

HISTORY OF THE ROMULUS PUBLIC LIBRARY

1923 - 1971

By Diane Hazen, Librarian and Member of the Romulus Historical Society

On Wednesday, November 7, 1923, the Romulus Library Center was opened in O.H. Raether's Confectionery store with a collection of 204 books. Mr. Raether had agreed to take charge of a library for \$3.00 per month, providing that the community furnish the book shelves. Romulus Township, as it was known then, appropriated \$20.00 that first year for the library budget and Wayne County paid the rest of the cost.

By March of 1924, because of the number of books used at the Romulus Library Center, Mr. Raether's salary was increased to \$5.00 per month.

During the following years, there were several requests to enlarge the Library Center. One suggested the possibility of a reading room in the Grange Hall which the township was considering for purchase to house their own offices. Each request was abandoned, either because the County could not afford to extend the services in Romulus or for lack of local interest.

In 1930, Floyd J. Osburn and his sister, Mrs. Veda LaChance, purchased the Confectionery and News stand from O.H. Raether. Mrs. LaChance became responsible for the Library Center which now included 580 books, and by 1938 had an annual circulation of 6,633.

The Township agreed in March 1940 to allow the Library to have a part of the Grange Hall to use as a reading room plus the services of a janitor for 90 days. The search for a new home for the Library still continued. Finally, in 1942 the Romulus Branch of the Wayne County Library came into existence with the County agreeing to pay the heat and electricity, but requesting that the Township provide janitorial service. The Library branch was located on Goddard Road in Romulus. The first librarian was Marion Morris.

Marion Morris was followed by Edna Yoder and Mildred Ridge, and the new Library was placed under the supervision of the librarian in Wayne.

By 1949, the County Library requested that the Township pay the rent for the library quarters. This was the beginning of Romulus Township's total support for their Library. In the years following, the Township took over increasingly more of the operational costs of their library until they fully supported the operation.

In 1951, larger quarters were needed as the Library doubled in size. The Library was repaired and remodeled.

By 1955, Mr. Avram Rosenthal had become the librarian and children's programming was begun. Also, this librarian began cooperative programming with the schools.

In 1958, Romulus had another librarian, Mrs. Louise Naughton and again, Romulus Branch Library needed more space. The approximately 1,200 sq. ft. had been outgrown.

Saturday hours were initiated in 1963 when Mrs. Eleanor Roberts took over as librarian. The building which housed the Library was continually deteriorating and in need of repair, besides being an inadequate size. From the librarians' 1966-67 annual report: *"I can't help thinking that although the poor may always be with us, the old Romulus Library building may not. The floor is deterioration so badly that I am alarmed for our patrons' safety. There are leaks in the roof over the circulation desk and in the restroom which will no doubt prove disturbing when the snow melts ..."*

Over a period of years a new home for the Library was sought, but nothing satisfactory could be found. Finally in 1971, the new Civic Center was completed which included the present Library building. The 1971 annual report begins: *"This past year has been an exciting, historic year in the Romulus Public Library. The first part of the year was spent in the old building with two leaky oil stoves and the feeling that at any time the building could go up in a cloud of dust. During quiet times in the library, the staff and patrons were serenaded by the mating yowls of two cats residing under the building. The resulting four wild kittens enlivened the library backyard later on in the early summer. Finally in early June the new library was ready to occupy. On June 14 the library was closed and the move begun."*

Many more people than those mentioned worked to continually improve library service to the people of Romulus throughout the library's history. Keeping the past in mind, the Library looks forward to continuing improvements of service to its patrons.