

"The year 1909 has been a notable one, characterized by substantial growth in all departments. For the first time circulation has passed the half-million mark. But the events which make an epoch in the library's history have been the planning and erection of two of the three branch library buildings given by Andrew Carnegie and the beginning of work on the new building for the main library."

Hiller C. Wellman, librarian



Beautifully restored in the year 2000.



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 Indian Orchard Branch

1909–present

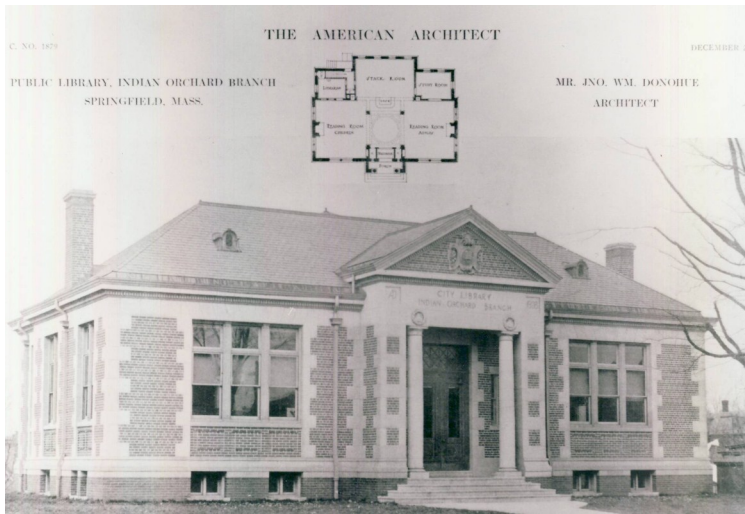


44 Oak Street
Springfield MA 01151



“A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people. It is a never failing spring in the desert.”

Andrew Carnegie, philanthropist



It's March 1909 and William Howard Taft has just succeeded Theodore Roosevelt as the 27th President of the United States, construction begins on the RMS Titanic in Belfast, Ireland, and at the corner of Oak and Worcester Streets in the Indian Orchard section of Springfield, Massachusetts, the doors of a Classical Revival style library, made possible through the generosity of industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie open to neighborhood residents. The attractive red vitrified brick and terra cotta structure by local architect John William Donahue, winner of the library “design competition,” is Springfield’s first fully staffed suburban branch library. The welcoming interior of the one story pitched slate roof building is painted a soft sage green with cream colored frieze and oak trim. A glazed dome in the ceiling made of opalescent glass creates a bright central delivery room and gathering

space. The basement has a “modern” furnace and the property is beautifully landscaped with poplar and hemlock trees.

Prior to this new Carnegie Library building residents of Indian Orchard, many of them workers at the successful linen mills and cordage factories, borrowed books from a brick Victorian storefront building owned by City Library Association member/businessman Henry Kirke Wight. Reflecting the ethnicities of the community, library shelves were stocked with books and periodicals in German, Polish, Russian, French, Italian, Swedish and Armenian. As space was often “filled to overflowing” it became apparent a new library was needed! Using Mr. Donahue’s plan and on land donated by Henry K. Wight and John Heydt, the library building committee (Henry J. Beebe, George Dwight Pratt, and Ralph W. Wight) oversaw construction, which began in June 1908; total cost for the building was anticipated to be \$14,000.

Opening day, March 27, 1909 was marked by an impressive reception with “rooms prettily decorated with ferns, palms, cut flowers and dashes from the wild in pussy willows, pines, etc., and being brilliantly lighted, presented a most cheerful appearance. Fireplaces in either end added to its attractiveness.” The Indian Orchard neighborhood population doubled between 1903 and 1922, with many new residents recent immigrants. Branch staff were involved in helping them become citizens by assisting with citizenship classes for the National Citizen Education Program. Not long after the opening Dexter P. Lillie of D.P. Lillie & Co. gave the library a beautiful reproduction of the old Willard banjo clock, which still has a place of honor above the fireplace.



Listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1999, the Indian Orchard Branch Library received funding from the Massachusetts Historical Commission Preservation Project fund, a municipal bond and capital campaign monies for a \$1.72 renovation and expansion. The library was closed in June 1999 and a grand re-opening was held in October 2000, now boasting 4,200 sq. ft., double the size of the original library. Additions included: a new Children’s Room, multi-media room, new entrance with lift, offices, storage, computers, plus a small parking lot and a new central heating and air conditioning system. Construction workers discovered the beautiful glass dome hidden above a drop-ceiling. The four-color dome was exquisitely restored by Guarducci Stained Glass Studios of Great Barrington, MA. Workers also uncovered the original tiled mosaic floor with a lovely brown circle design.

To this day the Indian Orchard Branch Library continues to play an important role as a community center, educational and social gathering place. Children’s Storytimes, homework help, art and craft classes, musical and instructive programming attract all ages to the library.