

Summer 2017 Mystery Photo



This home is at 482 Elizabeth Street. The photo was taken by B.J. Gilbert in 1973. What was its public function? It served as the Burlington Public Library from 1952 until 1970.

The following information is taken from the BHS digital collection, available through the Burlington Public Library website: www.bpl.on.ca/resources/localhistory

Built ca 1873 for James and Christina Laing and their family. In 1902 it was purchased by Dr Austin Hager Speers. In 1952, the property was purchased by the City from his estate and renovated to become the new location of the Burlington Public Library.

Today (2017) the building still stands and is home to a spa. In Vernon's directory it is referenced as the "Speers Building".

(see next page for current photo)



The following article is from the Nora Gilbert collection, on file in the BHS Archives. Nora Gilbert was a regular contributor to the Hamilton Spectator and the Burlington Gazette.

The Public Library

Burlington's Public Library has quite a history of its own and in its development is seen the growth of intellectuality and searching for knowledge on the part of the citizens who were its subscribers.

It began with a meeting of the public school trustees of school section No. 1, Nelson held in the school house on Brant St. in January, 1872 at which were present trustees William Bunton, Benjamin Eager, and William Kerns, when the question of establishing a library for the use of the school was discussed and it was decided to purchase books from the Board of Education in Toronto. Subsequently \$56. Was spent in books which were placed in the school. In 1873, a further \$25 was used for more books.

The next grant was made in 1884 when an entertainment given by the teachers and scholars of the school netted \$50. Which was doubled by a grant from the trustees. Dr. William Richardson, O.T. Springer and James Allen were appointed a committee to

expend \$100. for books and these gentlemen were afterward appointed a Library Committee. W. H. Finnemore was the first chairman of the Library Board.

Somewhere in the progress of time the Mechanics Institute figured in the beginnings of the public library, which is now housed in a building provided for the town under the terms of the will of the late John Waldie, Reeve of Burlington upon the change of the name of the town.



The first Burlington public library building was located on Brant Street

Photos from BHS Archives.

J.Downey, July 2017