

How It All Began . . . A Short Look at SFPL History

It seems San Franciscans have always felt the necessity for a free, public library system in the City.

In 1877, a group of concerned San Franciscans met at Dashaway Hall to discuss the possibility of opening a free public library in the City. State Senator George H. Rogers was then working on a bill later to become the Rogers Act of 1878 which authorized a public library system in California.

Rogers was present at the 1877 San Francisco meeting as was fiery Workingman's Party leader Dennis E. Kearny.

"One educated man is worth a whole Committee of Safety," he said as reported in the Daily Evening Bulletin. "I am a working man but I will give my five dollars towards our free library."

Publisher Marcus D. Boruck said the library should be open on Sundays "just as the churches are," and he donated 50 books from his own collection towards the new library.

The first library was opened at Bush Street between Kearny and Dupont, which is Grant Street today. The building was next door to the California Theatre, and some citizens feared that fire, a very common outbreak in theatres of those days, would shortly destroy the new library.

But with 6,000 books and a budget of \$24,000, the Library was opened in 1878. (Today the Library's budget is more than six million dollars.)

The Library quickly doubled, then tripled its usage, but it was not until 1881 that books were actually loaned out for home use. Prior to that time, the Library was primarily a reading room.

Such distinguished San Franciscans as Henry George, author of *Progress and Poverty* and A. S. Hallidie, inventor

of the cable car, were on the Board of Trustees. But the early leaders made it clear that the library was for rich and poor, the famous and infamous alike.

Despite minor setbacks, such as the smallpox epidemic of 1880 which forced the library to close for two months, the library grew and the first branch was opened in 1888 at Mission and 22nd Streets. In 1889 the Library moved into new and larger quarters in the City Hall building, then at the present site of today's Main Library.

In 1906 the City Hall along with the Library and the majority of its volumes were destroyed in the earthquake.

The library slowly began to recover from the disaster and was temporarily housed at Van Ness and Franklin, near the old Commerce High School site.

Finally in 1917 after two years of construction, the Main Library was completed at its present location where the old City Hall formerly stood. The total cost was \$1,152,000. (Oh for the good old days—the cost of construction of a new library today has been estimated at \$48.8 million, minimum!)

Part of the money for construction of the new Main Library came from the Carnegie Foundation which also stipulated that half of its donation be used to build branch libraries. The Richmond, Mission, Noe Valley, Golden Gate, Sunset, North Beach and Presidio branches were all built in part with Carnegie money.

The library began to grow again as it had in its earlier years. The Bookmobile was added in 1946. The library acquired film equipment in 1949 and a microfilm reader. By 1952, a full adult film program was in operation.

Today, the Library boasts 26 branches, a Business Branch and the 58-year-old Main Library.

Support Your Public Library—Be A Friend

Donations are tax-deductible. Fill in the coupon below and mail with your check to: Friends of the San Francisco Public Library, Civic Center, San Francisco, 94102. You can call the Friends at 558-3770.

☐ Sponsor \$100

☐ Contributing \$50, \$25, \$15

☐ Supporting \$5

☐ Students, Seniors \$3

☐ Business Sponsor \$100

☐ Business Member \$25

☐ School Organization \$15

☐ Business Patron \$500

☐ Business Benefactor \$1000

As a member, you will receive your copy of FREE each month by mail. There are many ways you can become a Friend.

Name.....

Street.....

City..... Zip.....

3:30 am, and 4:00 pm, Golden Gate Valley Branch

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS. Pre-school filmstrip program
10:30 am, Park Branch
For ages 6 and up
4:00 pm, Park Branch

THURSDAY, DECEMBER

HOLIDAY MAGIC. Pre-school film program
2:30 pm, and 3:30 pm, North Beach Branch

REAL MEANING OF CHRISTMAS.
For Ages 6 and up
4:15 pm, North Beach Branch

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER

HOLIDAY TIME. Pre-school filmstrip program
10:15 am, Mission Branch
For ages 6 and up
4:00 pm, Mission Branch

THURSDAY, DECEMBER

HOLIDAY FUN. Pre-school film program
10:00 am, Excelsior Branch
NUTCRACKER, For ages 6 and up
4:00 pm, Excelsior Branch

HOLIDAY FILMS. Pre-school film program
10:30 am, and 1:30 pm, Western Addition Branch
For ages 6 and up
4:00 pm, Western Addition Branch

FRIDAY, DECEMBER

TRIP TRAP TROUPE. Children's Librarians will present a puppet show "The Legend of Pecos Bill," "How the Bear Lost His Tail" and "Sweet Betsy From Pike"
3:00 pm, and 4:00 pm, West Portal Branch

TUESDAY, DECEMBER

HOLIDAY TIME. Pre-school film program
10:30 am, Sunset Branch
BALLET. For ages 6 and up
4:00 pm, Sunset Branch
NUTCRACKER, Film
7:00 pm, Noe Valley Branch

Dial these numbers for:

- Children's Story Hours and special children's programs
- Bookmobile and Whole World stops
- Find out if the book you want is at your local branch
- A different children's story every week on Dial-A-Story

Main Library	558-3191
Larkin & McAllister, Civic Center	
Business Branch	558-3946
530 Kearny Street	
Anza Branch	752-1960
550 - 37th Street	
Bernal Branch	285-1744
500 Courtland Avenue	
Chinatown Branch	989-6770
1135 Powell Street	
Eureka Branch	626-1132
3555 - 16th Street	
Excelsior Branch	536-4075
4400 Mission Street	
Glen Park Branch	586-4144
2842 Diamond Street	
Golden Gate Valley Branch	346-9273
1801 Green Street	
Ingleside Branch	586-4156
387 Ashton Avenue	
Marina Branch	346-9336
Chestnut near Webster Street	
Merced Branch	586-4246
155 Winston Drive	
Mission Branch	824-2810
3359 - 24th Street	
Noe Valley Branch	285-2788
451 Jersey Street	
North Beach Branch	391-9473
2000 Mason Street	
Ocean View Branch	586-4193
111 Broad Street	
Ortega Branch	681-1848
3223 Ortega Street	
Park Branch	752-4620
1833 Page Street	
Parkside Branch	566-4647
1200 Taraval Street	
Portola Branch	468-2232
2434 San Bruno Avenue	
Potrero Branch	285-3022
1616 20th Street	
Presidio Branch	346-9422
3150 Sacramento Street	
Richmond Branch	752-1240
351 Ninth Avenue	
Sunset Branch	566-4552
1305 - 18th Avenue	
Visitation Valley Branch	239-5270
45 Leland Avenue	
Waden Branch	468-1323
5075 Third Street	
West Portal Branch	566-4584
190 Lenox Way	
Western Addition Branch	346-9531
1550 Scott Street	
Whole World & Bookmobile	558-3985
DIAL-A-STORY	626-6516
continues 24 hours a day with a different children's story each week	

21

22

10

11

12

16

23

30

