

# FRIENDS OF THE CLINTONVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

## By Doris Abrahamson

### The First 25 Years 1985-2010

Many people found the crowded conditions in the Finney Public Library frustrating. Not only was the working space for the librarians restricted to a small area, but the stairs leading up to the library and down to the Children's Library was daunting to many patrons. These were among the reasons given to call a community meeting on September 25, 1985, at the local bank community room. Two staff members from Appleton explained the formation and function of a Friend's group. At the time no one said "raise money" or "make a donation," but it had the same effect. Reading the scrapbook for the first year is repetitious-organizations having a fund raiser and donating the profits to the Library Building Fund. All this was in addition to the Fund Raisers sponsored by the newly formed FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY. The first officers were: President – Doris Abrahamson, Vice-President – Jeanne Klemp, Secretary – Gale Hoffmann, Treasurer – Chuck Gillette, and Directors were Pete Oberhauser, Carole Sabel, and Gail Stillings.

After four years of these fund raising activities, Friends' officers began to question how long this was to continue without some indication from the City that they were even listening. A public forum was requested for our Annual Meeting in October 1989. By this time \$13,000 had been added to the building fund by the Friends. The mayor, members of the city council, and the Library Board were on hand to answer questions about the proposed new building. The Library Board provided a financial plan showing how a \$921,000 library could be funded without adding to the tax base. This total was requested to be on hand by 1991 from the following sources:

- \$390,000 in the Library Building Fun

- 306,000 from a municipal loan to be repaid by County usage fees and a pre-budgeted city payment

- 125,000 from a federal grant to be applied for

- 100,000 raised from the community to pay for furnishings and equipment.

This plan was approved. The federal grant was applied for and received, and the local funds to be raised were increased to \$125,000 and expected to be on hand by July 1990. By the end of this fund drive Friends had collected over \$157,000. Records show that the city received a check in August for \$104,000. Most of the money collected was used to provide automation for the new library. To attempt to list all the people in the community who helped with the fund raising would be like copying the telephone directory. Everybody had a hand in it. Bob Seaman was the overall Fund Chairman. Art Joerres was in charge of Industry, Margaret McCauley and George Zachow had the Special Donors list. The ones who really put us over the top were Beth Mack and the Alumni group. We heard from people in Saudi Arabia and Ghana as well as most of the fifty states.

The Art fair fell into our laps shortly after FOL was organized. There had been eleven Art Fairs before FOL took over from the Arts & Crafts Club. Their membership was small and aging so they were looking for a group willing to give the Art Fair new life. Jeanne Klemp, Carole Sabel and Gail Stillings were sent to find out all they should know

to run a successful Art Fair. Gail left the area shortly after this but the other two, with the addition of Eileen Gossens, chaired the Art Fair for many years. FOL stated from the start the Art Fair was to be a cultural endeavor for the community without worry of financial gain. In recent years the problem has been finding interested personnel to run the Fair since it demands some attention throughout the year. We are grateful for all the years of guidance we had from Jeanne, Carol, Eileen, Beth Mack, Judy Dorn, Barb Newton, Carol Johnson, Tracy Yearwood, and all the helpers they recruited. This was the first year without an Art Fair sponsored by the Friends. The subject will be re-evaluated at a later date.

In the past twenty-five years we have been both educated and entertained. We began by singing with the MacDowell Chorus for two years, birding with UWGB's Past-President Weidner, hearing the lives of First Ladies, and sharing in Tom Pease family fun. After moving to our new quarters, Ben Franklin, Eleanor Roosevelt, Louisa Mae Alcott, and Will Rogers put in appearances. We've had the Spoon Man, we've drummed and juggled, and we have had live animals, storytellers, and science programs. Among the authors we've heard from were Michael Perry, Don Oakland, Justin Isherwood, Ellen Kort, and a review of Bill Bryson's "A Walk in the Woods." Ellen Kort conducted a writer's workshop. In addition, many of our local residents helped us learn more about their concerns and their experiences in faraway places. We had had study groups and discussion groups and refreshed our memories on World War II. A Master Gardeners group tends to the plantings, keeping our library grounds beautiful. Most of our programs were free to the public or at a very low charge. We can be sure the next twenty-five years will bring more education and entertainment.

How do we raise money today? Well, are you a member of Friends? Are you familiar with our Used Book Sales? We have them twice a year and would have them more often if they didn't demand so much work. To long time FOL members, the Used Book Sales provided a source of conversation. "Where did we go after Mitch's?" and "What about Sixth Street?" We've been recycling used books from the first. Since there was no room in the old library, a storage place was a top priority. Anton's conveniently left the store and Ninth Street, and that became our first home. Behold! The building sold. We moved to Zimmel's Bakery across from the old library. This building had a pipe standing up almost a foot above the floor restricting it from public use. All sales had to be outside-lug boxes out and lug boxes in. (It was at one of those sales that I was told that for an old girl, I was pretty tough!) The building sold. From there we went to Mitch's old building the first time and were able to have a sale INSIDE-once we got the door open! New plans came for the building, but Cal Waite had a storage place on Sixth Street. Again the sales were outside only. Although for Winter Whirl we moved some boxes to the First National Bank basement. Then Cal needed the space. We moved to Third Street. The old Beer Depot was available. Outside only. You guessed it-building sold. Ike's old paint shop was next. We could be inside but the space was so small. Then that space was destined for other use. The old Buick garage (now housing the Ambulance Service) was used but again only outside sales. We moved in a snow storm and had a summer sale complete with rain. Finally we were located in the old Ben Franklin building (across from the Congregational Church) and the space was terrific.

There were no lights in the building so we had only outside sales. We used to claim that all the “For Sale” buildings should be happy to let us use their space since it worked like a charm to get it sold. “Have Books, Will Travel” was our motto. In spite of all this moving our sales usually went well. And our prices were really low: 10 cents for paperbacks and 25 cents for hardcover. Often we dickered for a box at a time.

To finally have a building with room to store AND sell books INSIDE was and remains a delight. Since we now had décor, we raised the prices to our current charges: 25 cents for paperbacks, 50 cents for hardcover, and 10 cents for all kids’ books. We are frequently told these prices are too cheap, but the objective is to keep people reading, and we have found our sales are profitable. Through the years the Used Book Sales have been organized by Doris Abrahamson with Chris Dittman and Pat Schley ready to help in this venture. Moving books is still a requirement for every sale. New donations are stored in the basement of the library. Space is limited and shelves get crowded fast. By the time of the next sale it is a case of organized confusion. All these books must be packed in boxes, elevated via the dumb waiter to the main floor and then transported to the Community Room. At the end of the sale, books that haven’t sold must be returned to the basement shelves. IT’S WORK! We have been very fortunate to have the capable helpers from Beat the Heat moving books for us. Without them there wouldn’t be a sale.

Generally the profits from these book sales had been used to finance children’s programs. Money we raise from memberships and also from used book sales has been used for programs, prizes, the scanner, the defibrillator, and other related costs. We are a non-profit organization for the public library, pledged to support library objectives. We should expect to pay for treats, for kids’ programs, advertising, programs at annual meeting, and other related fees. If you are asked to buy a ticket to a future Friends’ program you will be benefiting some child or some adult. Better yet, support the library by becoming a Friend.

No matter what our project we had the support and cooperation of the library staff. From Harriet, Kathy, Diane and Gale to the youngest part-timer, they have all been willing to help. THANK YOU-all of you. It hasn’t been said enough.

All the members, officers and directors of Friends have worked hard to make this organization successful, but more was required of some because of the time they served. The current officers are President – Sanny Oberhauser, Vice-President – Kathy Akey, Secretary – Steve Shelton, Treasurer – Ann Klemp, and Directors – Jeff Hoffman, Chris Dittman, Penny Kettenhoven, Carole DeWolf, and Deb Kamp-Schroeder.

Officers and Directors through the past twenty-five years include:

Doris Abrahamson  
Chuck Gilette  
Peter Oberhauser  
Bob Arkens  
Sanny Oberhauser  
Doreen Williams  
Jim Simpson  
Barb Newton  
Ann VanGrinsven  
Tony Tomlyanovich  
Chris Dittman  
Ann Klemp  
Deb Kamp-Schroeder

Jeanne Klemp  
Carole Sabel  
Tim Sweet  
Roger Sage  
Roger Patrickus  
Judy Paulson  
Kris Kenfield  
Joyce Rasmussen  
Mary Oelhafen  
Jeff Hoffman  
Tracy Yearwood  
Penny Kettenhoven  
Carole DeWolf

Gale Hoffmann  
Gail Stilling  
V.J. Wadleigh  
Beth Mack  
Wendy Brock  
Art Joerres  
Dick Yatzeck  
Joan Paulson  
Steve Heckman  
Carol Johnson  
Steve Shelton  
Kathy Akey