

Florida Library History Project

Clay County Public Library System

The first library in Clay County open to the public was a small collection maintained by the Village Improvement Association at its club house in Green Cove Springs. Other small lending libraries were established and maintained by interested organizations in municipal areas of the County.

In 1961 representatives of many women's organizations throughout the County began an active movement to establish a County Library System that would serve the needs of all Clay County citizens.

Due to the tireless effort of these and other interested citizens, the Clay County Board of County Commissioners agreed to set aside funds in 1961 to match grant funds available from the Federal Government and create the Clay County Public Library.

The first library in the new system opened its doors at a storefront location in Green Cove Springs on November 25, 1961. The first bookmobile was purchased in 1962, and outreach services to outlying areas of the County began in March 1962.

New bookmobile was acquired in 1994, the fourth vehicle to be purchased by Lee county for the library.

After the first library was established in Green Cove Springs, the towns of Keystone Heights and Orange Park agreed to provide space for small libraries.

The Keystone Heights Library opened in January 1962 in the Women's Club building. Two months later the Orange Park Library opened its doors to the public.

The Keystone Heights Library was destroyed by fire on February 24, 1962. A cooperative effort between the Friends of the Library and the City of Keystone Heights relocated the Library to a small building in Theme Park in 1964.

Population growth in the late 1960's mandated that new space be provided for the Library system.

Funds were made available in 1969 to design and build a new Headquarters Library in Green Cove Springs. The facility was completed and opened its doors to the public in 1970.

The Town of Orange Park provided space in its new complex in 1969 for the Orange Park Library. In 1976 the Orange Park Library moved from its Town Hall location to its current site on Plainfield Avenue.

In the late 1970's County population growth created a need for another branch library to serve patrons in the Middleburg/Clay-Hill area. The first library was a storefront operation on Main Street. Land for a permanent library was donated to the County by the Devrin Company on CR 218. A combination of grant funds and local contributions resulted in the construction of the current 6,000 sq. ft. facility that opened its doors to the public in September 1986.

The northern end of Clay County (Greater Orange Park) experienced an extraordinary population influx during the 1980s. In 1988 formal planning began for constructing a library facility that would serve the needs of citizens in this area. In November 1992 a new 28,000 sq. ft. facility was opened to the public.

In 1997 the Library installed a new SIRSI automation system that should serve the citizens of Clay County well into the 21st century. County-wide digital Internet access will become available at all library facilities early in 1998.