two thousand students pass through its doors. One of those was Henry Jenkins Roberts (c. 1821–1863) in the class of 1847. Three who followed were "instrumental in forming it into a free library." "In 1874, the Christian Center is a community park used for the outdoor African American dance, barbecues, and civil rights meetings. It drew people from the entire county and beyond. A declining membership and a lack of funds caused the Free Library to dissolve in 1936. In 1947, the Christian Center was incorporated as a non-profit organization. It has since been housed in a variety of locations, including a small oral history collection of local African Americans.

The Berkshire Athenaeum was founded by Reverend Elkanah Watson in 1799. Watson, a Quaker, was known for his support of free speech and education. The Athenaeum was originally located in what is now the Pittsfield Public Library, but moved to its current location in 1812. In 1813, the Athenaeum merged with the Berkshire Free Library, creating the Berkshire Athenaeum and Free Library.

The Athenaeum continued to grow and evolve over the years, adding new services and programs to meet the needs of the community. In 1890, the Athenaeum moved to its current location at 137 Onota Street, a building that was originally constructed as a mill. The Athenaeum has since expanded its facilities and services, including a reading room, a children's library, a meeting space, and a variety of programs and events. It remains a vital resource for the community, offering a wide range of resources and services to meet the needs of all ages.