

*If you have memories about this library,  
we'd love for you to jot them down for us  
to help us tell the library's "story."*



## SOLVAY PUBLIC LIBRARY

615 Woods Road, Solvay, NY 13209

Phone: (315) 468-2441

[www.solvaylibrary.org](http://www.solvaylibrary.org)

Cara Burton, Library Director

# SOLVAY PUBLIC LIBRARY

*A Self-guided Tour*

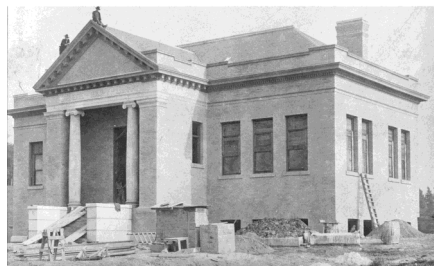


615 WOODS ROAD, SOLVAY, NEW YORK

## Welcome to Solvay Public Library!

### HOW IT WAS BUILT

The Solvay Public Library is one of three in Onondaga County originally funded with construction seed money from Andrew Carnegie. Built in 1905, it is the only Carnegie Library in the county still in public use. The balance of the building funds and the property were donated by Frederick Hazard and his company, Solvay Process Company.



Under the auspices of the Village of Solvay, this library is one of two municipally funded, independent libraries in Onondaga County outside the city of Syracuse. Solvay Process Company and Solvay Union Free School District archives are housed here in a climate controlled local history room. The grand Greek revival, yellow brick and oak paneled building, likened to the Acropolis, was designed by James Randall, a noted Syracuse architect. In 2007, the Solvay Public Library was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

### HEIRLOOM FURNISHINGS

Visitors to the library will see several displays of materials from its local history collection throughout the two story building. Much of the furniture in the building was salvaged from Hazard School in 2004, before it was demolished. An "Adopt a Solvay Heirloom" program supported the renovation of the cabinets and shelving for use in the library.

### MY GIFT TO THE SOLVAY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Yes! I/we want to help the **Solvay Public Library Foundation** further the mission of the Library. Enclosed is a tax-deductible gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

*Please make checks payable to:*  
**Solvay Public Library Foundation**  
**615 Woods Road, Solvay , NY 13209**

My employer will match my gift. A form is enclosed.

This gift is in honor of \_\_\_\_\_.

This gift is in memory of \_\_\_\_\_.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

*Please record my/our gift as follows:*

Ms.      Mr. & Mrs.      Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mr.      Miss

Name (s) \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone or Cell \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Please contact me regarding volunteer opportunities and/or membership with the **Friends of the Solvay Public Library**.

\_\_\_\_ I am interested in participating in a fundraising or planning committee for the Solvay Public Library.

**Thank you for your support!**

## SOLVAY PUBLIC LIBRARY CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY

**January 14th, 1903** By request of the Village of Solvay attorney, Lamont Stilwell, steel-magnate Andrew Carnegie offered the Village a gift of \$10,000 to build a library. Frederick Hazard, President of Solvay Process Company, agreed to match the gift and the company to provide \$500 per year for maintenance. Hazard personally donated the site on the corner of Woods and Orchard Roads. The Village agreed to contribute \$1,000 per year to operate the library.

**May 21st, 1903** University of the State of New York grants charter to Solvay Public Library. Founding trustees are Frederick R. Hazard, George J. Schattle, and Charles O. Richards. The Library was formed by merging the collections of the Solvay Literary Club located at Solvay Process Company's Guild Hall and the Union Free School District #2 Library.

**Sept. 25th, 1905** The Solvay Public Library officially opens with a collection of 2,042 books.

**1915-1928** Solvay Public Library operates a branch library at Boyd School to serve the citizens of "West Solvay."

**1916** Weekly storyhours begin .

**World War 1** Community Room converted into a lounge for soldiers camped at the State Fair Grounds. A Victrola was provided for amusement and French lessons were given to the soldiers.

**1946** "Teen Town" social club was organized for local young people.

**1974** Solvay Public Library became a member of the Onondaga County Public Library System, one of 20 independent libraries that share their resources.

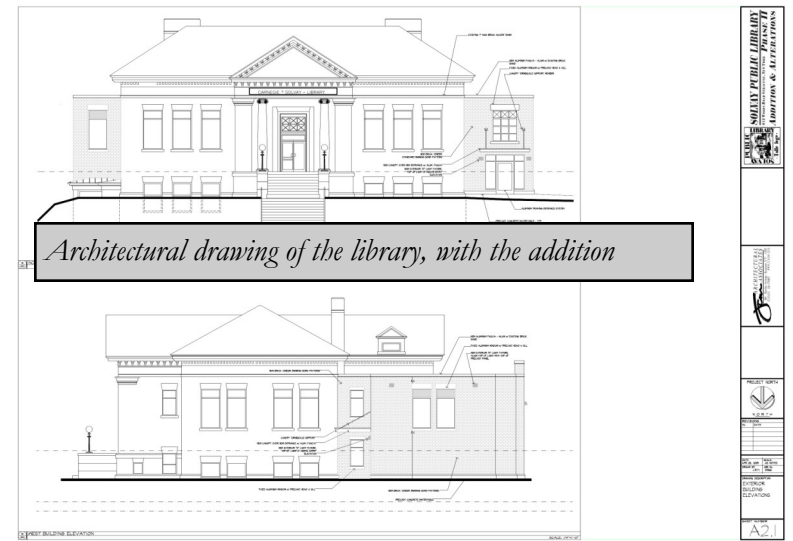
**1979** The Library is renovated with new heating-air conditioning system, new lighting, windows, roof, painting, insulation, and wall-to-wall carpeting.

**1981** The Library catalog is automated.

**1986** Allied Chemical, previously the Solvay Process Company, donates historic papers and photographs of the company and the Hazard family to Solvay Public Library. A climate controlled room was created to house the collection.

**2001** The Solvay Public Library Board of Trustees initiated a "Preservation and Expansion" Campaign to make the building handicapped accessible with an addition and elevator, provide space for technology, and preserve the foundation.

**2008** The 7,500 square foot addition and renovations are completed at a cost of nearly \$3 million. Village residents approved a bond referendum to fund the project, in addition to numerous grants and donations the Library Board secured.



1908 VILLAGE MAP

The library and high school property were donated by Frederick Hazard, whose estate, "Upland Farms", was southeast of the library on North Orchard.

### MAIN ENTRANCE

The new main entrance from North Orchard Road welcomes you with a foyer and mezzanine. The foyer contains a pew originally from St. Charles Borromeo Church in Westvale. Beside it is an atlas case purchased during the early years of the library.

### MEZZANINE

The Mezzanine has a cabinet from Hazard School, on top of which is a bronze bust of a little girl. The sculptor was Frenchman Emile Guillin (1841-1907). How it arrived at the library is unknown, but it likely was acquired by Hazard on one of his business trips to Ernest Solvay in Belgium.

A small meeting room adjoins the mezzanine in which monthly art exhibits are displayed. The door and transom windows to the room, as well as several others in the upper level, were salvaged from the Hazard school in 2004 before it was demolished.



### MAIN ROOM

Upon entering the center room, one enters the original part of the library. In 2008, an Expansion and Preservation Building Project was completed, adding 7,500 square feet to the library, doubling its size.



*Frederick Hazard (above) ensured funds matched Andrew Carnegie's (pictured below) \$10,000 grant.. Solvay Process contributed the additional \$8,746 over budget.*

The Solvay Public Library was built in 1905 with funding from steel magnate Andrew Carnegie and Solvay Process President, Frederick Hazard. The Greek revival style library was designed by architect James Randall, who also designed the Poultry Building at the Fairgrounds. Thomas Maloney and Hueber Brothers built it. The library design follows one of the basic Carnegie library crucifix designs.

The Village of Solvay has maintained the integrity of the Solvay Public Library for over one hundred years. The ceilings still have the grand beams and woodwork; the walls the beautiful paneling. The high ceilings, windows, fireplaces, and rich woodwork add to the unique ambiance of this library.



*Thank you for touring our beautiful library! If you have unanswered questions, feel free to leave a note with your contact information at the desk.*

**—Cara Burton, Library Director**

### Founding Library Board of Trustees (1902)

Frederick Hazard, President Solvay Process Company

George J. Schattle, Solvay Process Company official

Charles D. Richards, Solvay School Principal

The library before computers, online catalogs, DVD's, and other electronics.



Card catalog c.1910 (above, right).  
Card catalog, c. 1970's (left, right)  
Card catalog, c. 1920 (below).





## EXTERIOR

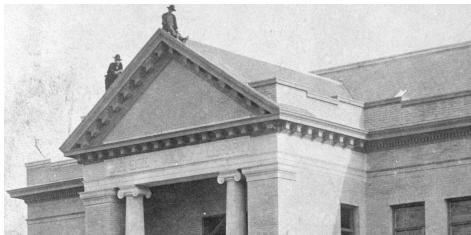
As you circle the front exterior of the building, notice the metal soffit. The building originally had a parapet that hid the sloping roof, but it was removed when the roof was replaced. A unique rainwater drainage system channeled water through interior gutters, which can be seen in the attic. It is believed this water was caught in the cistern (pictured here) that was unearthed during the construction. Later on, the cistern was used for coal ash and empty bottles, as discovered when archeologists excavated it.

Roof run-off is now captured in the raingarden installed by a local Boy Scout as his Eagle project. To the left of the front stair is a very tall Austrian pine. This was planted many years ago in recognition of the Tyrolians that moved to Solvay to work at Solvay Process in the early 1900's.



The wrought iron lanterns at the front entrance are original and were restored during the renovations. They continue to shed light on the grand entrance. Standing on the front steps, looking north toward Onondaga Lake, a broad lawn spreads. The library sits on a rise, giving the Acropolis effect, evoking the Greek penchant for learning and civic pride.

Today, the Solvay Public Library is a member of the Onondaga County Public Library System. The collection, including over 30,000 books, is shared throughout the county and accessed through the countywide online catalog. A dozen public computers connect patrons to the world. With technology and community meeting places, the library remains current with the information needs of Solvay, within this landmark built over one hundred years ago.



*Note the parapets and dental style soffits.*

## CIRCULATION DESK

The original circulation desk was in the middle of the room with, of course, the card catalog. Behind the current desk, on the wall is a Seth Thomas clock.. It was donated by Cornelia Mertens, one of the first librarians who worked for this library nearly 40 years.



## LIGHTING

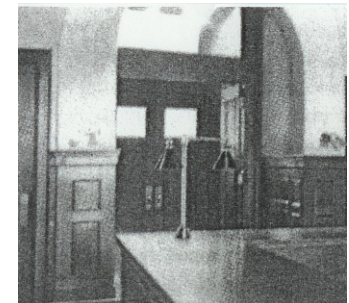
Large glass windows in the room allow for natural light in this middle room, reflecting the newness of electric lighting at the turn of the last century. The current lighting is provided by highly energy efficient fluorescents obtained with grants through the Village's Electric Department. The large windows used to be opened during the summer, creating good drafts and entry into the library by birds and soda ash and coal dust.



*The original light fixtures*

## ORIGINAL MAIN ENTRANCE

Opposite the desk is the original entrance to the library. Over the doors are diamond window panes and the old foyer's floor tile echoes this pattern. The addition's architects mimicked this in the new foyers. A marble plaque in this foyer commemorates the builders of the library.



*The front doors were originally mostly solid, making the foyer dark.*

**CONTINUE TO THE FICTION ROOM, TO YOUR RIGHT.**

## FICTION ROOM

This is one of the reading rooms characteristic of Carnegie libraries. Readers, students and tutors continue to use these enclosed rooms that provide quiet, somewhat private seating areas. Before the 2008 addition, the rooms were too cramped for seating space and tables.

This room has one of three working fireplaces in the building, with gas inserts donated with a grant from Solvay Electric Department. The stand-alone cabinet in the middle of the room was salvaged from Hazard School. The rear of it was removed to create usable shelving and to keep the beautiful cabinet door.



The bust of Ernest Solvay was given to the library when Allied Chemical closed its plant here. Solvay was the Belgian chemist that invented the "Solvay Process", also referred to as the ammonia-soda process, in the 1860's. This is the major industrial process for the production of soda ash (sodium carbonate). The ingredients for this process are readily available and inexpensive: salt brine (from inland sources or from the sea) and limestone (from mines). The Hazards started the Solvay Process Company by Onondaga Lake because of the availability of these resources. Ernest Solvay did not own this American company, but collaborated on research and development.

**PROCEED TO OTHER READING ROOM, THE HAZARD ROOM.**



*This Hazard School kitchen cabinet is now a usable book shelf in the Chapter Book Room.*



*The teen room (magazine room at the time) around 2001. Note the exposed walls. The window served as the coal shoot. The cistern was outside this*

**PROCEED THROUGH THE PARENTING ROOM, TO THE RIGHT, DOWN THE STEPS, AND INTO THE DAN CASEY COMMUNITY ROOM.**

## COMMUNITY ROOM

This "lecture room" was a requirement of Carnegie plans. Prior to 2008, it was the only handicapped accessible room in the building. This Community Room is used for storyhours, afterschool craft hour, meetings, and a variety of other programs. The ceilings have always remained open.

The room is named after Dan Casey, a past Library Board Trustee and local lawyer. Casey was nationally recognized as a strong advocate for libraries, including acknowledgement by President Ronald Reagan. Through his and other Board members' efforts, they created the Solvay Public Library Foundation in the 1980's with proceeds from a bicycle raffle. The Foundation supports special technology projects and library programs normally not funded with the Village's operational budget. These funds also act as a reserve to ensure the library's future for the next generation of readers.

**PROCEED OUT THIS REAR ENTRANCE.**

## CHILDREN'S ROOMS

Many in Solvay remember the children's room being downstairs in what is now the Community Room, but it was originally in an upstairs reading room, as seen in an early storyhour photo (page 5). The area is much less spacious due to the explosion of children's literature compared to that in the early 1900's.

This was originally an unfinished room. The arched walkway in the middle of the room was created during the construction. The section where the catalog computer sits was an electrical utility room. A door and window used to exist in the east wall, about where the 900 section of nonfiction is now (see photo).

Prior to the 2008 renovations, there was a dropped ceiling, making the then non-fiction room very closed feeling.

The library director argued with the architects to have the exposed ceilings with their beautiful beams. After gutting the room, they agreed and duplicated the door arches in this room's renovations.



The lintels for the windows and the custodial closet's ceiling supports were made from railway ties. Staff can open the closet to show you these, if you ask.

The adjoining teen room originally was the boiler room, with a coal chute (now a window). The chapter book room was originally the librarian's office and then made into the Solvay Process Room in 1987, finished off with fine wood paneling and drop ceiling. All the shelving in this room was from Hazard School, as well as all the desk chairs. The children's table here and in the center children's room have been with the library some time.

Prior to the renovations and addition, this area would frequently flood, due to the underground springs and location downhill from the site of Upland Farms, Hazard's estate. Thanks to the Village's investment in the renovations, proper drainage has stabilized the foundation.

## HAZARD ROOM

The Hazard Room, so named after Frederick Hazard, contains the reference, newspapers, large print, biography, DVD, music CD, Playaway, and books-on-CD collections. The two free-standing wood shelving units were also salvaged from Hazard school. On the wall are several photograph copies from the Solvay Process archives.



Over the fireplace is a painting of Cornelia Mertens, a librarian here from 1905 to 1939, and her father, Jacques Mertens, who served as assistant librarian. Miss Mertens was the second Director, after O. Ware Clary, and lived on Woods Road. Her tenure here saw the community through World War I, polio and flu epidemics, and the Depression. She was instrumental in starting many programs here, such as storyhours, foreign language collections, and advocated for more funding for books.

***PROCEED TO ELEVATOR LOBBY, THROUGH THE DOOR TO THE LEFT OF THE CIRCULATION DESK.***



## ELEVATOR LOBBY

This area and the non-fiction room next to it are in the 2008 addition of the library. The original exterior wall is still exposed here.

The large cabinet and magazine racks are from Hazard School. The small square table with the black top is from Church & Dwight Company, another industrial facility in Solvay that closed down. This room also holds the "Onondaga Lake and Solvay Information Clearinghouse," display of brochures, fact sheets, and DEC reports related to remediation in the village and lake.

Most important in this room is the elevator. This was the impetus for the addition, to make the library accessible to all village residents. Prior to the elevator and new lower parking lot, visitors had to enter by climbing the exterior front steps or the Community Room entry by way of the sidewalk.



*The doors and transoms were salvaged from Hazard school. They are pictured here in the school, sets of these doors at each end of the hallways.*

***PROCEED INTO THE ELEVATOR AND  
GO TO THE LOWER LEVEL .***

## LOCAL HISTORY ROOM AND LOWER LEVEL ELEVATOR LOBBY

In this small hallway, glass display cases exhibit copies of photographs from the Solvay Union Free School District collection held in the Local History Room. These materials were donated to Solvay Public Library when Hazard School was demolished to ensure their security and to be professionally archived.

In 1986 when Allied Chemical, formerly Solvay Process Company, closed its plants here, the company donated its archives to this library. Through grants and donations from Sarah Auchincloss, a Hazard descendant, a climate controlled room was made from the original Director's office (now the Chapter Book Room). The collection was moved to this room in 2008.

This archive room remains locked for security and environmental control purposes. Through the window, however, Frederick Hazard's desk and portrait can be seen. In addition to Solvay Process and Hazard family photographs, technical papers, maps, and memorabilia, this room also houses a local history collection that people can use by appointment.



*This portrait of Frederick Hazard was done by local impressionist Jeannette Scott. The library has a biographical brochure on Scott, who had a remarkable career.*

***PROCEED INTO THE CHILDREN'S ROOM.***