

# Historic Library Furniture Was Begged, Borrowed And Donated

By Laura Rawson

If some of the inanimate furnishings in the Santa Cruz library could talk, what interesting tales they could tell. Some of them date back to the time when in 1868 a loyal group of Santa Cruzans took advantage of an act of congress (1863) in reference to libraries' incorporation, and formed a library association.

It was not until 1903 that Andrew Carnegie sent his first check for \$15,000, made payable to Dr. F. W. Bliss, as first payment toward a new building. Later, the sum was increased to \$20,000, when Samuel Leask, one of the organizers, visited Carnegie while on a business trip to New York and told him of the great need of this city for a permanent home for a library. But long before then, the library had been partially furnished.

For instance, the huge solid oak table in the room to the right, as one enters the library from Church street, originally stood in the old Peyton Powder Mill property's building, up San Lorenzo valley and around it the 12 directors of the company sat.

Those who know, say that millions of dollars passed across its broad expanse during these sessions.

When it was placed in the library 24 inches were cut from the width, and 18 inches from each end, and it's still a huge table and looks as though it would be good for a century or more of service. Dr. Bliss bought it for the library for \$20.

Another old table in the same room, solid as iron, had part of its legs amputated so the little folks who are patrons of the library can sit around it and look at the books especially selected for them.

Some of the old maps and books are huge in size.

About 1890 the first branch library was opened in Seabright, in a tent. There had been many requests for a library there and the directors moved cautiously and experimented with a tent, to see if interest and patronage warranted the move.

Fred Swanton contributed the top and a canvas door which was strangely lettered, "teliot." Samuel Leask contribute some discarded velvet-topped glove counters from his store. Charles Greenfield offered to be custodian. A large piece of shelving, in three parts, used in this tent, does good service at the present time in the rural school department in the library. Books and magazines were contributed, and local papers,

as well as others from several cities were given by summer visitors, each day. Despite the open, rather "help yourself" manner, there was but one article stolen, and that was a magazine. John Moulton opened the canvas door each day, and tied it up at night. Street car employees took much interest in the library, which was located about opposite from the Seabright hotel.

Later it had more permanent quarters in a vacant store until the new library in Seabright was built.

As the city of Santa Cruz discarded things, the library fairly gobbled them up, for there was always need for more equipment. Sometimes they have wandered back to city possession, as did a filing case quite recently which the library turned over to the police department which needed one.

Three tables from the old court house basement are doing good service in the library, and some sturdy Venetian chairs, which were in the library when it was housed in the old Williamson and Garrett building, are still doing duty. They have changed their spots several times, for they started out black, later turned blue, and are now painted black again.

Some old cupboards which were in the old city hall and have been moved about with the changes the library has made, are filled with books and doing good service, despite their age.

The library committee, always on the lookout for bargains, bought 50 chairs at 25 cents each. Some needed repairing, which they received, and all were painted green, with black seats. At present they are renewing their youth in Chinese red and you who are patrons of the library have probably found them most comfortable.

Until the ground floor room of the library was converted into a rural school section, many clubs and organizations held regular meetings there. Linoleum which was purchased many years ago with \$100 donated by Ernest Cowell is still doing service down stairs, for its block pattern has permitted it to be laid in hundreds of pieces, without looking badly.

Some fine paintings adorn the walls of the library. One especially interesting is the huge oil painted by the late Frank Heath, Santa Cruz artist. It is a view of Santa Cruz as seen from Pasatiempo. Heath was

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commissioned by the city of Santa Cruz to paint the picture to hang in the Chicago world fair in 1893, with the understanding it was to be returned to Santa Cruz as the property of the library.

### Old Black Clock

Very ancient is the big clock which for many years has ticked off the hours. Its beautiful pendulum never falters in its rhythmic swing.

When the library was first opened a big Art Loan exhibit was staged and more than \$700 was netted. This money was used in furnishings. The old Improvement club donated a desk table, eight chairs and a carpet for the directors' room.

Along the corridor wall on the ground floor are many pictures donated by friends of the library. Judging by the dress, frames and types, some of these must be very old. Each one has a history, and all are prized.