cramer Waters resigns as the library's first librarian, explaining that the job had become too extensive to be handled on a part time basis.

1970 — Ellen Robinson Chack becomes the first full time librarian.

1972 — A branch library opens in a trailer in Seven Stars.

1972 — A mail order delivery service begins to provide books to people in far-reaching areas of the county.

1973 — The main library nearly doubles in size by renting additional adjoining space.

1974 — Ellen Chack's tenure as librarian ends.

1975 — Marianne Wise is named librarian.

1975 — The library contracts with the Huntingdon County Library to provide mail order delivery service to county residents who live south of the Juniata River.

1976 — Marianne Wise resigns as librarian and is replaced by Blane Dessy.

1977 — The Seven Stars branch and the mail order delivery service run by the Huntingdon County Library end and are replaced by a Mail-A-Book program, operating out of a room in

the Juniata County Courthouse.

1979 — Library officials begin searching for new quarters, having outgrown its facilities in the former Park Plaza Hotel.

1979 — Blane Dessy resigns as librarian and is replaced by Margaret Bauer.

1980 — Book deposit stations are established in Richfield and East Waterford.

1981 — A book deposit station is established in Thompsettown.

1982 — The library enters the computer age with the installation of an Atari 800 microcomputer for staff and patron use.

1982 — The library receives a grant from the Federal Library Service and Construction Act Title I to develop a five-year plan.

1983 — Juniata County Commissioners Ron Shearer and Richard Kerstetter meet with Librarian Margaret Bauer to discuss the possibility of applying for a federal grant to construct a new library.

1983 — Librarian Bauer resigns and, after a five-month search, Teresa Isadora is named the new library director.

1985 — The county commissioners begin to coordinate efforts through SEDA-Council of Governments to put together a funding package for the construction of a new library.

1985 — The Juniata County Library becomes a non-profit organization.

1986 — Construction of a new library is stalled due to design and funding

concerns.

1986 — The commissioners assume responsibility for the library project, taking over for the library board.

1987 — Land adjacent to the Mifflintown Playground is purchased from Mifflintown Borough for \$15,000 to be the site of the new library, with money donated by Juniata Business and Industry.

1987 — Construction begins on the new library building.

1988 — May. The move from the old library to the new begins, and the doors open to the public on May 25.

1988 — June 12. Dedication/open house is held for the new library building.

1990 — The first Library Liberty Weekend takes place at the Mifflintown Airport to raise funds for the library.

1990 — Tom Hipple becomes the library's seventh director.

1991 — The library upgrades to a new, computer-based circulation tracking system.

1997 — Internet service is introduced at the library.

2012 — Funded by a large bequest, the library's restrooms and main entrance receive extensive renovations.

2016 — The library adds a self-checkout station for its patrons.

2016 — The Juniata County Library celebrates its 50th anniversary.

Books, yes ...

But here are some other things offered at/by the Juniata County Library in the past 50 years:

Children's reading programs	Lunch at the Library series
Children's film programs	Polaroid cameras for loan
Adult reading programs	Bike safety checks by the sheriff's department
Adult film programs	Shaver's Creek Nature Center programs
Lectures	Flower design lecture
Workshops	Telephone deregulation lecture
Guest speakers	Rabies lecture
Author visits	Martial arts demonstrations
Santa	Stuffed animal contests
Easter Bunny	Stone Arch Players make-up demonstration
Raggedy Ann	Ham radio demonstration
Costumed characters	Vintage fashion show
Clowns	Pennsylvania German class
Animals	Spanish story hour
Penn State Nittany Lion visit	Fundraisers
Book sales	Volunteer recognition dinners
Mail-A-Book services	Cupcake contest
Cookie exchange	Testing site for Southcentral Workforce
Book deposit stations	Investment Board
Literacy programs	Write and Illustrate Your Own Book contests
Adult Education Classes	Oldies Dance
Macrame classes	Access to eBooks
Calligraphy classes	Lifelong Learning programs
Cake decorating	Computers, iPads, headphones and wifi
Art exhibits	Tax and rent rebate forms, booklets and more
Great Pumpkin Contest	Newspapers and periodicals
Photo exhibit and competition	Downloading books to tablets
Youth groups	Scanning and emailing documents
Junior Friends of the Library	Community rooms
Sales of commemorative items	Storytimes
Doll collection display	Access to more than 1,000 databases
Dairy Princess visits	And more ...

Yesterday in Juniata County

*By Ruth Cramer Waters
January 29, 1985
The Sentinel, Lewistown*

If you follow local news, you probably know that the Juniata County Library Board has plans to build a new library.

At the moment they are looking at land belonging jointly to Mifflintown Borough and Fermanagh Township as the site for the building at the corner of Main and Lemon streets, Mifflintown.

The Park Plaza Hotel, in which the JCL has been housed since it first opened in November 1966, is a building that is of great historical interest in Juniata County.

The first notes on the building appear in 1832, when it was built by Joseph Cummings. He kept it until 1835 and called it the "Mansion House."

In 1835, Captain Jonathan Aitkin bought it, running it as a hotel until about 1845, when W.W. Wilson purchased it from him. It was run by a number of people under his ownership until about 1876 when Robert Parker bought it at a sheriff's sale.

In a matter of less than two weeks, he resold it to

Isaiah Musser. In 1882, Urie Strehin bought it and his nine children took turns running it until the early 1900s, when Dr. William Banks bought it.

About 1931, it was sold by him to his two sons, William Banks Jr., and Hugh Banks. They ran it together between 1935 and 1947.

In 1947, it was sold to David Garfinkel, who within only a few months, sold it to Fred Studenmaier and Lottie Rourke.

In 1948, Dale Henry Jr. (the son of the Dale Henry who owned the Jacobs House), and his wife, Esther, bought it and ran it in partnership, naming the building The Park Plaza Hotel.

Part of the first floor was reserved as an apartment for them. Later they built a house on Washington Avenue in Mifflintown. Several offices were located in their apartment until 1966, when the library board rented the apartment and opened the library there.

In 1970, Richard and Ronald Clark bought the building from the Henrys. In 1972, Ronald bought his brother's share and since that time, he has leased most of the building to the library, leaving only a few rooms or apartments available for rent.