

[Newark, Wayne Co. NY]

How This Great Oak Grew From a Very Little Acorn  
[excerpt]

That "Great Oaks from little acorns grow was never more clearly illustrated than by the history of the Newark Free Public Library. Beginning with a few books collected by some of the members of the Universalist Church, it has steadily grown, until now it has 3100 volumes, including an especially fine collection of reference works.

The first steps were taken by Rev. Charles W. Tomlinson, D.D., pastor of the Universalist Church at the time and now known as the "Father of the Library." One Sunday in the late summer or early fall of 1895 Mr. Tomlinson suggested to his small congregation the fact that nearly all the families in his church probably each had a score or more of unused books, and he went on to say:

"If only two of you exchange these books, each would have a considerable number of fresh books that would be prized. If all of you should turn these unused books into one common collection, there would be a great many fresh ones for all. If you would adopt this suggestion, you will form the nucleus for at least a parish library, if not a general one."

The suggestion was immediately adopted, and a committee was appointed to receive the books, with power to weed out the objectionable ones. These books were kept in the Sunday-school room of the Universalist Church, and the clergy and Sunday-school superintendents of the village were invited to meet and pass on them, with a view to weeding out any more that they might think objectionable. When the meeting was held Dr. Tomlinson suggested that a proposition be made to the people of the village generally on the same plan. From this time on the meetings were held in the village hall, the school chapel and at other places, and gradually the people of various denominations became interested.

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Transcribed on 25 Mar 2011 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester NY