

https://www.dcourier.com/features/prescott-public-library-corner-celebrating-our-50th-anniversary-we-outgrow-our-space/article_c4b8eedf-84a6-47c8-ab91-1a22b2bf4a80.html

Prescott Public Library Corner: Celebrating our 50th anniversary: We outgrow our space

By PAULA FORTIER, Special to the Courier
May 24, 2025



Prescott Public Library around 1975. (Paula Fortier/Courtesy)

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

As promised, guest author Kristen Kauffman will share how Prescott Public Library came to move from the Carnegie building to our current location on the corner of Goodwin and Marina streets 50 years ago.

The culmination of our 50th Anniversary comes this Friday, May 30, from 5 to 8 p.m., with our Fest in the West celebration. Join us and participate in live music and performances, food vendors, prize drawings for our Passport program, a Touch the Truck area, youth activities on the back lawn from 5 to 7 p.m. and a resource fair. There will also be a large book sale hosted by our amazing sponsor, the Friends of the Prescott Public Library. I also invite you to visit the library Viewerie until the end of May to see the great exhibition of our history.

Now, over to Kristen:

Last month, we learned that a wagon of books started our history, 300 volumes that came over on a covered wagon, looking for a building which would become our library. Under the cultivation of The Monday Club and with the generous gift of benefactor Andrew Carnegie, the Carnegie Library on Gurley Street opened its doors in 1903.

It was considered one of the jewels of downtown Prescott, with its stained-glass window and with the volumes and newspapers generously given to the stacks. The generosity of the citizens of Prescott only grew.

By 1967, some big changes were happening. Library Director Allen Rothlisberg helped start The Friends of the Library, an organization which raises money to benefit library services, as well as the launch of the Large Print section. He knew more changes were coming. The collection at the Carnegie Library had outgrown the capacity for the building. The new library building was not only going to be facilitating a growing collection for the Prescott Public Library but would start serving Yavapai County as whole.

In 1968, the Yavapai County Library System was organized, using the Prescott Public Library as the main hub for its bookmobile service and driving books out all over the county. To make room for such a service, City Hall's basement had to be repurposed to help the library with technical services, mending and the storage of periodicals.

The Prescott City Council started discussing where the new library would be and, around 1970, there were two main location ideas. One possibility was to renovate the Junior High School building on the grounds of the present-day Yavapai County Sheriff's Office or to raze Dorothy Hooker's house on the corner of Goodwin and Marina. While both projects could cost over a million dollars, the Goodwin and Marina project would be a more economic project.

Therefore, the Groundbreaking Ceremony was elected for Monday, March 11, 1970. Come take a look in our Viewerie for the photo of three mayors breaking ground. As featured in the paper, "Howard Jorgenson's administration bought the land; Dr. Hicks' council began the planning and under Mayor Lytle the funding was raised."

One interesting fundraiser for the library was something called The Library Celebrity Series. Celebrities like Olivia De Havilland (of Gone with the Wind fame) came to the Elks Theater to talk about her career and answered questions from the audience. Ticket sales for events like these helped fund the furniture inside the library.

The ribbon-cutting for the Prescott Public Library was Sunday, May 18, 1975, and that same year, the Carnegie Library was added to the National Register of Historical Places. Since that time, Prescott Public Library has served the community with a number of interesting programs for children and adults. The library has hosted May Pole events, Halloween costume contests, a Comic-Con and local author fairs and concerts. Even to this day the Library of Things checks out not just books but telescopes and pickleball kits. For a time in the 1980's, kids could check out guinea pigs.

The building that was erected in 1975 is not the same building that stands today, as there have been several improvement projects over the years. Most notably was in 2006 when the square footage of the library was doubled. Over these last fifty years, we keep improving the library to make it better and find better ways to serve our patrons. Thank you for showing up these last fifty years and making it the great library that it is today.

Contact Paula Fortier, Assistant director, at paula.fortier@prescott-az.gov with your questions or suggestions for Prescott Public Library.