

THE RED FRONT PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE FULL HISTORY

In 1960, the Business and Professional Women's Club (BPW) saw a need for a library. They conducted a drive for new and used books and asked Virginia Adams, a BPW member, to provide this small collection to the public at her insurance company office on Center Street during business hours.

In the early 1970s, the library collection moved to City Hall on the West side of the Sarcoxie square. Bessie Burks became the librarian and served the public two hours a week on Saturday afternoons.

In the summer of 1976, The Missouri Green Thumb Program for older workers hired Bessie Burks for 10 weeks to reorganize the library and process books. At this time the library was moved to a new location on 9th Street where it shared room in the ambulance building.

Jeannine Wormington became a volunteer in this project. At the end of the summer, the Sarcoxie City Council hired Bessie and Jeannine to keep the library open fourteen hours a week. When Bessie Burks passed away in 1981, Jeannine Wormington became the librarian. She obtained her librarian's degree from Pittsburg State.

Use of the library continued to grow so much that in 1983 the Friends of the Library was established to help support the public library.

In 1984, an enlarged library was moved to the former Fire Department building on the West side of the square through a generous donation in the will of John Swanson. During this time, the Summer Reading Program began with Story Hour for the younger children.

In 1993, through private donations and money from the Stebbins Memorial Fund, volunteers remodeled, moved, and set-up the library in its current location in the old "Red Front Building" on the South side of the square.

Television crews came to video this huge community effort as a chain of citizens was strung across the square moving books hand-to-hand to our current address. This location is the largest the Sarcoxie Public Library has ever enjoyed with 1600 square feet.

In May 2001, a permanent museum-quality exhibit for V.E. Lynch was dedicated. Mr. Lynch was a famous outdoorsman and author who is buried in Sarcoxie. Today visitors can still view his antique typewriter and mementos from a by-gone era.

In early 2020, a global pandemic caused libraries nationally to shut down and restrict public use of library services. The City's approach allowed limited access to these services while following guidance from the health experts. By 2021, the library was able to return to normal but a growing decrease in patronage caused for question.

In the wake of COVID-19, the City of Sarcoxie saw an opportunity to redevelop and renovate the Red Front building into a multi-use building opening the door to new patrons and groups of people who would otherwise not enter the library.

In January 2022, the library was shut down and a small collection was moved to the City Hall Conference Room as a temporary library location. During this time, patrons were able to check out books and converse with the library staff with anticipation for the reopening.

The decision to create a "living experience" environment inspired the outside appearance that can be seen in the design of the Red Front interior. The creation of a coffee shop was also a major component to this project as both a way to respond to the public's request for this service as well as make the library experience more modernized and comfortable.