

THE LIBRARY AND THE COMMUNITY: AN OVERVIEW

Middletown is a community of 17,075 residents, located on historic Aquidneck Island. It was incorporated in 1743, and possesses a rich cultural heritage, an outstanding quality of life, and access to pristine natural resources. The library is governed by a seven member volunteer Board of Trustees appointed for a three year term by the Middletown Town Council. It receives an annual operating budget from the Town of Middletown, annual Rhode Island Grant in Aid, as well as generous support from the Friends of the Middletown Public Library, local businesses, and the Rhode Island Foundation. There are fifteen employees, of which five work full time. As of July 1, 2020, there are 9,170 registered library card holders.

MIDDLETOWN PUBLIC LIBRARY – READING WITH YOU SINCE 1848

The library began as the Miantonomi Circulating Library in 1848. It consisted of a small collection of books that were kept in a locked bookcase at the Oliphant School. Borrowers paid \$1.00 per share annually. At the same time, another group of residents formed the Middletown Free Library. In 1875, the two libraries combined and the collection was moved into a small building on the Chase Farm. In 1903, the family of Joseph Bailey donated funds to erect a library building in his memory at the corner of West Main Road and Oliphant Lane. The library was open on Tuesdays from 2pm-4pm. It was heated by a coal stove and there was no running water or electricity. A furnace was installed in 1948 and running water in 1955. In 1978, ownership of the library was transferred to the Town. In 1979, the library moved to 700 West Main Road into the former Navy Anchorage Day Care Center. It was expanded and renovated in 2005 funded in part by a Rhode Island Public Library Construction grant. Currently the building has outgrown its usefulness. In several areas, the slab floor is severely cracked presumably due to the weight of the book stacks. The mechanical systems are nearing the end of their life expectancy.