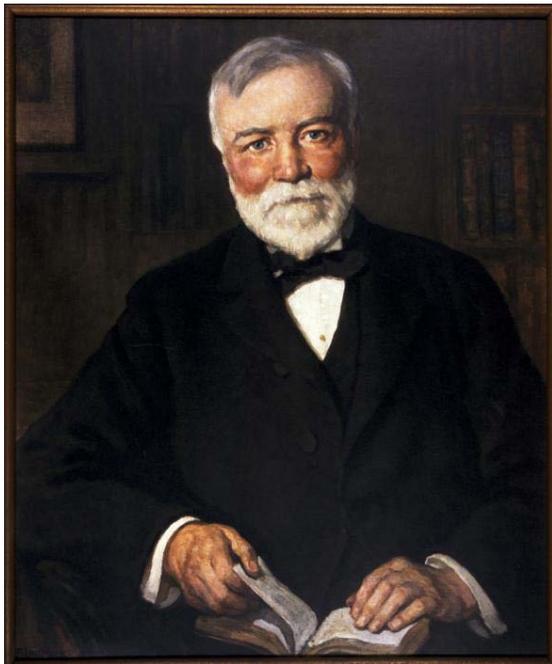


History of the Westfield Memorial Library

1873 Every Saturday Book Club begins operation when twenty-six Westfield women start to collect and exchange books. It has a collection of 126 volumes and a treasury of \$16.21. Books are exchanged throughout the fall, winter, and spring but kept in storage during the summer.

1876. The Every Saturday Book Club and the Town of Westfield establish a committee to explore the idea of opening a public library.

1877 In February the Every Saturday Circulating Library opens to the public, with management responsibilities vested in the association of women who originally organized the book club. In October the name is changed to the "Westfield Every Saturday Library."



1879 Incorporated as the Westfield Public Library. From 1879 until 1905 the library would exist at several rented locations, public meeting rooms, churches, and schools.

1905 Town votes overwhelmingly to establish a free public library. The Mayor then named a Board of Trustees, consisting of five appointed members, two ex-officio members, the Mayor, and the supervising principal of schools.

The Trustees decide to buy a lot at Broad and Elmer Streets for \$3,950, funded by donations from private citizens and contributions of the former library association. At that time the trustees made a request to Andrew Carnegie for a grant, who later donates \$10,000 for a building.

1907 New building opens to the public as the Free Public Library of Westfield with a 5,000 book collection. Carnegie's donation was merely the largest. Over 80 Westfielders donated.

1929 Children's department is established.

1954 Library opens in municipal building; name changed to Westfield Memorial Library. The new library location opens with a plaque,

"THIS BUILDING IS DEDICATED TO THE MEN AND WOMEN OF WESTFIELD WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE FOUNDING AND PRESERVATION OF OUR REPUBLIC. THUS, THE LIBRARY IS A MEMORIAL TO ALL THOSE WESTFIELD RESIDENTS WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THEIR COUNTRY FROM EARLIEST TO PRESENT DAYS."

1984 Voters of Westfield approve, in a non-binding referendum, by 7,847 to 6,286, building a new library for \$3.5 million. The \$3.5 billion includes demolition fees for the old Grant school, construction costs, and all library furnishings and automation. In addition, the library receives over \$250,000 from the State of New Jersey and over \$200,000 from Westfield donors.

1988 New library facility opens at 550 East Broad Street and Stanley Avenue, at the site of the former Grant School. The architectural firm is Bouman, Blanche, Faridy, Thorne, & Madish of Trenton, NJ. The new library is completely automated, without a card catalog.



Above: photograph of volunteers helping to move books into the library in advance of the new building's opening day.

1996 In May, the Westfield Library begins to offer internet access on nine computers. This event is covered by the ABC Evening News with Peter Jennings. The Westfield Leader reported this development thusly:

The Library uses Netscape, a searching program using icons and pictures along with text, to explore the Internet. Netscape is used especially navigate the area of the Internet called the "World Wide Web." The Web has been compared to an enormous book with "pages" of text, pictures and sound which are stored at computers all over the world. Netscape users move from page to page using "links" to find various resources such as paintings in the Louvre, the route of the Olympic torch or the current state of the Dow Jones average. (Westfield Leader, May 30th, 1996, page 19.)

1999 Library is open on Sunday

2001 Library is open on Saturdays during the summer

2007 The Library undergoes a renovation and is temporarily closed.

2009 More than 260,000 patrons walk through the door annually to borrow over 350,000 items

2010 The Library is open all day on Saturdays during the summer