

## History of the Beaver Area Memorial Library

In its earliest days, the Beaver Library and its small book collection was housed in the basement of the then Beaver Trust Co. building on Third Street (Now Huntington Bank). It later moved to the basement of the former high school on College Avenue. Members of the Beaver Civic Club pursuing a long-held dream of an increasing community role for the library established the Beaver Memorial Library Association on November 11, 1948. Beaver County courts granted a charter for the formation of the Beaver Memorial Library the same year.

Early in 1949, a house at the corner of Insurance and Fourth Streets was leased from the Beaver Area School District for \$1.00 per year. This old house was completely renovated with the major help of area merchants who donated labor and materials. On September 8, 1949, the board of trustees elected Mrs. W. Wallace Rinehart to be librarian and Miss Jean Sebring to be assistant librarian. The library was officially opened to the public on November 17, 1949. At the first annual meeting in April of 1950 the library reported a collection of 4,000 books.

By 1959, the library had outgrown its quarters, and the Board of Trustees purchased property on the corner of River Road and College Avenue for \$24,500 to be used as the site of a new library building. In 1961, a fund drive was launched to raise \$130,000 from business, professional, and individual citizens of the Beaver Area. This campaign was successful, and the present library building was officially dedicated on April 8, 1962.

In 1961 the name of the library was officially changed to the Beaver Area Memorial Library, reflecting the expanded public support and increased services and overall contributions to the community life provided by the library.

Over the next 14 years, library services and clientele multiplied almost five-fold and in 1974, the Board of Trustees in an agreement with Beaver Area Heritage Foundation formulated plans for an expansion of the building. This resulted in a 2,500 square foot addition completed in 1980 at a cost of \$138,900.

The library again outgrew its facility and expanded to meet the needs of the community. A 4,200 square foot addition was added to the north side of the library to blend with the architecture of the homes in the neighborhood. The children's library was significantly increased. The work area was enhanced and much-needed storage space, as well as kitchen and lavatory areas were added. The addition allowed for more computers throughout the library to address the growing public demand. The exterior appearance of the existing building was enhanced as well as the landscaping area.

The project cost was \$1 million, with \$300,000 raised in a public campaign. The library was fortunate to have received significant gifts from the estate of Dr. and Mrs. W. Clair Merriman and from Frank Varga in memory of his wife, Evelyn Varga, an early trustee of the library. These gifts, along with a \$300,000 grant from the Pa. Keystone Recreation, Park, and Conservation Fund provided the funds for the project.

The library's board of trustees originally decided to add to and renovate the present building in the spring of 1998 but unforeseen delays stalled the project until early 2001. Architects Radelet McCarthy started the project in 2002. Modany Falcone of Fallston was hired as the general contractor. The new facility was dedicated on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2003.