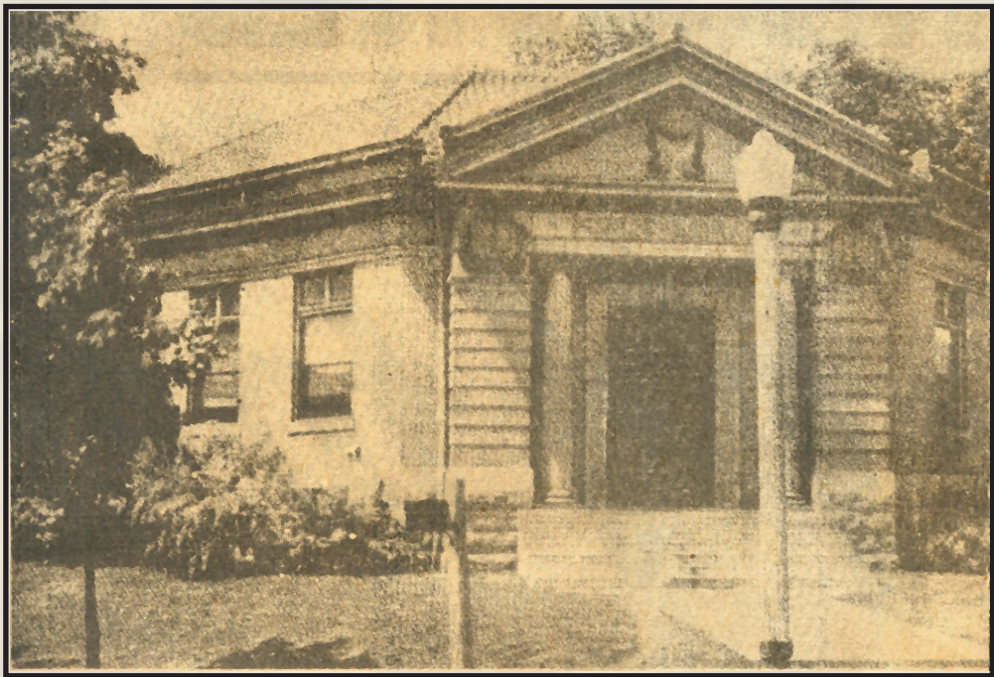


OUR NEW LIBRARY

Beautiful in its Design and Modern in its Appointments.

Erected With Andrew Carnegie's Donation and Handsomely Furnished and Decorated Through William E. Harmon's Generosity.

By Josiah Morrow



THE NEW CARNEGIE LIBRARY

After many long delays our new public library is nearly ready for occupancy. Mr. Carnegie's offer for Lebanon was dated February 20, 1903, and was, in substance that he would furnish \$10,000 for a library building if the council would agree to maintain a free public library at not less than \$1,000 a year, and provide a suitable site for the building.

Lebanon was more fortunately situated for the acceptance of such an offer than most towns of its size, having three excellent sites for such a building centrally located, which had been donated to the public by the original proprietors of the town, and consequently the village was not compelled to pay a large sum for an eligible site or to go to the outskirts for an undesirable one. The offer of Mr. Carnegie was presented to the council in connection with a petition signed by 730 citizens asking for its acceptance.

REFERENDUMS.

Notwithstanding the large number and the high character of the petitioners, the council wisely determined upon a referendum in the matter. The question of the acceptance of the offer and the annual tax was submitted to a vote of the electors of the village and more than two thirds of the votes were in favor of the acceptance. On July 7, 1903, the council by resolution accepted the offer and agreed to provide a suitable site and to maintain the library at an annual cost of not less than \$1,000. Afterward the council authorized the library trustees to occupy any one of the three vacant lots of the public square as a site for the building.

The library trustees submitted the question, which one of the three vacant lots should be selected, to a vote of the electors, and the lot on which the building stands was chosen by a plurality of two votes.

THE LAW'S DELAY.

The trustees proceeded at once to the selection of an architect and the adoption of plans for the new building. Just as they were ready to let the contract for the erection of the library two suits were brought to restrain them from proceeding further. The suits were brought by citizens who opposed the erection of any structure on the public lots and who desired them to remain open and vacant as they long had been.

Both suits were finally decided in favor of the library trustees. The injunction against the trustees was dissolved in the supreme court on March 6, 1906. The decision in the supreme court was unanimous, all six judges concurring the dissolution of the injunction. In reference to this

litigation it may not be generally known that the lawyers who were members of the board of trustees conducted the case for the library through three courts without asking or receiving any compensation for their services, and they paid their own traveling expenses to the circuit court at Cincinnati and the supreme court at Columbus. The law provides that library trustees shall serve without compensation.

It is to be hoped that the question of the right of the village to erect a public building on any one of the four lots constituting the public square of Lebanon, will never again be raised in a court of justice. Two public buildings were erected on these lots one hundred years ago. The library is the second public building erected on the lot on which it stands and the fifth one on the public square.

The litigation in this matter caused a delay of nearly two years in the erection of the library, and by the raise in the price of building materials, about \$500 was added to the cost of the edifice. How much was added to the cost of furnishings it is difficult to estimate.

PLAN OF THE BUILDING.

Many architects visited Lebanon and submitted plans for a library they thought adapted to the needs of the town. The plan submitted by E. W. Hart & Co., of Columbus, was the only one which provided for the main entrance at the corner, and it was at once approved by all the trustees, some of whom had this idea from the first. Two corners of the building being cut off, one for the entrance and one in the rear, the edifice is a six sided one. A new library building at Cleveland is ten sided.

There is ample space all around the building for light and air, and the architects endeavored to plan a small modern library with ample shelf room and good light in all parts of the interior. The wall space for book shelves may be said to be at least six times as large as in the old library which has windows on one side only and has always been badly lighted.

In some modern libraries all the windows are so placed that book shelves seven feet high can be placed under them, but, as the eminent librarian, Melvil Dewey, says, a prison-like effect is produced unless some of the windows are at the ordinary height. In this building the windows on the Broadway and Main fronts are placed at the common height, all the others are seven feet above the floor.

The interior walls are tinted with colors that reflect rather than absorb light. Reading lamps on the tables are lighted by electricity from below, the wires passing through the center of the table. As, for many years at least, there will be but one librarian in

Lebanon, the main library and reading tables are placed in one large room. The plan will be continued of giving readers free access to the shelves, a plan which a generation ago would have been thought impractical, but is now nearly universal in free public libraries.

COST.

The entire cost of the erection and furnishing of the building cannot yet be stated exactly as a number of contracts, each for an inconsiderable sum, were made after the completion of the basement was determined upon. It was the original intention of the trustees to leave the finishing of the basement for the future. The following are some important items in the cost:

Builders original contract \$8,958; Architects paid up to this time, \$218; Plumbing, \$260; Hot water heating system, \$792; New furniture and shelving; \$746; Concrete floor in basement, \$175; Plastering basement, \$104; Electric and gas light fixtures, \$190; Frescoing, \$134.

It should be borne in mind that the trustees have expended no money raised by taxation either for the erection or furnishing of the building. The trustees have adhered rigidly to their original purpose to have the building finished ready for occupancy without cost to the taxpayers, so that all of the money raised by the levy for the library fund shall be applied to the annual maintenance of the library and reading room. The building has cost the taxpayers nothing, either for its site, its erection or its furnishing.

THE HARMON DONATION.

The name of our former fellow citizen, William E. Harmon should always be associated with that of Andrew Carnegie when the people of Lebanon look upon their new public library. Had it not been for Mr. Harmon's generosity the building could not have had the handsome furniture and decorations it now has. Mr. Carnegie's donation was sufficient to give us a handsome building but not enough to enable the trustees to make the interior the most beautiful and attractive place of public resort in the village, as was their desire.

In many towns trustees of Carnegie libraries have applied to Mr. Carnegie for an additional sum for furnishings, and have received it only on condition that the annual sum for the support of the library be increased. Mr. Harmon's donation adds nothing to the burden of taxation. He has given \$2,500 for the completion of the building and \$1,000 for the purchase of new books, asking only that his gift be made a memorial to his mother, who was a native of Lebanon. Mr. Carnegie's generosity is recognized in the words, "Carnegie's Gift" on the date block, and a handsome bronze tablet has been placed in the interior as a memorial to Mr. Harmon's mother. The inscription on the tablet is as follows:

THIS TABLET IS PLACED HERE
BY THE TRUSTEES AS A MEMORIAL TO
MARY WOOD HARMON
1842-1884
IN RECOGNITION OF ASSISTANCE
GIVEN BY HER SON
WILLIAM ELMER HARMON
IN THE COMPLETION AND EQUIPMENT
OF THIS LIBRARY.

THE DURBIN WARD LIBRARY.

The shelves of the new library will from its opening, display a very fine and valuable collection of books. Our citizens should be grateful for the donation of the greater portion of the Durbin Ward library, the largest, costliest and most valuable of the private libraries of Lebanon. After the death of Gen. Ward's widow, who was a sister of Judge John Probasco, of Lebanon, her heirs and relatives of the Probasco family, at the instance of Mr. Samuel W. Probasco, donated the greater portion of the collection to the Lebanon public library. A label will be placed in each volume stating that it is from the library of Durbin Ward and that it was donated by the personal representatives of his widow, Elizabeth Probasco Ward. The collection, while it will not attract the average novel reader, is one of great value in a public library, containing a large number of rare and valuable standard works, and is especially rich in political economy, the history of the Constitution of United States, and in complete works of early American statesmen.

The union of this collection with the many excellent works of the old Mechanics' Institute library and the new and more popular works now being purchased from the funds of the Harmon donation will give Lebanon one of the best free public libraries in the state of Ohio outside of the larger cities.