



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FRIENDS OF THE SANTA FE PUBLIC LIBRARY

How the Santa Fe Public Library Began

In July 1892, eight women formed the Santa Fe Woman's Board of Trade (WBT), the first Board of Trade in the U.S. that was formed with women members. They began Santa Fe's history of community support for the public library. Their goals were to renovate the plaza, to take care of the "indigents," to clean up the Fairview Cemetery (the paupers' cemetery), and to start a public library. WBT members worked diligently and creatively, and eventually achieved each goal, but the most demanding and longest-held commitment was the establishment and development of a public library.

The WBT opened the first public library in Santa Fe on January 15, 1896, in four rooms of a dilapidated army barracks (which later became the New Mexico Museum of Fine Arts). By January 1907, an entire building — the "Woman's Board of Trade Library" — was constructed and formally opened, at a cost of \$8,901.25. Funds were raised mostly with cake sales, Fiesta parties, charity balls, Valentine dances, "Leap Year Frolics," and vaudeville shows, plus \$1,000 from the Territorial Legislature.

For many years, the WBT nurtured the development of Santa Fe public library services, expanding to provide children's programs, medical services, books and magazines for wounded World War I soldiers, books for prisoners in the city jail, and an extension program that served 16 branch libraries in rural schools and a book delivery program to 23 other schools in the city.

The Santa Fe Woman's Club and Library Association

In 1932, the WBT merged with the Santa Fe Woman's Club and became the Santa Fe Woman's Club and Library Association. For the next 42 years, this organization guided and funded the development of public library services in Santa Fe, fostering branches at the Agua Fria Senior Citizens' Center, the Alto Street Branch Library (materials and services provided in Spanish), the County Juvenile Detention Home and the city jail, and providing bookmobile services to area nursing homes. In 1964, the City of Santa Fe bought the Main Library building and began municipal ownership of the Santa Fe Public Library, which continues to this day.

The Friends of the Santa Fe Public Library

The Friends of the Santa Fe Public Library was initiated in April of 1974 with an open meeting of about 30 Santa Fe residents, including members of the Santa Fe Woman's Club and Library Association. C. James Cook, chairman pro tem, explained that "the functions of the Friends of the Library would include administering bequests, gifts, and donations received by the library, promoting interest in the construction of a

new main library, arranging displays of stamps, coins, artwork and other collections in the library lobby, and organizing volunteers help. (*Santa Fe New Mexican*, April 18, 1974) The Friends of the Santa Fe Public Library was incorporated as an independent non-profit organization on June 17, 1974, “To maintain an association of persons interested in books and libraries, especially the Santa Fe Public Library; to stimulate public interest in the Santa Fe Public Library and its services and facilities; to make gifts of books and other library materials, equipment and funds to the Santa Fe Public Library, and to encourage others to do likewise.” (Articles of Incorporation, June 17, 1974)

Our mission statement: The Friends of the Santa Fe Public Library is an independent non-profit organization whose mission is to support the public library by providing funding, advocacy, programming, services, and materials that enrich the diverse community it serves.

The Santa Fe Public Library is now a system composed of three libraries within the city. The libraries receive financial support from the Friends to purchase up-to-date materials in both traditional and new formats, equipment; services; programs for children, teens, and adults, and author presentations and lectures. Friends volunteers staff the bookstores at Main and Southside, organize book sales, and help with Library events and projects. Through membership dues, contributions, and proceeds from book sales, the Friends have raised over \$1,000,000 for the Santa Fe Public Library since 1974. We welcome new members, volunteers, contributions and ideas.

Information about current Friends activities can be found on our website:
<http://www.SantaFeLibraryFriends.org>

For a more about the development of both the Santa Fe Public Library and the Friends of the Santa Fe Public Library, consult the following resources:

1. Alana MacGrattan. “A History of the Santa Fe Public Library” (Video DVD). 2010.
2. “History of the Santa Fe Public Library” 1990.

Brief history updated 2014.

*The Friends of the Santa Fe Public Library is a nonprofit organization with 501(c) (3) status.
All contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.*