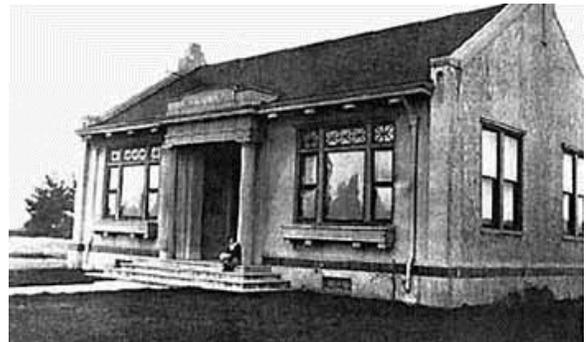


## History of the Garfield Park Library, 1914-1997

*By Daniel McMahon*

The Garfield Park Branch Library, at 705 Woodrow Avenue, was one of four Carnegie Libraries built in Santa Cruz, California between 1903 and 1921. The Main or "Carnegie Free Library" was built downtown in 1903-04, and two grants from the Carnegie Corporation for two small branch libraries were received in November, 1913. The grants were for the Seabright and Garfield Park buildings, and these both opened in mid-1915. Garfield Park opened just before the Seabright Branch, making it the second Carnegie Library in Santa Cruz.

This picture was sold as a souvenir postcard of Santa Cruz. The window boxes are gone, and the wooden porch and steps were replaced by concrete in 1976. Otherwise the building is little changed from this view of over 70 years ago. However, the neighborhood around the building has filled in quite a bit.



*Garfield Park Library, circa 1922 – Photograph courtesy of Tish Payne*

### **Early History of Westside Library Service**

The Garfield Park Neighborhood, specifically the streets known as the "circles" on the westside of Santa Cruz was first laid out in 1889, around the Northern California Convention of Christian Churches' new Garfield Park Tabernacle. A library was first provided to the westside by the City of Santa Cruz in 1908, and was located in the then-new fire station on Younglove Avenue. In 1910 it was moved to a cottage on Errett Circle, across from the Garfield Park Christian Church (the Tabernacle).

After receipt of the \$3000 grant, the site was chosen in February 1914, on two lots at the corner of Naglee and Garfield Avenues, and construction began in November of that year. William H. Weeks designed the library (as well as the other three Carnegies in Santa Cruz, and numerous other buildings including Santa Cruz High School, the Boardwalk's Casino, Branciforte Elementary School, the Palomar Hotel, and too many other buildings to list here.) The winning bid to Weeks's design was for \$2,615, by W.A. White. Construction began

in November 1914, and the building opened in July 1915. The original address was either 30 Garfield Avenue (from Polk's City Directory) or 24 Garfield Avenue (from Sanborne Fire Insurance Maps), and may have been both at different times. Garfield Avenue became Woodrow Avenue (to honor former president Woodrow Wilson) in the early 1920's, and the building became 705 Woodrow Avenue between 1948 and 1950.

This picture is believed to be from 1922, and the branch manager is the woman on the right, Ruth Bellus. The hardwood floor and oak trim are visible, and the painting above the fireplace, *Monterey Coast* by Frank Heath, was returned to this spot in 1996. The fireplace, surrounded by green tiles, was plated over in the 30's or 40's, was restored and piped with gas in 1976, and still works today.

The interior of the building was, by today's standards, quite dark. All of the wood in the building was varnished oak, and one half of the building had wooden wainscoting. The walls above the wainscoting, and in the



*Interior, circa 1922 - Photograph courtesy of Tish Payne*

other half of the building were painted a very dark brown, and the ceiling (12 feet high) was ivory. (Samples of these colors were recovered during the painting of the interior in December 1995.) Everyone who looks at photos of the building in the early days asks, "Where were the books?" There were probably only a few hundred books in the building when it opened compared to today's 15,000 books, and the north half of the building was a meeting room with a piano in it until the 1960's.

The outside of the building has been painted almost every 12 years since 1915. (The last time was in 1976.) The inside has only been painted four times, around 1941, in 1961, 1976 and 1995. Each color scheme was very different, as tastes changed with the decades, and painting wood trim and doors became common. The building has been light green (1941), salmon pink (1962), mustard yellow (1976) and is now white with green trim (1995). The wood floors are covered in tile, though the original boards are still visible in the tiny back rooms, and the original lights ("electric chandeliers") have long since been replaced with fluorescent lighting.

This photo shows Branch Manager Donaldine McRae at the front desk with young library user Susie Coury. This is thought to be around 1978, and is taken from the cover of the Westside Neighborhood Association's newsletter.

## **82 Years of Operation**

The Garfield Park Branch Library has been continuously open for 82 years, with two exceptions: For six weeks from October to December 1919, it was "Closed on account of Flu." (This was the Influenza epidemic that followed World War I.) And the building was closed on July 7, 1978, along with three other libraries in Santa Cruz County, after the passage of Proposition 13. A



*At the Circulation Desk, 1978*

neighborhood group (Westside Neighbors) succeeded in convincing the Santa Cruz City Council to restore the branch, and it reopened on September 6, 1978.



The Garfield Park Branch in 1996. These computers are part of the Electronic Homework Center for area young adults, ages 10-16.

*Garfield Park Library in the 1990's*

Paint and fixtures, the number of books in the building and the open hours have all changed quite a bit in the last 82 years. But what constitutes library service has probably changed even more, and Garfield Park is an excellent example of this change. Since 1995 the branch has been operating under an LSCA (Library Services and Construction Act) grant for services to young adults, of whom there are several thousand on the westside. As a result of this grant, hours were increased, new materials for young adults were purchased, and a small network of public-access computers was installed at the branch. The new computers, different from the work terminals and Public Access Catalogs added in 1985, gave library users access to the Internet and to informational and educational CD-ROMs. Garfield Park Branch created a web site, and began publishing an Electronic Newsletter written by local young adults.

The passage of Measure B in November 1996 enabled the library system to continue focusing services on young adults at Garfield Park, and to further increase the branch's hours.

## **Source**

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