

History of the West Lafayette Branch Library

West Lafayette Branch Library has been connecting people of all ages with books and information to cultivate and enrich lives since 1936. From its



opening 85 years ago, to its current location today, the West Lafayette Branch of the Coshocton County District Library has undergone many significant changes. The West Lafayette community received the gift of a public library on October 10, 1936 with the opening of the West Lafayette Branch in a vacant, basement room in the West Lafayette

School building on Main Street. It took the efforts of a committee of local citizens, consisting of Mrs. Russell Berlean, Mrs. Josephine Carr, Mrs. R.L. Rehard and Harold Pence, along with many community service organizations and individual volunteers working together to provide the funds and services needed to supply books and equipment for the library. Shelves and racks were built by the West Lafayette High School Industrial Arts class. Volunteers, such as Nellie Moore (Guilliams) and Mary Ellen Moore (Powell) to name a few, staffed the library throughout the first winter until Mrs. Jerry Newman was

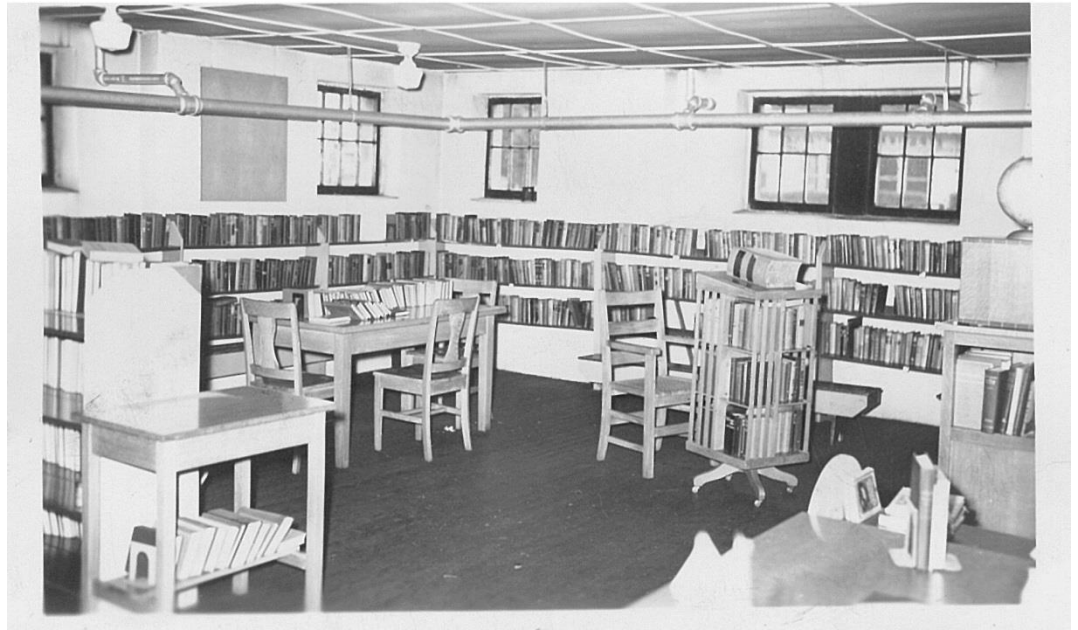
appointed as the first librarian.

She was followed by Mrs. Elmer Kobel, Mrs. Carl Hawk, Mrs. Harvey Buker (left), Mrs. Walker Babcock, Nellie Guilliams, Margaret Lowe, Linda Yoder, and presently Andrea Schweitzer Smith. Nellie



Guilliams served as Branch Manager for forty-two years, with a total of 64 years of library service.

Several years after opening, the library was moved into a different room in the basement of the Main Street school. In August of 1946, when the basement classroom was



needed by the school, the library moved to a rented room on the south side of

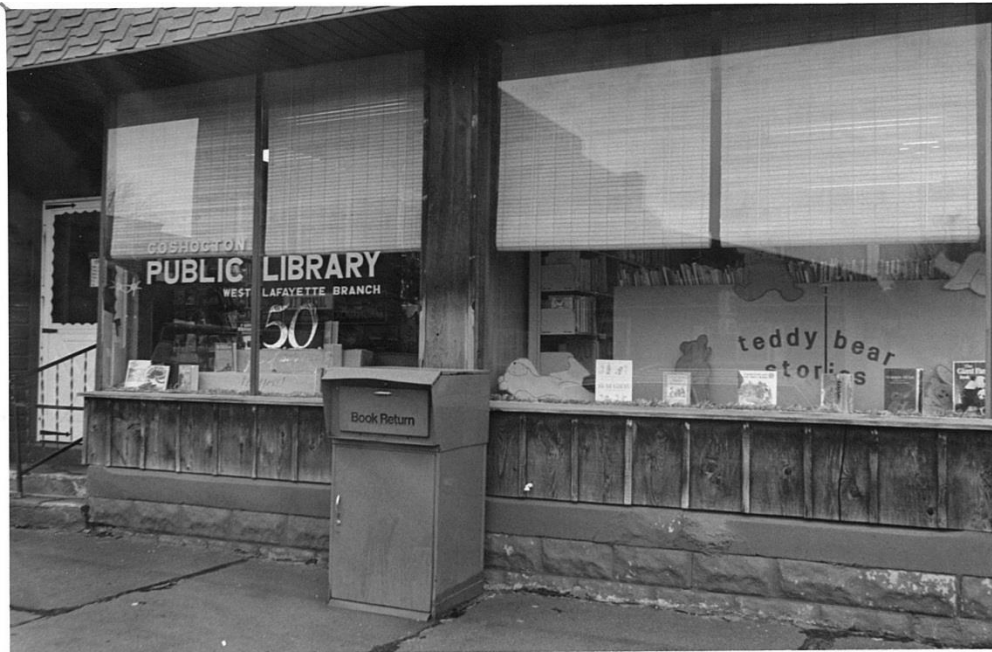
Main Street in the Rehard building, located at 117 East Main Street, also known as the old Dale Gress Real Estate building.



Glazier's Barber Shop was located in the left side of the building with the Branch library

located in the right. The Branch library stayed in that location for twenty-nine years. The Branch collection in 1946 included 3,000 volumes.

In October 1975, the library was relocated again to 108 East Main Street.



At that time the library collection was increased to over 7,000 books and the library broadened its materials to include books on cassette and videocassettes.

The building provided space for story time sessions, which were and are still quite popular with local children.

As time passed, the Library Board and Director began discussing the option of moving the Branch Library to a different building since the library on Main Street was becoming too small for the collection and parking was difficult.



(Nellie Guilliams, seated, and Ruth Pritts)

At last, it was decided that the library would be housed in the former Apple's Pennzoil Station at the corner of Main Street and State Route 93. With much excitement, the station was transformed into a pleasant library with a new interior, designed by Pamela Maxfield-Ontko and constructed by Carl Cognion Construction. The library staff, as well as members from the West Lafayette Rotary Club, West Lafayette Lions Club, and West Lafayette Junior Guild joined together to transport thousands of books to their new home. Members of the Junior Guild have assisted with each move.

On July 15, 1991, the new West Lafayette Branch Library opened at its current site of 601 East Main Street. A Grand Opening Celebration was held on August 24, 1991.



During the 1990's the library collection grew to 15,000 books, thirty magazines, three newspaper subscriptions, 430 videocassettes, and a copy machine was added as a public service. Junior Guild members continued to provide a monthly display at the Branch for over fifteen years. During 2005, the West Lafayette Rotary Club gave an outdoor Reading Shelter to the Branch library as its Centennial project with seating provided by two Eagle Scouts. This provided a much needed space for



library programming and continues to be available for public use. In 2009, the West Lafayette Janusian Club and the West Lafayette Junior Guild provided patio tables and seating for an outdoor Reading Garden area.

The West Lafayette Branch Library has grown beyond its walls and continues to participate in the SEO Library Consortium. During 2011, over 6.7 million items were available to borrow. At that time, the Branch also maintained a rotating collection of materials from the Coshocton Public Library to keep the local selection updated quarterly.



The West Lafayette Branch Library celebrated its 75th anniversary on October 10, 2011 with a reception and a short program. Proclamations were received by the library from Ohio Senator Troy Balderson, Coshocton County

Commissioners Gary Fischer, D. Curtis Lee, and Dane Shryock, and Village Mayor Jack Patterson. Two hundred, hand numbered copies of a water color painting of the West Lafayette Branch library building, by local artist Gwen

Shaw, were distributed to attendees. A framed, first edition was won by patron Joy Collins.

In 2010 the Branch library served over 43,000 customers, meeting their informational and recreational needs. It provided computers and laptops for public use while being the only location in

the village of West Lafayette with free Wi-Fi Internet access.



The Rotary Reading Shelter continues to enable the Branch to offer programming for teens, adults, and children throughout the spring, summer, and fall months. The West Lafayette Branch Library continues as a community asset with a friendly and dedicated staff, serving the citizens

of West Lafayette, eastern Coshocton County, and surrounding areas with enrichment opportunities and resources for lifelong learning. The library staff during 2011 included Andrea Schweitzer Smith, Margaret Reveal, Amanda Geary, and Cindy Baker. Today, Andrea Smith continues as the Branch Manager, along with Amanda Geary, Cindy Baker, and numerous support staff members from the Main library in Coshocton.

During the past decade from 2011-2021, the Branch library has introduced new information technologies to meet advances in access to information. The Branch library added digital databases including Hoopla Digital and Historical Newspapers Collection, Apps for circulation, curbside pickup, high speed Wi-Fi, Launchpads for children, access to digital materials through the Ohio Digital Library, mobile printing, digital scanning, and most recently mobile hotspots. The Branch library provides digital education to assist people in navigating the Internet and online databases to find authoritative answers to their questions. The Branch library plays an integral role in community development through technology assistance for individuals seeking employment opportunities via online applications, scholarship and grant submissions, and advancing job skills via LinkedIn Learning, an online database of over 12,000 online courses lead by industry experts.

Library services and materials are made possible through a percentage of the State General Revenue Fund (Public Library Fund), the support of a local property tax levy, and donations from generous individuals and organizations. The Branch library building at 601 E



Main Street continues to be leased since 1991 from the Jones family, whom have been greatly supportive of the Library in the West Lafayette community for numerous years.

The West Lafayette Branch Library brings people together through reading and learning. During recent years, library programming has been adapted and made available digitally beginning in 2020, connecting people during the pandemic stay at home order. Some programming remains in hybrid format going

forward, offering both in-person and digital learning opportunities. Beanstack, an online tracking tool for reading, was implemented in 2021 during the Library Summer Reading Program, offering children, teens, and adults a digital participation format option.

Engaging the community is done through programming, outreach educational opportunities, and by providing a community space used for meetings by



various organizations including the West Lafayette Adult Book Discussion Group, Coshocton County Master Gardeners, Ridgewood Golf Boosters, and the Janusian Club. Individuals meet at the Branch library for job shadowing and development, tutoring, wireless remote field-work by health care professionals, college student study groups, and more.

Today, 85 years later, the Branch library continues to provide opportunities for discovery and growth through multiple media formats such as print, digital, streaming, wireless, and online. As a continued member of the SEO (Serving Every Ohioan) consortium, West Lafayette Branch library patrons have access to over 8.1 million physical items from 98 Library systems at 258 service points

throughout 49 counties across Ohio, using the OPLIN (Ohio Public Library Information Network). The Ohio Digital Library provides access to tens of thousands of eBooks, digital audiobooks, digital magazines, and videos. As times have changed, the West Lafayette Branch Library has adapted to provide needed services and collection materials to remain a relevant and thriving institution in the community.