

Celebrate: It's Lebanon library theme

By EDWINA ESSEX
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LEBANON — The familiar Bedford limestone and buff brick building at the southwest corner of Broadway and Main Street here almost never, ever was.

Court records detail a two-year fight between the village and a group of residents who sought to prevent construction after industrial magnate Andrew Carnegie first offered \$10,000 in 1903 for a library building, contingent on \$1,000 village yearly maintenance.

The residents believed the village should not accept Carnegie money for a public library although he had made similar gifts to communities throughout the nation.

AFTER SEVERAL ROUNDS in the lower courts, the Ohio Supreme Court finally gave the go-ahead in August 1905, but building costs, even then, had risen and architects had gone out of business.

William E. Harmon (benefactor of the present Civic Trust) came to the rescue with \$3,500 to finish the building and buy books and periodicals. Building plans were salvaged for \$150.

The library opened Jan. 1, 1908 yet no one seems to know if there was any celebration then. However, there will be a celebration on Sunday when an open house from 2 to 5 p.m. will mark the 75th anniversary of the structure. During the open house, sketches of a proposed addition to the columned building will be unveiled.

The Lebanon High School band will play, and the Lebanon Singers and pianist James Mills will perform.

The event will launch efforts to get funds for the addition on a site cleared to the west of the library.

Rosemary Chute, acting president of Friends of Lebanon Library and program chairwoman, said commemorative brochures and bookmarks will be available.

SPEAKERS WILL be Dixon Maple, a third generation (former) library board of trustees member, state Rep. Corwin Nixon and trustees president William Fowler. Other trustees are I.W. Hyman, vice president; Marilyn Sexton, secretary; Marcia Young, Wilma Coyan and Thomas O'Kelly.

The library has an annual circulation of some 113-

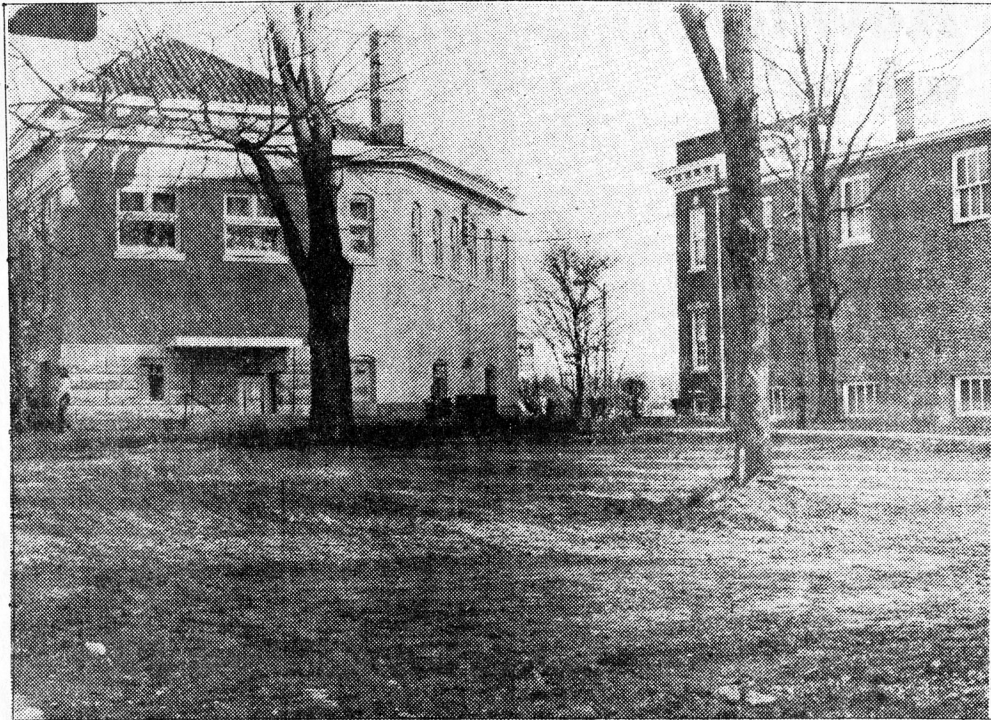


Photo by Edwina Essex

Site where old home was cleared for library expansion project

000 books and periodicals and maintains approximately 50,000 volumes. Library Friends have thinned out duplicates but every nook and cranny of the two-story building is filled.

"We don't need space so much for changes — just more room to do what we already do," said librarian Geraldine Noble. "We do need a place for a children's story hour and special programs, a reading lounge and more office and work space. We also want to add microfilm readers and a computer for cataloging and reference."

ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN Estelle Bean remembers visiting the library as a youngster.

"When I came here as a child in 1928, books were arranged alphabetically around the walls," she said. "Nothing was restricted. We read for fun, but there were few children's books. I started with 'A' and read straight through. I read every Grace Livingston Hill story as it came out."

A half-century later, the library still manages to be an island of quiet at the city's busiest intersection. "When I started, checking 67 books was a 'good day,'" Bean said. Today, that number is around 650 and often higher.

Self-help books are in demand on all subjects, including health, home building and restoration, child birth, and with the recession, car repairs, she said.