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Florida Library History Project

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Florida Library History Project

New Port Richey Public Library

The New Port Richey Public Library was founded on December 22, 1919 by Dr. Elroy McKendree of Cleveland, Ohio and named the Avery Library and Historical Society. The Library officially opened its doors, February 1920, in the Snell Building on Main Street with Mrs. R.F. Conover as librarian. The City of New Port Richey incorporated in 1925 and began assisting the library financially, with the governance being handled by the Library Board of Trustees. The next library director was Dr. Holway who served from December 1925 until March 1948. The Library through the years moved several times and evidently located at 113 East Main Street. Laura Powell became Library Director from 1948-1954 followed by Ellene Kroll (1954-1959) and Barbara Clark (1959-May 1965). A new building was built by the City of New Port Richey in 1963. Janet Lewis took over as Library Director in 1965 and remained until 1980. During this period an auditorium and reading room were added (1966). The Library Board of Trustees converted the auditorium into a reference Room due to a lack of space in 1973. Upon the retirement of Janet Lewis in 1980, Donna Riegel was named Library Director. It was during this period (1980-1986) that the Library Board of Trustees turned over governance of the Library to the City of New Port Richey. In December 1986 Jane Schwamberger became Library Director. Ms. Schwamberger was instrumental in automating the card catalog and joining the SUNLINE Database through the Tampa Bay Library Consortium.

The New Port Richey City Council authorized a renovation and expansion program in 1987 for the present City Hall and Library. Gee and Jensen Engineers-Architects-Planners, Inc. of West Palm Beach, Florida were selected to design and construct the new complex. The library was to occupy the old City Hall building which was originally an old school building built in 1926. The renovation resulted in a 15,230 square foot library which retained the English Renaissance styled brick walls and windows. The Library received a Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) Grant of \$400,000 for the project. The total project cost approximately \$1 million. The ground-breaking ceremony was held August 30, 1988 with the following participants: City Manager, Charles McCool,; Mayor Robert Prior; Council Members, Peter Altman, Fran Oreto, and O.J. Brisky; former Council Members, Jean Rose and Bill Tatum; and Library Director Jane

Schwamberger.

The Library was moved to temporary quarters in the Rockville Center Building at 6351 Massachusetts Avenue on February 6, 1989 and remained there until March 1991. During this time Jane Schwamberger, Library Director resigned and Susan Dillinger was hired as her replacement in October 1990. The building project was completed in February 1991 and the library was moved to its new quarters in March 1991. The Friends of the Library assisted in fund-raising and the acquisition of new furniture and equipment for the library. The new library was opened to the public in April 1991. The formal dedication ceremony was held in May 1991 with Mayor Peter Altman, City Manager Gerald Seeber, Council Members Dell de Chant, William Partridge, Debra Prewitt and Nelson Vogel; Library Director Susan Dillinger; Library Staff; Library Advisory Board Members; Friends of the Library; and other distinguished guests. The Singing Strings provided a classical music setting.

The Library received LSCA Grant funding (\$35,000) in October 1991 for the establishment of an adult literacy program. This program, in conjunction with the Pasco County School's Reading Assistance Program (RAP), instructs adults through the use of computers how to read and write. The Library received a second grant of \$35,000 in 1994 to expand its program. The Library also formed an alliance with the Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) of the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP) to provide computer training to their clients.

The Library received a LSCA Collection Development Grant (\$25,000) for the purchase of resource materials to support local businesses and the New Port Richey Community Cooperative. This grant greatly enhanced the reference and circulating business collections and provided for our first reference materials on CD-ROM.

The Library received Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for equipment for the visually impaired in 1994 and Teacher Quest Grant funds in 1995 and 1996. The Library also remodeled the second floor and expanded the meeting room seating capacity from fifty (50) to two hundred (200) as well as equipping the room with computer network and Internet connections. In 1996 the Library moved from the GEAC automation system and a Novell network to DYNIX and a Windows NT network. The result of this change was the ability of

staff and patrons to access library resources here and around the world graphically. The Library also received a LSTA FloriNet Basic Grant (\$10,900) in 1997 to install videoconferencing equipment in the meeting rooms.

The New Port Richey Public Library continues to grow and strives to meet the needs of its community.