

In 1910, the "Society of the Hall in the Grove", a local organization of graduates of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle met in Falconer. It was there that Susan Howe proposed the establishment of a library as a project of the society, and L. Theresa Benson proposed that each member contribute a book to form its nucleus. The members also gave one dollar each to start a book fund. Several members gave parties to raise money and contributions were solicited from the public. Books were kept on a shelf in Dr. William O. Smith's drug store, and later in Leonard Anderson's furniture store.

On May 13, 1913, a meeting of interested persons was held in the old High School on North Work Street and an organizer from the State Library Department in Albany assisted in the formulation of the Falconer Free Library Association. A constitution was adopted and the following trustees and officers were elected: Sydney T. Benson, President; George R. Raynor, Vice President; Gertrude Mosher, Secretary; and Ethel Sample, Treasurer.

The first annual meeting was held in January, 1914 and the year's progress was reported as follows: a gift of 87 books and \$122.07 from the C.L.S.C., the purchase of a lot at the northeast corner of North Work and East James Streets for \$775.00 and the office building of the S.R. Benson Company for \$500.00. The office building was moved to the North Work Street site and a home for the library was established. Falconer citizens were generous in contributing time and labor as well as money to establish the new library. Many people volunteered their time for the preparation, care and lending of books. The first book purchase authorized was a dictionary for \$12.00. The library hours were from 3:00 to 5:00 Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and from 2:00 to 9:00 on Saturdays.

In 1916 a grant of \$300.00 was approved by the village and Mrs. Kate Davis was hired as the regular librarian. Mrs. Davis served devotedly until 1922, when duties as school librarian required her full time. By that time the library was in need of expansion. When the Village Community Building was planned, arrangements were made for the transfer of the library and property to the Village which assumed its support and management. In New York State, a Free Library is one supported and managed by an association. A Public Library is one supported by public funds. The Falconer Free Library thus became the Falconer Public Library

in 1922, under the direction of a Library Board appointed by the Village trustees. Hours were extended to every afternoon and three evenings a week. Gertrude Mosher became the Librarian and Dorothea Peterson (later Mrs. Richard Turner), the Assistant Librarian. Mrs. Turner served on the Board for almost fifty years before her resignation in November of 1974. Mrs. Mabel Olson became the Assistant from 1926-1960 serving for 34 years.

The library is a vital factor in the community and it has been proven by at least two dramatic periods of our nation's history. During the Depression more than 30,000 books were circulated in one year and the capacity of the reading room was taxed beyond limit. The Library again served the community in Work War II by providing a source of technical books and information for defense workers. The scope of the library at that time is indicated by some 1941 statistics:

- Budget was 41,880; 4308 was spent on books.
- There were 8,290 volumes in the Library.
- There were 14,264 books circulated that year.

In 1951 the Falconer Public Library received a permanent charter from New York State and in 1960, the Library became part of the Chautauqua- Cattaraugus Library System.

Gertrude Mosher retired in 1962, after seeing the library through forty years of growth and development. Carolyn Schwab became the librarian in 1962 and Phyllis Engstrom became the Assistant in 1964, retiring in 1982. Many additions were made during the 1960s to meet with the changing times. The preschool Story Hour was initiated, offering one hour per week for stories and games for children ages 3 to 5 years. Mrs. Schwab arranged for senior citizens to have books delivered at home with no fines on their overdue books. Records were collected and a record player was purchased, initiating a trend toward non-book circulation. A 16 mm projector and screen were also purchased for use within the village by local organizations. At about this time period the James B. Schwab Company donated a copy machine to the library.

On July 21, 1975 Sue Seamans became the Library Director and in 1978 Betty Palmer became the Senior Library Clerk.

In the Fall of 1981, 1,260 square feet were added to the Library. Included in the new addition were handicapped access, a lavatory, a new gallery/conference room, ceiling fans, air conditioning and a new children's area. The money for this project was donated by the Gebbie Foundation, Carnahan-Jackson Foundation, Chautauqua Region

Foundation, Chautauqua/Cattaraugus System Grants, several memorial funds; fund-raising efforts by the local Kiwanis, Lions, Rotary, Moose Included in the new addition were handicapped access, a lavatory, a new gallery/conference room, ceiling fans, air conditioning and a new children's area. The money for this project was donated by the Gebbie Foundation, Carnahan-Jackson Foundation, Chautauqua Region Foundation, Chautauqua/Cattaraugus System Grants, several memorial funds; fund-raising efforts by the local Kiwanis, Lions, Rotary, Moose Clubs and Henry Mosher Post #638 plus local business/industry and private contributions. The old oak furniture was stripped, sanded and varnished and the interior was restored with a wood motif. An atlas stand and record bin were purchased and new carpeting and lighting were installed.

While the 1980's witnessed the library addition, services were being expanded as well. Video tapes, books on tape, updated reference file, a television, increased magazine subscriptions and large print books were introduced to the library collection. The Chautauqua/Cattaraugus Library System offered workshops to member libraries as they increased their services such as inter-library loan, Bookmobile, "Books by Mail" and Book Plan incentives to member libraries.

The 1990's changed many more things for the patrons and for the staff. Library personnel worked with Mayor Albert Mattison and Historian Christine Lyon to produce a Centennial Book for the 1991 Observation of 100 Years as the Village of Falconer. People donated old photos and information to help create this book and used the library as the focal point of collection. The library then used some of these photos as a Historical Preservation Grant which included taking old photos, having Falconer Printing & Design place them in a sepia tone and then having Dennis Houston frame them. The picture are now on display throughout the Community Building. More services were enhance during this period of time; a fax machine, new copy machine and computers were introduced to the library. Bill and Melinda Gates, as part of the Gates Foundation Endowment to public libraries, donated six computers to the Falconer Library. A computer lab area was created and Lou McChesney taught computer classes as part of a Literacy Gebbie Grant for three years. The library adopted new internet policies and provided a handicapped access computer. Sue Benson, former Village Clerk, became Assistant Library Clerk.

The Preschool Story Hour Program was expanded during this same time period. Every Wednesday morning, two classes are held for preschool children, stories are read, crafts created and a snack is provided. Sandra Thies, and at present Laurie Becker became the Story Hour Directors

following a line of dedicated instructors including Frances Saulsgiver, Rosanne Traniello, Chrissi Lyon, Lynn Campbell and Margaret Park.

Band Concerts in Davis Part across the street from the Library, part of Arts Council Grants, were commenced in July 1989 on Thursday evenings from 7-9 p.m. Large crowds still attend.

Change was the Era of the 1990's. Library hours were expanded to 52 hours of opening per week. Mayor Mattison helped secure new windows for the Community Building via a Sheldon Foundation Grant. New carpeting, new paint, and new bookshelves were installed. The new Historian Room on the second level of the building was completed for the general housing of Historical Records with Brenda Cavallaro as Historian, following the tutelage of Nancy Anderson.

By 2000, the library had been declared an Electronic Doorway Library. A Braille Collection was made available to the public. DVD and books on CD were added to the services. Homework Hotline with the coordination of Falconer Central School and Selbourne Tours are part of the library program. Art displays, local organization displays and Falconer Firemen presentations are on the library calendar. Workshops on digital cameras, gardening, genealogy knitting, and living wills are some of the topics covered in monthly programs.

Dick Josephson, Bob Fuller, Bob Pickett, Lewis Fuller, Janice Steele and Brenda Cavallaro all helped copy and preserve history in binders and large yearbooks. Maynard McCullor assisted the library place documentation of local events of the Village on CD format.

The Falconer Library has earned the distinguished honor of being one of the top 100 libraries in the United States since 2000. This honor is based on the Hennen Library Ranking of libraries in the United States based upon population served, services offered and community support. Director, Sue Seamans, won the New York Times Award for Librarian of the Year in 2004. She was one of 27 librarians honored in the United States. The library has an Endowment Fund at the Chautauqua Region Community Foundation to help preserve the library financial future. Donations can be accepted for this Fund at any time or contributions can be made directly to the library. The budget is mainly supported by the Village of Falconer. The Town of Ellicott, gifts and donations help defray library costs. People also place memorials with money or books in memory of loved ones.

The library is open 52 hours a week. Monday through Wednesday the hours are 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., Thursday & Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.. The Trustees at the present time are: Dr. Patricia Fales, Pam Vanstrom, Carol Peterson, Steve Swanson and Jim Jaroszynski. The current staff is Sue Seamans, Library Director; Betty Palmer, Senior Library Clerk; Sue Benson, Assistant Library Clerk; Laurie Becker, Sandra Thies, Polly Cimino and many volunteers who donate their time and help.

The Library is part of the history of Falconer. It has enhanced learning, reading, communication and community rapport since its roots in 1913. Stop to visit the library and take a tour of the history of Falconer via the photo gallery/yearbooks. Take some time to read, write, email or just simply browse.