

HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF THE CLIFFSIDE PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY

1890's

In the late 1890's it is believed that four prominent, female, residents of Cliffside Park (Miss Cowan, Mrs. Jameson, Mrs. McClave and Mrs. Nutt) would meet in their homes to discuss books. They read books from their homeland in Europe as well as American titles.

1890's through 1911

The Edgewater Library Club serviced the residents of Cliffside Park with free reading materials. However, in 1911 the Edgewater Library Club went out of existence.

Sometime after the closure of the Edgewater Library Club, Mrs. Jane E. Coulter, Principal of School #3, began discussions with local officials and pillars in the community to form support for a free public library in Cliffside Park. Monies were set aside to fund the library at \$300 in the first year and \$500 each year thereafter.

June 11, 1913

The Public Library of Cliffside Park opened to visitors in one room, on the second floor of Cliffside Park Public School #3. The next day it began circulating its 1,435 books to the residents. The books were donated by Mrs. McClave's book group, the Edgewater Library Club and by citizens and friends of the Borough. Mr. Robert Morton was the library's director. In 1915 Mr. Morton resigned as librarian and Miss Nancy Bowman (ret. 1925) took his place.

1913 through 1918

It was deemed necessary that the residents needed to formally vote, via [referendum](#), to own and maintain a free public library and become officially incorporated.

November 5, 1918

The library referendum was on the ballot at the November 5, 1918 General Election (the mid-point of Woodrow Wilson's second term in office and a key senate race). The vote passed unanimously.

March 13, 1919

In response to the outcome of the referendum, the Trustees of the Public Library of Cliffside Park passed a resolution dissolving the Public Library of Cliffside Park and forming the Free Public Library of the Borough of Cliffside Park. A seven member Library Board of Trustees was appointed (Mayor John C. Cadien, Mrs. Jane E. Coulter, Mr. Warren N. Drum, Dr. E. C. Hellstern, Mr. Patrick F. Kelly, Mrs. Carrie Maude Koch and Mr. Robert H. Nutt).

March 20, 1919

Mayor John C. Cadien and the Library Board of Trustees recorded the library's ballot results and resolution with the Clerk of the County of Bergen.

May 13, 1919 at 10:43AM – The library’s “official” birthday!

Arthur M. Agnew, Master Chancery of New Jersey, recorded the library’s incorporation into the State of New Jersey’s rolls. Miss Nancy Bowman was the Library Director and remained the director until 1925.

June 16, 1926

The library opened a branch; the Grantwood Branch, in Cliffside Park Public School #4. The main library and branch were run under the direction of Mrs. Maude P. Koch (ret. 1939).

1935

The Friends of the Cliffside Park Public Library was formed. For more information about the Friends of the Cliffside Park Library, go [here](#).

April 1935

Permission from the Cliffside Park Board of Education was granted, to move the growing library to the basement of Cliffside Park Public School #3. In 1939 Miss Clarice Blake became the library’s director (ret. 1960).

1964

Resident, Bessie Woods passed away. Woods resided at 505 Palisade Avenue; she bequeathed her home, and the land it was on, to the library.

1965

The library had a collection of 30,000 items and 35,000 annual circulations and was outgrowing its main library & branch locations. Mayor James F. Madden, the Borough Council and Library Board of Trustees made the decision to build a library on the site of Miss Bessie Woods’ home. To complete the project, the Mayor and Council issued a bond and solicited for donations from residents and organizations. One such solicitation was a fee-based, concert program, held on Sunday, October 3, 1965 at 8:00pm.

1966

Under the direction of architect Robert J. L. Cadien, A.I.A. there was a groundbreaking for the new library.

October 15, 1967

Mayor Gerald Calabrese, the Borough Council and the Library Board of Trustees formally dedicated the newly built library. Mrs. Assunta Nappo Ferrelli (ret. 1975) was the library’s director.

June 26, 1979

There was a formal dedication ceremony for the expansion of the library, which created a larger children’s room and a meeting room for programs. Miss Jane Galgoci (ret. 1996) was the library’s director.

October 1, 1979

Cliffside Park Public Library joined the newly formed Bergen County Cooperative Library System (BCCLS – aka “buckles”) for the purpose of sharing library materials between members to better service the patrons of the individual libraries. *For information about BCCLS, go [here](#).

May 1985

When libraries began to automate, BCCLS, formed a computer consortium to share the costs. Cliffside Park's library was a charter member of the consortium and remains a member today. Cardholding members of the Cliffside Park Public Library can borrow items from any of the other 73 BCCLS member libraries including several that are outside of Bergen County.

1996 – 1999

Mr. Robert Pawson was the library's director. Mrs. Ana Chelariu replaced Pawson and remained director until 2010. In March 2013, Chelariu wrote a children's [book](#).

November 30, 2009

An early morning fire destroyed much of the library. Much of the collection was able to be restored but sadly, the hardest hit room in the building was the Local History Room. From March 2010 through August 2011, the library operated out of a small temporary storefront location at 781 Palisade Avenue. During that time, the location of 505 Palisade Avenue was being renovated and expanded. The architectural firm for the project was Arcari & Iovino, P.C.

September 25, 2011

The library's temporary location was across the street from the site of the world famous Palisades Amusement Park. Architects drew on that history and incorporated the park into the new library's décor as a way to pay tribute to Cliffside's moment in the spotlight. The park was also honored on newly issued library cards. The library was formally dedicated with a grand re-opening celebration. Camille Valentino Steinfeld (res. 2012) was the library's director.

Today

Over 9,000 Cliffside Park residents have a library card. To obtain a card you must have proof of residency. You can apply [online](#) or in person. The library owns over 51,000 physical items and provides access to many e-resources including e-books. The library's annual circulation tops 124,000. In 2013, the library received over one million dollars in municipal appropriation from the Borough. Proudly, the library is funded slightly higher than the [state mandated 1/3 mil](#). Stephanie Bellucci is the library's director. A current list of trustees can be found [here](#). The library operates seven days per week to best meet the needs of the residents. The library offers a wealth of services as well as many programs for children through adults. Please take some time to explore our website or stop by for a visit to learn about all that the library can offer you!

Bibliography:

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**Copies of the above sources, and others, are available in the library's Reference Department*