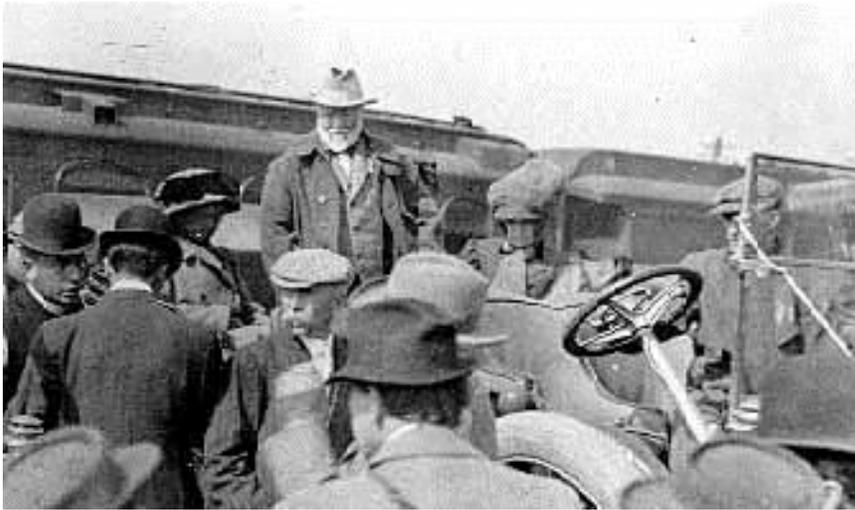


The Four Carnegie Libraries, 1903-1921

By Daniel McMahon



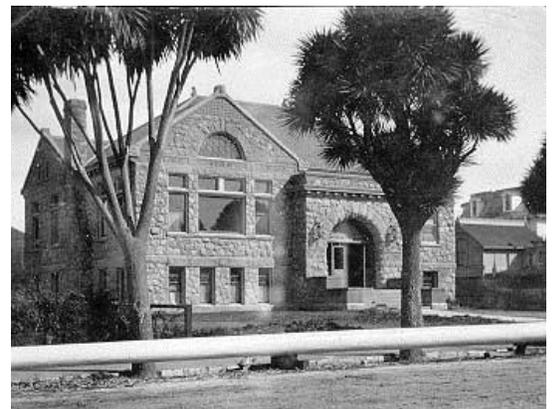
Andrew Carnegie Visiting Santa Cruz in 1910

The Santa Cruz Public Library (now Libraries) received four grants from the Carnegie Corporation, between 1903 and 1921, for the construction of a main library and three branch buildings. All four of these buildings were designed by noted California architect William H. Weeks. Two of the four are still standing, one as a museum (which is common for surviving Carnegie Libraries) and the other as exactly what it was built to be, the Garfield Park Branch of the Santa Cruz Public Libraries.

THE FOUR CARNEGIE LIBRARIES

Santa Cruz Main, also called "The Carnegie Library," 224 Church Street

This building was built in 1903, with a \$20,000 grant of Carnegie funds. It was the main branch of the Santa Cruz Public Libraries, and later became the headquarters for the city/county library system. The front of the library faced the gardens at Santa Cruz City Hall across Cedar Street, although this piece of Cedar Street and the present City Hall weren't there until 1937. The Main Library building was considered to be too small as early as 1953, and it was demolished to make way for the present Downtown Branch in 1966. When built in 1903, the building's address was 52 Church Street. (Most addresses in Santa Cruz were renumbered between 1947 and 1950, when this building became 224 Church Street.)



Santa Cruz Main Library in 1903

East Cliff & Seabright Library, 1305 East Cliff Drive

The grant from the Carnegie Corporation for this building, and for Garfield Park Branch, were both announced in November, 1913. The Seabright Branch Library opened in August of 1916 [1915, according to local history sources, including the History of Carnegie Libraries Website], and in 1954-55 the City Museum was moved here and combined with the library. The branch library was closed in 1965, leaving the museum, which is now the City of Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History. Two additions were built at the rear of the building, in 1962 and 1968, so only the front portion of the building, a "Y" shaped structure, is original. The inside has been extensively remodeled, but the exterior is recently painted and is in excellent condition.

Eastside Library, 1263 Soquel Avenue

The Eastside Branch was the last of the four Carnegie Libraries built in Santa Cruz. The grant from the Carnegie Corporation was received in 1917, but construction of the building was delayed by World War I. The Eastside Branch opened in 1921, and its address was 1263 Soquel Avenue. The streets surrounding the branch's triangular lot, Water and Poplar Streets and Soquel Avenue, became busier with traffic every decade, and by the 1960's it was difficult to reach the building. The passage of Measure B in 1964 (not to be confused with 1996's Measure B) allowed the construction of not just a new main branch, but of a new Eastside Branch as well. The Branciforte Library opened in 1967, and the old Eastside Branch was closed, and the building torn down. The triangular lot where it stood is a park today [1997].

This illustration is based on the original blueprints done by the office of William H. Weeks, and submitted to the Santa Cruz County Recorder on September 1, 1920. The "front" side of the building faced Soquel Avenue, so the view would be looking to the north.

Front Elevation of the Eastside Branch Library



Eastside Branch Library

Garfield Park Branch Library, 705 Woodrow Avenue

Like the Seabright Library, the grant for Garfield Park Library was given to the city in November 1913. After some controversy, 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. The winning bid to build William H. Weeks's design was for \$2,615, by W.A. White, and the building opened in 1915. This is the only one of the four Santa Cruz Carnegies that is still in operation as a library branch in 1997.

Source

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