

# **Potsdam Public Library Patron Register Records**

Potsdam Public Museum  
2 Park St. Potsdam, N.Y.

**Location**

NB R. 8/ S. 4

**Call. No.**

2021.037

**Creator**

Potsdam Public Library

**Date Range**

1914-1996[bulk dates: 1960-1970]

**Historical Note**

The Potsdam Public Library came to its current form in a series of installments. This first phase helped establish the foundation for the founding of the public library reading room toward the end of the century. During the early years of the Town of Potsdam, the first library association, the Washington Benevolent Society, incorporated in 1814. This association consisted of many of the early settlers and founding members of the town, such as Benjamin Raymond, Sewel Raymond, Liberty Knowles, Azel Lyman, Jacob Redington, Pierce Shepard, and Dr. Robert McChesney, who all acted as Trustees. Another association formed in 1828 called the Union Library Association, with many other early settlers of the town acting as Trustees. These two associations helped illuminate a desire from the community for a library establishment. So, with the funds available, the Union Library Association was able to purchase a library building for public use which contained hundreds of volumes. This establishment lasted until decades later when, in 1887, it was voted to establish a free public library called the Potsdam Reading Room and Library that was incorporated in 1895-1896 as the Potsdam Public Library and Reading Room. The library was in the Finnimore House at the corner of Market Street and Depot Street.

The second installment phase came in 1933 with the dissolution of the First Universalist Church Organization in Potsdam and the donation of the church property to the village, prompting the building of a new civic center next door and the renovation of the church building to be used as a new library. Much thought went into the process of converting the building from a church to a library. Expert help was brought in from New York City to supervise the job. Major structural changes during the conversion of the building into a library included knocking off the steeple of the church and moving the entrance of the church from the front of the building to the side of the building. The library was largely modeled after the library in Mamaroneck, N.Y. Later, a record-lending library was added in 1943, and the library joined the North Country Library System, an interlibrary cooperation between St. Lawrence, Jefferson, and Lewis Counties, in 1961. As part of this cooperation, village libraries honored other village library cards with no charge for service.

The last installment phase came with the decision to renovate the auditorium of the civic center for use by the library in 1976. Construction began in June of that year, concluding by the end of the year in time for a ribbon-cutting ceremony in December 1976. The library existed in this form until 2020-2021, when major renovations occurred again.

### **Scope and Content**

The Potsdam Public Library Patron Register Records consist of bound volumes documenting names, addresses, and other information of library patrons of the Potsdam Public Library in Potsdam, New York during a portion of the 20th century. It should be noted that large gaps in the chronology are present in the records. The years 1922-25, 1932-1959, and 1971-1986 are not represented in the collection. Nevertheless, the existing range of years represented in the records of the collection could be valuable for directory purposes among other uses.

### **Size**

2 standing letter boxes (9 books), 0.854 linear feet

### **Language**

English

### **Conditions governing reproduction and use**

For copies of materials, users must pay \$0.25 per page.

For use of material for publishing purposes, users must credit Potsdam Public Museum.

### **Access restrictions**

This collection is open for research

### **Rights Statement for Archival Description**

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### **Organization and Arrangement**

Registers are arranged chronologically in bound volumes

#### Series 1:

Box 1- 1914-1970

#### Series 2:

Box 2- 1987-1996

### **Processing Information**

The collection was processed by Collections Manager, Mary Gilbert, and Archives Manager, Hans Kuno, in September 2021. A finding aid for the collection was created in October 2021 by Hans Kuno. The collection has been processed to the series level.

### **Related Material**

Potsdam Public Museum Record Group II.A.2 Folder #1—contains a typed history of the Potsdam Public Library

**Provenance**

Collection was gifted to the Potsdam Public Museum by the Potsdam Public Library in September of 2021.