CLINTONVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
HISTORY

The Clintonville library began in 1884 when Pastor A.C. Newcomb of the Congregation Church in Clintonville bought several "Pansy Books" for the girls in his Sunday school class to read. After the books had been read and reread, one of the students suggested that each member of the class donate a book or a dollar to purchase another book. Interest was so great that non-class members also made contributions and the books were housed in the church parlor. Later, the Christian Endeavor Society of the Congregational Church took over the operation of this little library.

As use of the library by Church members and non-members alike continued to grow, the quarters at the church became too small. Mr. Sedgwick, a local druggist, offered to have the little library of approximately 200 volumes moved to his drugstore on Main Street.

In 1905, the Clintonville Common Council appropriated $200 for the support of a public library on the condition that the Christian Endeavor Society donate its library of about 800 books to the City. At that time the Council appointed Rev. Aloysius Bastian, Otto L. Olen, Dr. H. A Mielike, C.E. Gibson, Dr. G. W. Spang, F. A. Sedgwick, and W. E. Switzer to be the Free Library Board of Trustees of the Clintonville Free Library. One of the first acts of this board was to transfer the collection to a room in the City Hall.

By 1914, the library again outgrew its quarters. In June of that year the library board chose a committee of three to consider a new location for the library and to inquire about a Carnegie grant. Carnegie funds were received and Dr. W.H. Finney donated land on which to build the Finney Library. The building was dedicated in 1917.

In 1943 the children's books were moved to the basement to provide additional room for expansion of both the adult and children's collections. School classes began making regular visits to the library during that same year.

In 1948, Walter A. Olen provided funds for an addition to the library to house the Eben E. Rexford collection. Mr. Rexford, who lived most of his life in Shiocton, Wisconsin, was a horticulturist, author, poet, and musician. He wrote the words to the popular song "Silver Threads among the Gold". The Rexford Room was maintained as a memorial to Eben E. Rexford until 1971. At that time the collection was placed in storage because of the extremely crowded conditions at the library. The collection is now displayed in Clintonville's History House. The former Finney Library building located at 95 S. Main Street now houses O'Connor Sales & Realty Inc.

A summer story hour and reading program for children began in 1951 and has been offered every year since. A preschool story hour was started by the Jr. Women's Club in 1973. Three years later the library took over the program which continues today.

In 1973 library service for the homebound was begun by the Clintonville Woman's Club. Volunteers and staff continue that service today.

The library became a member of the Outagamie Waupaca Library System in 1976. That same year Outagamie and Waupaca Counties began reimbursing the city for library services given to county residents. At the Board's request, the Common Council put a portion of this money in a building fund account beginning in April of that year.

A vacant lot south of the library was purchased in 1982 for future expansion of the Finney building. In 1983, a business concern stated its interest in the property for commercial development. After considerable discussion, the Board agreed to sell the

land providing several conditions were met by the City. The conditions were agreed upon and the property was sold.

An Ad Hoc Library Site Committee, appointed by the Mayor, recommended a feasibility study be done on property at the corner of 8th and Hemlock streets. The Stubenrach Associates, an architectural firm, did the study. In April 1985, the land was purchased, the buildings on it were razed, and a sign was erected stating it was the "Future Site of the Clintonville Public Library."

The *Friends of the Library* was formed in 1985. The group became politically active and promoted the library through various programs. In 1989, the *Friends* held a public forum to discuss the proposed new library. At the meeting the Board provided a financial scheme for a new building that would not add to the city's tax burden. The Mayor endorsed the plan. The Council approved plans for a new library to be built in 1991, provided the community could raise $100,000 and the library could get an LSCA Title II grant.

The *Friends*, with assistance from the Library Board, organized a very successful fund raising campaign. The community, working as a whole, raised over $157,000 for the new library. Because the *Friends* had such a successful fund raising campaign, funding was available to fully automate the new facility.

The LSCA Title II grant in the amount of $125,000 was approved in early spring and a ground breaking ceremony was held May 11, 1991.

In August 1991 the Library Board purchased an additional lot on Ninth Street from the city to increase the size of the parking lot.

$306,000 was borrowed by the city early in 1991 for the remainder of the building costs. A payment schedule was set up using the reimbursement money from Outagamie and Waupaca Counties to pay off the debt.

The new 13,422 square foot library building located at 75 Hemlock Street opened its doors to the public on January 6, 1992. The cornerstone laying, dedication, and open house was held on June 21, 1992.

In 1999 the 710 square foot entrance for the library was enclosed for safety purposes, to correct an ice problem which existed during the winter months. The project was financed with no additional cost to the taxpayers using funds from the Library Endowment Fund and the undesignated Library Fund balance. A Grand Opening was held on February 11, 2000 to celebrate the completion of the new entrance.

The final debt payment of $4,304 on the new building was made in 2001. A debt retirement celebration and open house was held at the library on September 19, 2001.

On Friday, December 2, 2005 the library checked out the 100,000[th] item for that year. This was the first time that the library checked out more than 100,000 items in a year. By the end of December 2005 the library had checked out 106,559 items.