

Bi-Sesqui-Centennial Commemorative Tree Planting

Remarks by Margo Prak, DPL Director

Hello everyone! Thank you again for joining us. I am Margo Prak, I have been the Library Director here at the Danville Public Library for the past 3 years, which works out to be only 2% of the Library's extensive history.

We have gathered this afternoon to celebrate the milestones of our Library by planting a Pin Oak tree on the library's lawn. As a librarian, I couldn't pass up the chance to do a bit of research: So, according to the USDA Plant Fact Sheet on Pin Oaks, they are known for their "adaptability, growth rate, longevity, and fall foliar display." While I cannot yet comment on the fall foliage, the traits of adaptability, growth, and longevity are certainly mirrored in our library.

The library has transformed over the past 5 years, and even more so over the last 100 and 150 years. Recently, we have worked to become more accessible to all, and we have seen an influx of digital users, as more people choose to access our resources without leaving the comfort of their own homes.

In 2022 the Library went fine free - meaning we no longer charge fines on items returned after their due dates: Charging overdue fines does not support the library's mission of providing access to opportunities for all members of the community, as overdue fines disproportionately affect low-income individuals and families, adding a barrier to their library use.

The library has evolved over the years to keep pace with societal changes, ensuring it remains accessible to everyone and responsive to the needs of our patrons and community.

As we evolve, we also expand. A significant expansion project was completed in 2011, which not only increased our physical space to accommodate our growing collection but also created areas for community engagement, connection, and learning.

Our collection has diversified to include digital resources such as ebooks, downloadable audiobooks, and magazines. Kanopy, the video streaming platform recently joined the ranks of our online resources. The library has transformed from a quiet sanctuary into a vibrant hub that offers materials, programs, and services designed to inspire creativity, exploration, and enjoyment as our users continue to grow.

Much like the pin oak we are planting today, the library is designed to be adaptable, to continue its growth, and to serve future generations for many years to come.

In my research I also encountered a story shared by JFK in his speeches during the early 60's. He recounted an incident involving Marshal Hubert (Leo-tey)Lyautey, a French army general, statesman, and administrator in Morocco, who approached his gardener with a request to plant a specific tree. When the gardener expressed concern that the tree grew slowly and would take

a century to mature, the Marshal replied “In that case, there is no time to lose. Plant it this afternoon.”

There is no time to lose. While library services adapt and grow, we must also take care of our beautiful building. This has been the library’s home for the past century, and we plan for it to be our home for at least the next 100 years as well. The library will soon undertake essential preservation efforts to strengthen the aging structure of the Shepard Memorial building, ensuring its functionality for the years, decades, and even centuries to come.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has supported the library—past, present, and future. Among those deserving of our thanks are the current members of the Library’s Board: Rhea Walker, Sherrie Reilly, Mary Ann Holden, Alise Rounsville, and Suzy Boor, as well as the Friends of the Library.

Your dedication, consideration, and financial assistance have fortified the library, enabling us to endure the challenges we have faced and ensuring our resilience moving forward. The positive impact you have had on this library and on our community is truly immeasurable.

Additionally I would like to acknowledge Noah Farrell and Farrell’s Lawn Service for their efforts in preparing the tree planting for us today, as well as Karen Howell for the cookies that will be available after today’s event.

Finally, I hope that when you see this tree in the future, it will evoke memories of the Library’s history, reminding you of our past and those who have paved the way for us. Furthermore, I hope this oak tree will serve as a source of inspiration for all of us to remain flexible and committed to ongoing learning and growth, just as this tree will continue to grow and thrive long after each of us has left the library for the last time.

Thank you all for joining us today, for our momentous occasion.