

In 1901 the early library was open two afternoons and evenings a week – one day at the Park Memorial Baptist Church and the other at the Faith Congregational Church. Books were transferred from one church to the other by a boy on a bicycle!



Library Locations

A Brighter Future for Springfield Today

Central Library

220 State Street
(413) 263-6828

Brightwood Branch

(413) 263-6805
359 Plainfield Street

East Forest Park Branch

(413) 263-6836
122 Island Pond Road

East Springfield Branch

(413) 263-6840
21 Osborne Terrace

Forest Park Branch

(413) 263-6843
380 Belmont Avenue

Indian Orchard Branch

(413) 263-6846
44 Oak Street

Mason Square Branch

(413) 263-6853
765 State Street

Pine Point Branch

(413) 263-6855
204 Boston Road

Sixteen Acres Branch

(413) 263-6858
1187 Parker Street



SPRINGFIELD CITY LIBRARY:

**PART OF SPRINGFIELD'S HISTORY,
PART OF SPRINGFIELD'S FUTURE**

The Forest Park Branch

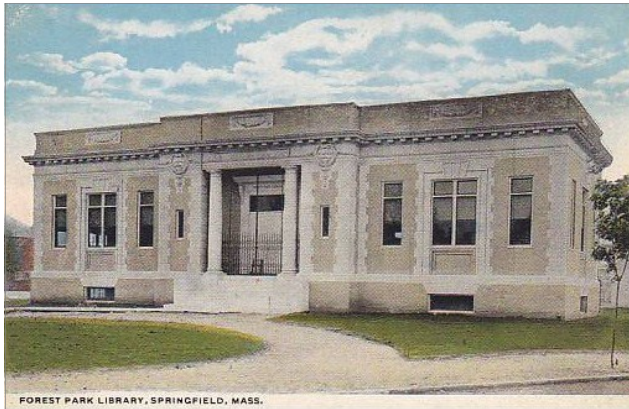
1909–present



380 Belmont Avenue
Springfield MA 01108



"There is not such a cradle of democracy upon the earth as the Free Public Library, this republic of letters, where neither rank, office, nor wealth receives the slightest consideration."
Andrew Carnegie, philanthropist



In the fall of 1909, eager readers could take a ride on Springfield's electric trolley line to the corner of Belmont Avenue and Oakland Street in the "planned suburban residential community" of Forest Park to the new Forest Park Branch Library. Built during the golden age of the American public library, it was, like most Carnegie libraries, a hub for social activities. East coast steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie gave \$260,000 to the city of Springfield Massachusetts to build a central library and three branch libraries, the Forest Park Branch included. Over one hundred years later, a drive to this very intersection leads you to the same beautiful Beaux Arts style library, still a neighborhood center for activities, both educational and social.

In May of 1898, using fifty books borrowed from the Central Library, Rev. Willard E. Waterbury arranged to have a weekly "Book Night" at the Belmont Avenue Baptist Chapel, located at the corner of Belmont and Euclid Avenues. (Two ladies drove their horse and buggy to the Central Library weekly to pick up a new selection of books.) In 1901 the early library was open two afternoons and evenings a week – one day at the Park Memorial Baptist Church and the other at the Faith Congregational Church. Books were transferred from one church to the other by a boy on a bicycle! In 1905 a room was permanently made available at the Baptist Church for use as a library two days a week.

City Librarian Hiller C. Wellman noted in his 1908 Annual Report the generous gift of Mr. Andrew Carnegie for construction of a branch library in Forest Park. Contributions from 581 residents of the district bought land for the new library. Originally about half the size of the current building, it was erected for a cost of \$17,5000. In 1908 the cornerstone was laid and the Forest Park Branch Library officially opened on February 17, 1909. By 1924 it was so overcrowded that neighborhood residents, led by Henry R. Johnson and Col. B.A. Franklin, raised almost \$45,000 for expansion, resulting in additional stack and work areas plus a Children's Room. In 1966 neighborhood resident Miss Frances Plimpton Keyes died at age 99, leaving a significant amount of money to the Springfield Libraries. Miss Keyes loved both books and children so it was decided to use her gift to completely remodel and refurbish the Children's Room at the Forest Park Branch.

In 1971 the Library received new landscaping through the work and generosity of the Forest Park Civic Association. 1976 saw the renovation of the basement, sometimes referred to as the "Rathskeller." Again prominent was the support of the Forest Park Civic Association, as well as city and grant monies. In recent years repairs have been made to the roof and parapet, and in 2008 grant money was awarded to the branch for improvements in the Teen area. Later in that year, the City appropriated \$361,617 for a long needed building accessibility project. The Forest Park Branch renovation was completed, with a new walkway leading to an exterior door on Oakland Street and a lift for visitors, in late 2009. The new lift takes those with mobility issues into every level of the library.

The renovation of the children's area (2012) funded by The Barker Foundation and Troy and Patricia Murray, honors former Springfield Mayor Charles Ryan and his wife, Joan. Inspired by the animals and gardens in nearby Forest Park, the "City of Homes" now houses *Charlie & Joan Ryan's Family Place* at Forest Park Branch Library!

