

Powers Library – a Moravia and New York State Gem

The motto of the Powers Library Association in Moravia, NY has long been “A Part of the Past, A Part of the Future.” How true that motto is. On this day, 144 years ago, the idea of a public library was legally formalized with the signing of the Powers Library Association's Certificate of Incorporation:

“The undersigned, five citizens of the United States, and of the State of New York, being desirous of associating themselves together for the purpose of founding, continuing and perpetuating a library in the village and town of Moravia, County of Cayuga, and State aforesaid, and in order to accomplish that purpose, to become a body politic and corporate and to be entitled to the rights and benefits provided by law, and particularly to those provided by chapter 343, of the Laws of 1875, do make, sign and acknowledge this written certificate in triplicate. The name or title by which such society shall be known in law shall be “The Powers Library Association”. The business and object of the society shall be the founding, continuing and perpetuating a library, the number of trustees to manage the same shall be five, the names of the trustees of the association for the first year of its existence shall be Leander Fitts, S. Edwin Day, Theodore C. Jewett, William E. Keeler and Manville E. Kenyon, and the library shall be located in the village and town of Moravia, County of Cayuga, and State of New York, aforesaid.

In Witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands this twenty ninth day of January, in the year one thousand eight hundred and eighty.

Leander Fitts
S. Edwin Day
Theodore C. Jewett
W^m E. Keeler
Manville E. Kenyon

(Notary Seal)

State of New York, County of Cayuga

On this twenty ninth day of January, A.D. 1880, before me the subscriber personally appeared Leander Fitts, S. Edwin Day, Theodore C. Jewett, William E. Keeler, and Manville E. Kenyon, to me known to be the same persons described in and who executed the foregoing instrument, and severally acknowledged that they executed the same.

J.A. Thomas,
Notary Public, Cayuga County

I approve & consent to the within certificate. Let it be filed.

Signed,

Charles C. Dwight,
Justice of the Supreme Court”

[Filed in the Cayuga County Clerk's office, January 30, 1880, and in the office of the Secretary of State, January 31, 1880.]

Dr. Cyrus W. Powers, the library's namesake, didn't live to see his dream completed in brick and mortar, but he probably could not have conceived in his wildest dreams that his library would come to be the oldest continually occupied free association library building in New York State. Now,

the entrance on the side of the library welcomes patrons into the part of the library that is no longer called the addition by regulars, as it was completed in 2003. Accessibility was greatly improved – removing the obstacle of the stone steps at the front entrance, yet still providing access to the stacks and meeting area upstairs via an elevator if needed.

In 1880, many things we take for granted today were not available to the average household. Most homes had no books at all, except perhaps a Bible, and electric lights were not yet common. Libraries continue to provide services not available to all households: desktop computers with Internet access are available for patron use, or they can use the library's wireless Internet connection with their own devices. In addition to books and movies, all sorts of information are available through the databases at the fingertips of the holder of a library card. The library is not just a book lending facility, and has never really been *only* that, it's a place for local groups to meet, a community hub for idea exchange and socialization, an area enabling enhancement to education and study, and a play space for young families.

In our rapidly changing world, it's hard to imagine an idea not becoming obsolete in less than a decade, much less lasting 140 years. The birth of this fine institution must be celebrated! How thankful we should be to Dr. Powers for that original idea, and to all of the men and women who worked, not only to build this treasure, but to maintain and preserve it for us, and for the future. As the engraving over the front door says, "Esto perpetua!" (Let it be forever!)

Author: Bonnie Thomas, Powers Library Trustee