

Elmhurst Library Has All The Answers

On July 8, 1912, the city council passed an ordinance establishing a public library and an annual tax levy for its support.

The first library board met, drew up a set of by-laws, and tried to find a place suitable for its needs and budget. The city granted the board \$400, half of which was to be used for the purchase of books. Hampered by lack of an appropriate site the library was slow to start.

Finally, after three and a half years and an accrument of tax money, a board committee procured a room in the rear of the old Glos building at the corner of York and Park. The board allotted \$400 for books, \$15 per month for rent, \$5 per month for janitor services and \$15 per month for librarian's salary. The Elmhurst Woman's club, interested in the establishment of the library, contributed \$75 toward the purchase of children's books.

On March 22, 1916, despite a heavy snow storm, the doors opened for the first time and 100 people crowded into the room. The Elmhurst Public library was born. Starting with 830 volumes, part of them a gift from a discontinued boy's club, the library served the town two days a week. Wednesdays and Saturdays, 2-5 and 7-9 p.m.

The first annual report showed a growth in the number of volumes in the library to 1507 with 643 registered borrowers. The library also had twelve magazines which were circulated. A story hour was offered to all children in the third and fourth grades on Saturday afternoons during the summer months.

By 1918, the library had aquired 2,039 volumes, 977 borrowers, 13 magazines. War work activities saw 1,000 books collected by school children for soldiers and sailors, and the distribution of food leaflets and government bulletins. Library hours increased to three days a week. A new service added in 1925 was the "Reading With a Purpose" course offered by the American Library association.

March 1, 1926 marked the beginning of a new decade in the library with the announcement that the library would be open every day except

Sundays, all day except for the lunch and dinner hours.

The library now contained 6,975 books and had 1,304 borrowers.

A telephone was installed and the public was encouraged to call for information on books or services. The Chicago Daily Tribune was added for use of the patrons.

In 1926, a regular column, "Library Notes," appeared in the Elmhurst Press at regular intervals presenting short reviews of books as well as library information. A summer reading program for children was introduced. During the summer, the library closed during the morning hours.

On Sunday, Jan. 26, 1930, a fire broke out in the second and third floors of the library causing \$12,000 worth of damage to the building. Elmhurst college students from across the street carried out books, furniture and records. The fire damage was confined to two rooms on the second floor.

The first floor damage was caused by water and was confined to the children's room and the lobby. Fortunately no books or records were damaged or destroyed and the insurance covered the loss. While the building was being repaired, library hours were shortened to morning and afternoon due to the lack of light in part of the building.

By the middle of May, the library resumed its regular hours. For the first time, two rooms on the second floor were being used for an adult fiction collection.

A \$20,000 program of modernization and renovation, including an addition, was presented by the library board in February of 1936 as its contribution to the Elmhurst Centennial and the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the library.

As one of the Centennial programs, the cornerstone of the library was laid on June 6, 1936, into which was placed pictures of the Wilder home before remodeling, copies of newspapers with pictures of the new project, a copy of the Elmhurst Centennial booklet, a copy of the 1922 agreements between the park and library boards, and copies of speeches made at the laying of the cornerstone.

The library closed during the

summer to allow workmen to proceed with construction but on Sept. 1 the library reopened in temporary quarters at 111 E. First Street.

Open House Opens New Doors

On Sunday, Jan 31, 1937, the Elmhurst Public library held an open house to show off the extensive changes made in the building.

The outside porches were removed and replaced by a large portico with four white pillars and a step through the door revealed a small vestibule.

The large room on the north remained structurally the same but was entirely refurnished in eighteenth century English design.

The rest of the building was furnished in early American furniture. One fireplace had been removed in the entry hall and the charge desk built around the opening revealing the new office for the library staff.

The new structural addition on the south end of the building provided space for a children's room.

The second floor now contained a large room on the north end for adult fiction, a room on the east for display cases, room for periodicals, a board room and an apartment for the caretaker.

The cost of the remodeling was about \$29,000 and was met by an accumulated building fund. The new furnishings throughout the building were gifts of various families or organizations. The open house attracted 950 persons.

The library now contained 17,362 volumes and 54 periodicals, serving 8,906 borrowers. A new schedule of hours accompanied the reopening, every day except Sundays from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the library, a group of 150 residents gathered at the library on March 23, 1941, and launched the Elmhurst Friends of the Library association. The annual report of the year showed the library had 21,057 volumes with 7,691 borrowers. By 1945-46 the library reported a raise in the tax rate, the hiring of a children's librarian and the establishing of a small building fund. Borrowers now numbered 7,082 with 24,115 volumes, 108 out-of-



The Elmhurst Public Library as we know it today barely resembles the charming mansion of Seth Wadham. Once a treeless lot, Wadham planted young birch trees on his estate and named it White Birch.

town borrowers, 164 college cards. Services included classroom collections and class visits for reading and instruction, story hours and movies for summer programs, plus regularly scheduled exhibits, talks, and book discussions.

April of 1947 marked the start of a circulating record collection with 380 classical selections. The following February the Great Books foundation began its series of seminars.

The annual report of 1951 showed the library had 24,949 volumes, 9,000 borrowers, cost of an out-of-town card rose from \$1 to \$3, and a collection of first editions of works by former resident Carl Sandburg. The Elmhurst Garden club decorated the library at Christmas for the first time and began the program of providing flowers for the library.

On May 20, 1955 a newly finished room in the lower level of the library was opened and dedicated at the annual meeting of the Friends of the Elmhurst Public Library. The room was designated the Alice Seton Berens room in honor of Mrs.

Berens who served on the library board for 35 years.

Beginning on Tuesday, Jan. 17, 1956, the Friends of the Elmhurst Public Library began sponsorship of a foreign film series. The Elmhurst Garden club held a flower show at the library to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the library and featured the scale models of the building in its various stages complete with replicas of the original plantings maintained on the grounds.

The Library Club of America program was started in the library in 1957 with information distributed to all the schools in Elmhurst.

In the fall of 1961, a detailed study suggested an addition to the existing building to solve the serious problems of restricted collections of books, magazines and records, inadequate working space, smaller staff than needed, and limited services.

With the completion of the library building program and the acquisition of additional materials, the library began its transition from a small community library to a

medium-sized library. In an effort to bring its facilities up to the American Library association standards the collections were enlarged. Because of the increase in numbers of reserves on library materials, phone calls were replaced by post cards. A new classification scheme for the cataloging of recordings was introduced and work was started on the record collection.

In February of 1962, the library board, presented the city council with a proposal to build an addition to the library facilities, remodel present facilities and increase the library tax rate. The annual report of 1961-62 showed a total of 18,956 borrowers, 42,779 volumes, 120 magazines.

The Elmhurst Press of March 7, 1963, carried a story of the approval by the city council of the library board's request for a referendum and the building of a \$546,275.70 addition to the library. The election was held April 16, 1963 and approved by the voters. By January of 1964 bids were authorized for the addition and work began in the

spring. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held April 11, 1964.

With the building project well under way, the library board began a drive for funds for the furnishings of the rooms in the library. Library services remained throughout the building program, closing only a couple of weeks to enable the staff to complete the moving and reorganization of materials in the library.

As part of the new building project, the Elmhurst Historical Museum took over two rooms on the second floor in the old section of the library. Paintings by local artists were donated and hung throughout the building. On Oct. 17, 1965, a formal dedication of the new building was held. With the building program completed, several new ventures started in the form of art rentals of paintings and later of sculptures. A collection of 8 mm film and enlargement of the record holdings were made possible by the increase in available space.

By the end of 1969-70 fiscal year, the library staff had been reorgan-

times a year for discussion of mutual interest.

The following year a paperback collection of 1,700 volumes was offered as an additional service. The Regiscope, a new circulation system of microfilming and punchcard data processing, was put into operation in September of 1970. A new delivery service to shut-ins was instigated using volunteers to make deliveries to homes.

In January, 1972, the Elmhurst Public library joined the Suburban Library system, enabling Elmhurst residents to borrow 16 mm sound

system with the introduction of zone service on cassettes. Along with the signing of a reciprocal borrowing agreement with three other systems, the sources of material for the library user were greatly expanded. During the year the book collection passed the 100,000 volume mark.

Expanded service the next year included staff members visits to the pediatrics section of DuPage Memorial hospital, bringing story telling sessions and books to the patients, and classes for parents in the use of educational toys were

Remodeling also extended to the enclosure of the porticos at the north and south entrances, the enclosing of the book drop, the erection of a partition closing off the circulation desk and the construction of two staff offices. An art print collection for the Children's department was started and a cabinet

was constructed to house these prints.

The automated circulation system was installed and coding all library materials was started. The new system also required the reregistration and entry into the computer of all library patrons.

In 1986 the library board re-

quested permission to hold a library referendum to raise the library levy. The referendum passed on March 18.



Park District Helps Keep Elmhurst A Colorful City

The Elmhurst Park district will observe its 66th year of serving residents' leisure and recreational needs during the city's sesquicentennial.

Over the years park district facilities have grown from the first land acquisition — 12-acre Wilder Park — to the current 28 leisure and recreation facilities on 428 acres of land. In addition to park land and facilities, the district provides year-round leisure programming for all age groups.

On June 5, 1920, an election established Elmhurst Park district as a separate governing body with its own ordinances and tax levying powers.

Shortly after organization, the board began negotiations for acquisition of the Thomas Bryan estate, located at York street and St. Charles road. Before negotiations were completed, the city of Elmhurst was bequeathed the north half of the Wilder estate in the heart of Elmhurst, with the proviso that the city would erect a library within five years.

The city council found this an impossibility and asked the park board to secure the south half of the twelve acre tract which included the Wilder home.

The park board stopped negotiations on the Bryan property and purchased the south part of the Wilder estate for \$45,000. The board then sold the Wilder estate house and one acre of land surrounding it back to the city for \$14,000 to serve as the library site. Upon completion of these transactions, the city ceded the northern six acres to the park district and the Wilder estate became Wilder park.

Butterfield park was purchased for \$16,500 in April 1930.

Other land acquisitions followed: Salt Creek was purchased for \$20,000 in 1927; East End park was purchased for \$36,000 in 1929 and

The district's first swimming pool was opened in East End park in 1937. The first organized recreation program — a children's playground program — was offered for the first time in 1942.

Added impetus to the local recreation movement was provided in 1958 when the voters of the park district approved an increase in the tax rate which made additional funds available for maintenance and development and increasing the recreational program fund.

Eldridge park was added to the system in 1954, purchased for \$37,000. It was named after Edward Eldridge, one of the pioneer settlers, who staked his claim to land in Elmhurst in 1834.

York Commons park was acquired in 1965 and Elmhurst's second swimming pool was opened in the park in 1967.

In 1971, voters approved a \$3.9 million bond referendum for land acquisition, park development and special facility development. The majority of the district's present acreage was purchased within the following 10-year period and much of the facility development was conducted in the same time span.

Four special facilities that resulted were: • The Courts — an indoor tennis, racquetball and handball facility. • Sugar Creek Golf course — a nine-hole executive length course. • The Abbey Senior center on St. Charles road which provides seniors with recreational and leisure activities, as well as social services and a weekday lunch program. • The Elmhurst Community Center, formerly at Eldridge and now at Madison school, is an unused school leased from the

school district. The community center also houses the Elmhurst Art museum maintained by the Fine Arts and Civic Center Foundation.

In addition, the park district acquired the Depot property from Chicago and North Western Railroad on York road in 1971. It was renovated by the park district as a Bicentennial project in 1975 along with the construction of the Bicentennial Fountain on the same site at Wild Meadow Trace. The Depot and the fountain were dedicated on July 4, 1976.

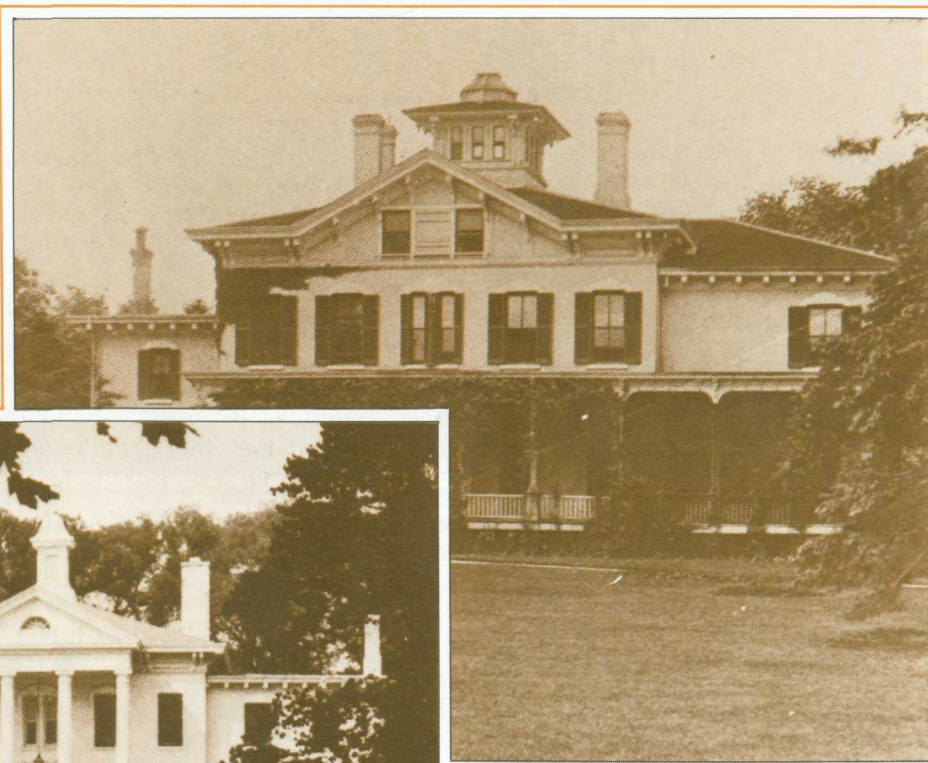
In 1985 and 1986, Pioneer park was developed to include a picnic area, children's play area, a baseball diamond and walkways.

Something For Everybody

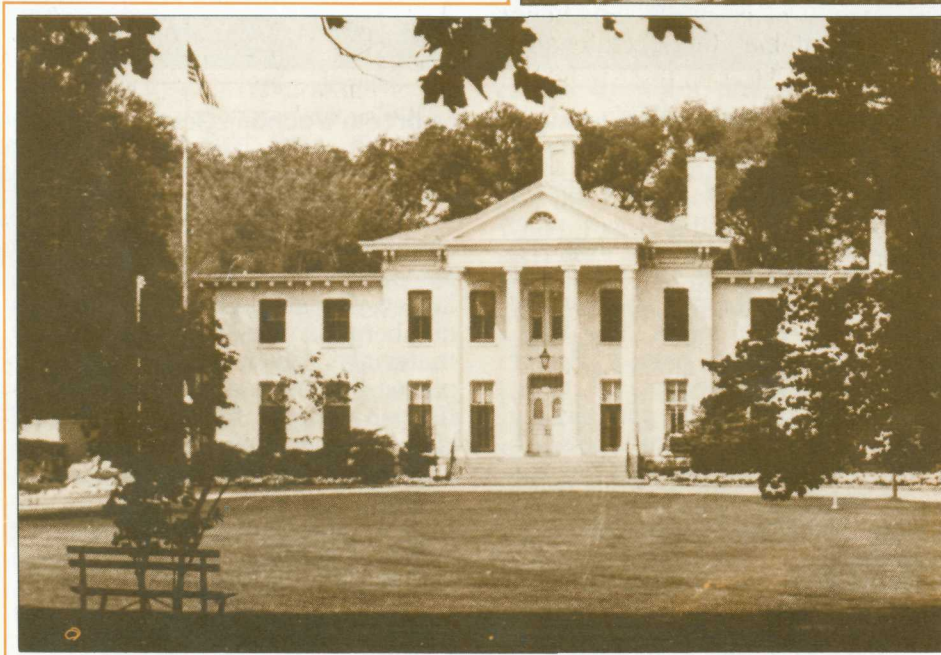
Current park facilities include: a community center; a senior center; seven recreation buildings; a conservatory/greenhouse; a golf course; an indoor tennis and racquetball center; two outdoor swimming pools; a multi-purpose trail; 18 group picnic areas; 26 individual picnic areas; 20 play apparatus areas; eight passive recreation and horticulture areas; a fitness trail; 10 outdoor basketball courts; 4 outdoor volleyball courts; 10 horseshoe courts; 23 tennis outdoor tennis courts; 30 ball diamonds; two football fields; 16 soccer fields; seven ice skating rinks; three sledding hills; two cross-country ski trails; an amphitheater; three gardening areas; and a fishing area.

Special Events

Elmhurst Park district's special events have been popular with



As new owners took over the original Wadham house, it gradually changed from Wilder's Lancaster Lodge (above) into the library building as it appears today.



ized into four departments: Children's, Reader's Service, Circulation and Technical Processing. The recataloging of the record collection was completed, the library became a member of the John Crerar Library Loan service, the Friends of the Library established a listening alcove in the Children's department with two record players and the start of a record collection. A new group was formed composed of Elmhurst librarians, meeting three

films, to have access to the resources of fifty-eight other libraries, and to continue the use of Chicago Public Library resources. The library increased its hours to 68 per week, installed the first parking meters and received from the Friends gifts of two speed-a-matic reading machines, a postage meter and envelope sealer and two sets of art slides and records.

Also, 1972 brought a new media to members of the Suburban Library

started.

The installation of parking meters around the building was completed with the expectation of solving the shortage of parking spaces. The library board signed a contract with the Suburban library system and Computer Library Service, for the installation of a fully automated circulation control system.

In February 1975, when the museum which had occupied two rooms on the second floor for ten years, moved to the Glos mansion, this area was remodeled along with the former board room to accommodate the periodicals section.

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YEARS

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