

The Ilion Free Public Library

130 Year Celebration

October 2023

Ilion Public Library 130 Year Celebration



Ilion Alumni Association

Ilion Free Public Library

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Ilion Free Public Library - Alumni Association

At the annual meeting of the Alumni Association held in 1891 the first steps were taken toward the establishment of a public library. The need for such an institution was set forth in a paper read by Miss Harriett Russell. The Village Board appointed the first Library committee: James M. Dygert, John Giblin, J.

Holland Rudd, Carrie L. Richardson and Harriet 'Hattie' E. Russell. Cornelia 'Nellie' Seamans (sister of C. W. Seamans), Ida Walker Heacock and Bella Redway Osgood served on the committee that selected and purchased books.

Ilion 1852-1952

Source file is here [Ilion Free Public Library](#)



Carrie Richardson

Two years later, the Ilion Free Public Library would hold the grand opening of the library on Friday, October 27, 1893. Clarence W. Seamans attended and spoke at the ceremony.

Ilion Free Public Library - Clarence Walker Seamans

C. W. Seamans

Alumni Hall of Fame Nominee



Clarence Walker Seamans

Clarence W. Seamans made a generous gift to his hometown. Seamans gave credit to his father, Abner Clark Seamans (a superintendent of Remington Armory), for presenting the idea of the Ilion Academy Alumni Association Library Committee for a village library to him. This took the form of a \$30,000 building in which to house the library's books. The interest of the village was then stimulated and \$5,000 was raised by the Alumni Association for books and legal provision was made by the village for the care and maintenance of the building. Michael Giblin's land located on the corner of Second Street and West Street was purchased for the site of the new library by Clarence Seamans. The deed was written in trust for the village and made to Misses Carrie L. Richardson, Cornelia M. Seamans (sister of C.W. Seamans) and J. H. Rudd, members Ilion Alumni committee. Transfer of the deed had the additional condition that the citizens of the village needed to raise \$5,000, to be used for the purchase of books. A legal provision was included to address the perpetual care of the building to be erected, and its contents, and stipulated the use of a Free Public Library.

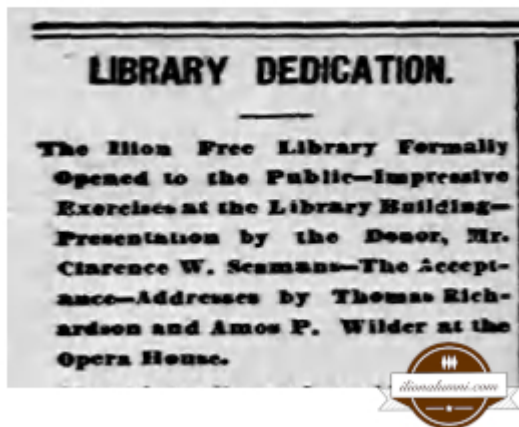
Library Architecture

Clarence Seamans visited many of the village and city libraries in the Eastern States and made a study of both the architecture of the buildings and the methods of operating and managing the libraries. He had plans for a Romanesque building, for the new library, prepared in New York City. The plans were his own but were executed by Architect George P. Chappell of 24 State Street, New York.



Ilion Free Public Library Cornerstone

Library Opening and Dedication - October 27, 1893



C. W. Seamans spoke at the dedication. He credited the Alumni Association for much of the effort to establish the library.

"And first upon the list of these to whom credit is due, I wish to place your own Alumni Association, and particularly its library committee. It was their earnest and enthusiastic work which enlisted my father's interest, and prompted him to ask me to do what I could to aid them in accomplishing the object upon which their hearts were set."

The Ilion Citizen - Library Dedication.

Source pdf file is here [Ilion NY Citizen 1893-1896 - 0976.pdf](#) on fultonhistory.com for Seaman's full address.



The Utica Observer - Ilion's New Library

Source pdf file is here [Utica NY Observer 1893 - 1384.pdf](#) on fultonhistory.com

Library History

Jane Spellman published an article for LEGACY - Annals of Herkimer County by the Herkimer County Historical Society. The article contained a very detailed history of the library and is titled, "Ilion Free Public Library At 100 Years."

Jane Spellman's history of the library contained the following text:

Seward Hakes, local florist, President of the Ilion Academy Alumni Association, began the ceremony by calling on the Rev. W.M. Cook of St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, to open with a prayer. Then Clarence W. Seamans spoke for 20 minutes giving thanks to all who made the building and books possible. Seamans gave credit to his father, Abner Clark Seamans (a superintendent of Remington Armory), for presenting the idea of the Ilion Academy Alumni Association Library Committee for a village library to him. Clarence had challenged the Ilion community in a December 28, 1891 letter to raise \$5,000 for books and obtain the village financial commitment to assure the library's future. This challenge had been met in record time. Clarence Seamans ended his remarks by presenting the keys to Mr. Hakes who accepted the building and gave a short speech before presenting the deed and keys to C. Smith Ingham, the Village President.

See [Ilion Free Public Library At 100 Years](#) By Jane Spellman.

See [Ilion Free Public Library At 100 Years](#) part 2 By Jane Spellman.

Obituaries

Miss Cornelia Seamans

Miss Cornelia Seamans, a former member of the faculty of the Ilion High school and a graduate of the Oswego Normal school in the elementary class of 1875 and the advanced class of 1877, died at her home in Ilion yesterday.

See [The Ilion Sentinel - December 29, 1915](#) Cornelia Seamans death notice

Miss Harriet Russell

Miss Harriet Russell, 84, died late last Thursday at her home 61 Second street, after a protracted illness. Miss Russell was the daughter of the late Albert T. and Mary Hatch Russell, and the sister of the late Samuel T. and George R. Russell, former residents of Ilion. She was born at Falls Church Va., Feb. 13, 1851, and came with her parents to Ilion in 1861, where she had since resided. She attended the local schools and was a member of the first class graduated from Ilion Academy. For some years prior to 1890 Miss Russell taught in the Ilion public schools, being principal of the Intermediate Department from which position she resigned to travel in the west with her father. She was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, a charter member of Ilion Travelers' Club and of the DAR, a trustee and former president of Ilion Public Library, a member of the board of managers and for many years an officer of the Old Ladies Home of Herkimer County. Survivors are a sister, Miss Ella M. Russell, and several nephews and nieces

See [The Ilion Sentinel - December 26, 1935](#) Miss Harriet Russell death notice

Ilion Library Foundation



Please join the Foundation for the 130 year celebration of the Ilion Free Public Library - Wednesday, October 4, 6-8 pm. All are invited.

In his opening ceremony address, Clarence W. Seamans asked alumni to continue support for the library.

"I therefore do not hesitate to ask you to give the library cordial and liberal financial support. A well selected free library is a wise and powerful educator, second only to the public schools."

Ilion alumni and class reunion committees may want to consider donating to the library. The Ilion Free Public Library Foundation, LTD. is a 501c3 organization created to accept tax deductible donations, gifts, bequests and memoriams as well as grants that might not otherwise be available to a public library.

See the following for donating: [Ilion Public Library Foundation on Facebook](#).
See also [Ilion Free Public Library Foundation, LTD.](#)

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