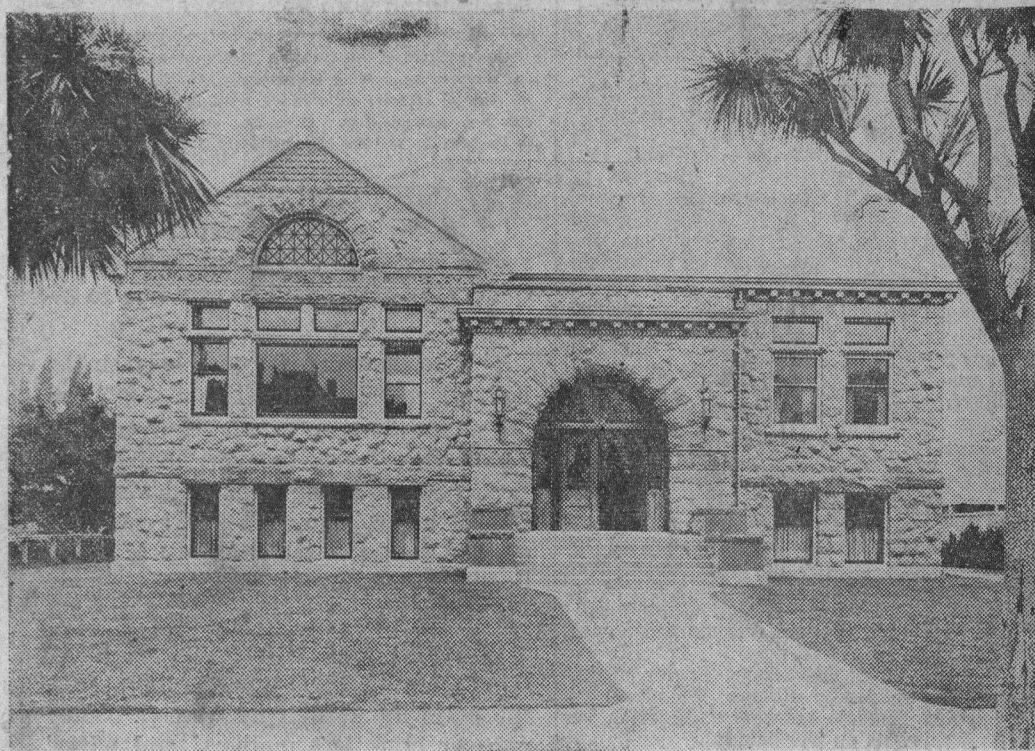


4/10/55

SANTA CRUZ YESTERDAYS



WHEN THE MAIN LIBRARY WAS YOUNG

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

Santa Cruz' main public library was referred to as a Carnegie Free Library in the local press as it was nearing completion exactly 51 years ago, and "costing about \$20,000."

Earlier quarters in upstairs locations in town had become inadequate.

The forward-looking Board of Free Library Trustees, composed of Dr. F. W. Bliss, president, Dr. C. L. Anderson, J. W. Linscott, E. L. Williams, Samuel Leask, had set in motion earlier negotiations which placed Santa Cruz on a list of California public libraries being financed by Andrew Carnegie funds.

The steel magnate philanthropist wrote: "... I feel that there is no arrangement so powerful for good, ... no benefit that can be bestowed on a community so great as that which places within the reach of all the treasures of the world which are stored up in books."

His first allotment to the local project had been \$15,000 (in 1903) but this was increased by \$5000 as result of a visit to Carnegie by Samuel Leask, library board member, while on an eastern business trip.

Cornerstone Laid, 1903

The cornerstone was laid with ceremony, on September 29, 1903, under the auspices of the State Masonic Lodge. A procession composed of Masonic bodies, Naval Reserves and Choral Union, plus Hastings' band, with Dr. T. W. Drullard as Grand Marshal had preceded the event.

W. H. Weeks of Watsonville was architect. The library lot, 100 ft. by 200 ft. (with 100 ft. frontage on both Church and Locust streets) was obtained from F. A. Hihn. It had been sliced from the eastern extremity of his home acreage. By a unique arrangement Hihn had made the choice lot available to the city for \$40 a month payments, spread over a period of ten years.

Contract for the building was let in July, 1903, to McPhee & Sutton of San Francisco. They later sub-let to local contractors as follows: Byrne Brothers, plumbing; George Root, painting; Robert Cardiff, electric wiring.

Concrete work went to Granite Rock company of Watsonville.

Statistics given at the time called the completed building 75 feet long, north to south, and 60 feet wide, east to west.

Beauty and Dignity

The oldtime picture of the completed building shows the Church street entrance, reached by a flight of six Colusa sandstone steps, 13 feet wide. From the vestibule ten steps lead to the main hall.

Foundation is concrete, the walls of concrete and Santa Cruz county sandstone, with Arizona red sandstone trimmings and roof of slate.

A significant anniversary is near at hand for it was on April 14, 1904, that the formal opening of the library took place—"biggest event in Santa Cruz since the great fire of April ten years before."

Formal opening ceremonies were slated for 8 o'clock in the evening, but the great Art & Loan exhibit was already in progress. The following committee had charge of the entertainment: Mrs. Henry Willey, chairman; Mrs. H. S. Deming, Mrs. H. F. Kron, Mrs. C. K. Chace, Miss Annie Austin, Mrs. Hope Swinford had charge of the music.

Miss Josephine Parker played a violin solo. Vocal solos were given by Miss Olive Fagen, Mrs. Frank Elliott, and Harry Murray and a vocal duet by the Misses Cooney.

President's Message

Among congratulatory messages read was one from Presi-

dent Theodore Roosevelt (who had visited here the year before), in which he said, "Nothing it seems to me, can do more good in a community than a free library ... and deserves the support and encouragement of everyone interested in ... education in its largest sense ... of first importance ... My good wishes for the new library."

The library opened with the largest collection of books in proportion to population of any town in the state. In 1904 the population of Santa Cruz and suburbs was 10,000. Approximately 14,000 volumes were in the library. Circulation was 50,000 books per year (from main library and two city branches).

Today's city population is estimated at 22,000, with some 123,000 volumes in the main library and city and county branches. City circulation is now 271,943 from the main library and city branches, with a county overall circulation total of 389,273.

The present efficient city and county librarian is Geraldine G. Work who came to the post following retirement at the end of June, 1941, of City Librarian Miss Minerva Waterman. The latter had then closed a long and devoted 51 years serving the local reading public.

Donor Andrew Carnegie who, with his wife and daughter, visited the library here in 1910, was shown the increase of local reading made possible by his gift, but could not foresee the vast extent to which it has further expanded since that time.