

The History of the Kewanee Public Library
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The Kewanee Public Library is located on the corner of Tremont and First Streets. During its history the library has inhabited three different locations and has had one name change. The Kewanee Public Library has gone through many changes during its history.

In 1872, the state library law was enacted, which allowed townships to vote for tax supports for public libraries. In 1874, two years after the enactment of the state library law, a township election was held. At this election a one mill property tax of Kewanee Township was voted upon. This property tax allowed the township to establish funds to found a library.

During the following year, 1875, the Kewanee Library Association was formed. Fourteen members signed the association's constitution, nine of which were recorded. These members are: W.H. Russell, president; W.T. Cross, vice-president; James K. Blish, secretary; R.P. Parrish, treasurer; Adolph Maul and C.K. Ladd who eventually became the first Board of Directors; and H.T. Lay, A.F. Bigelow and B.A. Gurney. Between the signing of the constitution and the opening of the library, funds were collected. Through the finance committee and a course of lectures funds were raised. The money received during this time permitted the purchase of books.

After the association raised enough money and purchased books they were ready for the opening of the library. On February 1, 1875 the Kewanee Library Association had its grand opening. The library was located in the northwest room of the newly built town hall. At its dedication it was named "Library Hall." The first librarian was John G. Blish and the library contained 262 books. The library was open to the township during evenings and Sunday afternoons.

In April of 1875 the first big change to the library association was made. It was at this time that it was renamed the Kewanee Public Library. The public library was launched under the Illinois Library Law and the same directors from the association became the directors of the new public library. The library was one of the first to be founded under the Illinois Library Law. It was among libraries located in Chicago, Rockford, Peoria, Evanston, Galesburg and Moline. All of the books and funds were transferred over to the Kewanee Public Library. The library remained in the town hall even though the name change was made.

It was not until 1880 that the library packed up the books and relocated. It moved onto the second floor of the Odd Fellows Building on the northwest corner of First and Tremont Streets. It was also during this year that another one mill tax was added to give the library the maximum tax rate for maintenance.

