

FRIENDS

OF ROELIFF JANSEN COMMUNITY LIBRARY



The Hillsdale Library

— The Early Years —

Remember 1977? That's the year Elvis died, the Bee Gees sang, Seattle Slew took the Triple Crown, Jimmy Carter was President -- and in Hillsdale, the Friends stepped forward with \$800 to make up the shortfall in the library's \$3,500 annual budget. That library of the mid-70's was open only a few hours a week. It was chronically short of money, resources and -- friends. Enter a small group of local citizens who offered a very welcome helping hand, with a first meeting on April 29, 1976.

Within a few months they'd held a book & bake sale, and within a year, 211 members had forked over \$2 in dues. A roster of eager volunteers was recruited to help the young librarian -- Carol Briggs.

Friends were painting the walls, shelving books and serving rum punch at their first major fund-raiser, an "at home tea" that took in \$460.

The long list of early donations makes one wonder how the library survived before the Friends -- a rubber stamp, door lock, subject guide, bulletin board, typewriter, telephone, vacuum, filing cabinet, book ends, step stools, stationery and so on. They doled out for a sign in front of the library, fixing the concrete steps, glazing the windows, repairing the gutters and adding to the library's collection. By 1985 the Friends were donating six new books a month.

Early on, the group established another tradition -- programs at the library. In 1979 they sponsored the first summer reading program for children. The first decade of the Friends was overseen by five presidents: John Hines, Susan Malevsky-Malevich, Helen Glynn, Elinor Truman and Johnnie Huebner.

A key element of the Friends mission was the herculean task of helping the Trustees to transform the aging Hillsdale Library and its dark, dank basement into a useful, welcoming environment for book lovers -- a battle bravely waged for many years. You'll see how it all turns out in our next episode!



Carol Briggs, Curt Herrington (Trustee), John Hines and Ann Zdziarski at the first meeting of the Friends

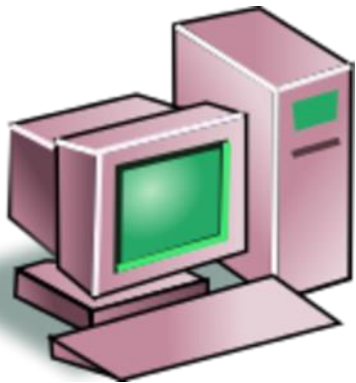
The Middle Years—1986-2005

Thirty years ago, the Friends had already put in a decade of strong support for the Hillsdale Library. In 1986, they celebrated the opening of a new community room in the basement and donated \$1,000 to the trustee's fund. Twenty-two volunteers were helping at the desk and funds were provided for a new well, brickwork, volunteer handbook, summer reading program, etc. Business as usual for this active group.

But there were many "firsts" still to come. 1987 brought the first June Strawberry Festival, a favorite fundraising event for 20 years. One year later the first volunteer training program was instituted. Then came Sally Laing's first major book sale (1989), with prices very similar to what we charge at our Friends Book Shop in 2016! The first books for troops went out to Desert Storm soldiers. In 1993, the first December fundraiser (called the Cookie and Bookie sale back then) took place and 23 years later we're still being delighted by the yummy cookies and savory soups and holiday books. Museum passes, young adult books, audio books, restoration of old books were among the other Friends-supported firsts during these years.



The biggest first was the arrival of a computer at the library. The year was 1992, and the Friends anted up almost \$5,000 for a computer (8 MB of RAM!) and printer, software and tutoring for librarian Carol Briggs. At the time, who knew this would be the future? And how soon the tech needs would change and grow? Over the next 12 years, the Friends would invest almost \$30,000 in computer equipment and manage to shoehorn a tiny computer lab into the cramped quarters of the old library. Computers came and went, printers evolved, software exploded and the Friends struggled to help the library keep up with the times.



But the little library just wasn't ready for the 21st century. Patrons were asking for more computers, more books, more of everything from their libraries. The Hillsdale Library was small, aging, inconvenient, did not serve the larger Roe Jan community. What to do? The Friends continued their fundraising and volunteer activities as usual, but changes were in the air.

The first whispers about a "new" library were heard in 2001. Was it possible, was it practical, was it necessary? As the library's most dedicated supporters, the Friends watched and wondered about what would be coming down the pike... To be continued in our next installment.

Years 2006 –2016

Happy 40th Anniversary!

Starting in 2007, it was no longer business as usual for the Friends. The group took on two huge challenges. First up was the dream of a much bigger, much better library to serve the entire Roe Jan community – a massive endeavor. What could this little group of dedicated volunteers do to help? Become the single most significant donor to the funding campaign for the library, that's what.

The Friends rolled up their sleeves and book by book, cookie by cookie, t-shirt by t-shirt, they accumulated their \$50,000 pledge to the capital campaign. An additional \$29,000 has been presented to the Trustees in the five years since the library opened.



Library Ribbon Cutting—2010

Challenge number two was to find a place for the Friends within the new library. Over 35 years, the group had become experts in making do -- sheds and closets for storage, laborious setups and take-downs for every sale. They decided to seize the opportunity to create a permanent home for Friends fundraising activities, no small task. (

While all this was going on, some things changed – coordination of programs was handed over to library committees. Some things stayed the same -- the

Friends continued to find money for the key items falling outside the library's budget, such as the comfy loveseat in the children's room, blinds for the Community Room, rug and window cleaning services, a host of museum passes, a defibrillator in the lobby, furnishing the teen area... the list goes on.

Small volunteer organizations rarely thrive for 40 years. Active members come and go, communities change. It takes a very special group to remain vital and relevant for four decades. The Friends have had a unique bond with the library since 1976, and if they had a motto, it might be: "We are small but we are mighty." How happy for the residents of Ancram, Copake and Hillsdale that they are!

