Today’s Topics

• Library Development in West Virginia
• History of the Ohio County Public Library
Library Development in West Virginia
The Early Years

1807-1813

Beginning of library companies in West Virginia

January 1819

Romney Literary Society developed

1820’s-1840’s

Various literary societies flourished

1830’s-1840’s

Lyceums, athenaeums, and literary institutions developed

Mid 1800’s

– Advent of education institutions

The Annual Payment to the Wheeling Library Company,

For the year 1807, became due on the first inst. The Shareholders are de-
sired to take notice, that unless the same, together with the arrearages of Fines
incurred during the year last past, be settled with the Treasurer on or before
the first day of next month, they will be debited with a weekly accumulation of
25 cents respectively.

A. M. Bolton, Treasurer.
Wheeling, 26th of 12th mo. (Dec.)
The 19th Century

May 18, 1859
Wheeling Library Association chartered by the Circuit Court of Ohio County

October 12, 1882
Wheeling Library Association becomes Wheeling Public Library
The 20th Century

1900

- 1 public library
- 1 state law library
- 1 historical library, partially supported by the state
- Several college and university libraries
- Most literary societies or library company collections had been dissolved or merged with school libraries

1901

- Governor requests legislation for public library system
The 20th Century

1914

12 cities and towns had public libraries

September 15, 1923

Louis Bennett Public Library founded, the first county library in the state (Lewis County)

June 8, 1929

West Virginia Library Commission established by law

1929

Only 23 public libraries exist

November 1932

- Tax Limitation Amendment to State Constitution
May 31, 1933
Legislature creates the Ohio County Public Library

1938
WV Federation of Women’s Clubs funded a statewide library survey, which found that 88% of the state lacked library services

1941
West Virginia Library Commission is finally funded

June 19, 1956
Eisenhower signs the Library Services Bill into law

April 2, 1979
Gilmer Public Library – all counties now have at least one public library
History of the Wheeling and Ohio County Public Library
The Early Years

Wheeling Library Company

[Subscription Library]

– 1807

First reference to the company appeared in the *Wheeling Repository*, announcing officer elections for the next year

– 1811

• *Pittsburgh Navigator*, mentions the existence of a printing office, a book store, and a library

• “The first two quit town for want of public patronage; the last is still upheld by citizens.”

– 1833

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia passed an act incorporating the Library Company in the Town of Wheeling
The Early Years

Wheeling Lyceum
Incorporated in 1834 by Virginia General Assembly

Wheeling Library Association
[Subscription Library]
- The Mercantile Library Association was founded in 1859 and was chartered later that year as the Wheeling Library Association
- Absorbed the Wheeling Lyceum collection and provided the earliest foundation for the current library system
…we are happy to speak of the prospects of our City Library Association, an institution of which we should all be proud and in which every man, woman and child in the city has a deep personal interest.

Every citizen for the sake of his family, if not for himself, should be an annual subscriber. The price of subscription is the merest trifle, only five dollars, and where is the man who loves to read, or who deserves to cultivate a taste for reading in his family, who cannot pay that small sum?

…fellow citizens do not hoard up dollars for your children to the exclusion of advantages far more beneficial to them than dollars. Give them the benefits of an excellent institution like the library, by giving it your aid.
The Early Years

Wheeling Library Association
[Subscription Library]

– As early as 1877, there was public discussion about the possibility of the city financing a public library

– While the early years of the Association were difficult, mainly due to the Civil War and lack of funding, the Association flourished until 1881 when it was disbanded
The Early Years

Public Library of the City of Wheeling

- In 1882, one year after the close of the Wheeling Library Association, the Wheeling Board of Education began discussing the advantages of a public library
- The Board of Education created a library committee
- Later in 1882, state legislation was passed officially chartering the Public Library of the City of Wheeling and permitting the levying of taxes to support the library
- With agreement from the Association Board of Trustees, the Public Library absorbed the Wheeling Library Association collection
## Andrew Carnegie’s Philanthropy

### Library Construction Grants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Wheeling</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Huntington</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Parkersburg</td>
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<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Bethany College</td>
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<td>1907</td>
<td>Hinton</td>
<td>$12,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Bluefield</td>
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<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Williamson</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Charleston</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
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**Total - $241,000**

$101,500 used of requests = 42.1%
FORTY-MILLIONAIRE CARNEGIE IN HIS GREAT DOUBLE ROLE.
AS THE HIRING-FISTED EMPLOYER HE REDUCES WAGES THAT HE MAY PLAY PHILANTHROPIST AND GIVE AWAY LIBRARIES, ETC.

Utica Saturday Globe, July 9, 1892
THE LIBRARY COM'S.—SURELY YOU OUGHT TO BE WILLING TO ADD THESE TO YOUR BURDENS, TO HELP ANDY BUILD ONE OF HIS MONUMENTS.
The committee on teachers and schools reported adversely on the petition of residents of Union district, desiring their children to attend Clay school, and the Board concurred. The recommendation for an increase from $30 to $40 of salary of High School junior was referred to the committee on salaries. The recommendation for the purchase of twelve Cram’s reversible maps, was referred to committee on text books.

The commissioners of Madison district reported the appointment of Miss Lenora Krauter in C grade; Miss Rose Hunter as substitute; Miss Virginia Norton promoted from A grade to Grammar, and Miss Estella Underwood from C to A.

The resignation of Parke Collier as substitute teacher in the High School was accepted.

Webster commissioners reported the resignation of Anna V. Kennedy as teacher in C grade, and asked confirmation of Margaret M. Dudley in C grade, and Temperance Garden in D grade. The report was confirmed.

W. A. Milligan tendered his resignation as member of the Board, on account of his removal from Centre to Clay district. Upon motion of Judge Cranmer, the resignation was laid on the table.

Mr. Maxwell inquired by whose authority the number and time of sessions at the High School had been changed, in the face of a direct order of the Board. Col. Miller thought the single session is injurious to pupils, and he said that some persons are of opinion that it was a change solely in the interest of the teachers. Dr. Birney made a plea for two daily sessions on the ground that it would be doing the greatest good to the greatest number. No action was taken.

Miss Lida Wells was appointed as a new teacher in Centre school, and Miss Lou Hastings substitute.
July 28, 1899

Dear Sir,

We are naturally much gratified by the suggestion in your letter that in case the city were to give a site and make provision for the support of a library, you might be disposed to aid our efforts. We hope to earn your assistance. Certainly I had never thought of any possible arrangement for a library which would not include a subscription by the city—as large a provision as the authorities could be induced to consider reasonable. There is a site which is being held as an investment and can perhaps be obtained: it would be exceptionally suitable, but expensive. We shall try to have private subscriptions provide the site, if possible, and thus be able to devote the entire appropriation which may be granted by the city council, to maintenance and support and possible increase of facilities.

Wheeling's wealth is so small, compared to that of Pittsburgh, and so much of it is locked up in the hands of those who are not ready yet to appreciate our need of a good library, that I am at a loss to know what you would consider a fair comparison with Pittsburgh's appropriation and a suitable provision to be made by this city. It may be that you would care to express your views as to this, and as to the value of the site which should be provided, as well as perhaps the extent of the assistance which you might be willing to grant in case satisfactory conditions should be assured.

A small group of citizens here are impressed with the city's backwardness and with the serious need for such improvement as a good library guarantees. They are willing to give energy as well as time to the gradual building up of the community; and whether or not you may finally consider it wise to give financial help, they would receive with pleasure any suggestions coming from you as to municipal improvement.

Yours truly,
Nelson C. Hubbard.
Wheeling Library and Andrew Carnegie

Carnegie offers $75,000 to erect a library building in 1899

Original caveat: the local community must make an annual contribution of $5,000

In 1909, maintenance of effort becomes a 10% contribution ($7,500)
Wheeling Library and Andrew Carnegie

• In 1901, the West Virginia Legislature passed a law empowering Wheeling authorities to procure a library site and to levy a tax sufficient to pay for it and maintain the library property.
• This funding required a bond issue.
• Negotiations continued with Carnegie over the next three years.
The Carnegie Controversy

• In 1903, Carnegie’s secretary indicates offer still stands
• The Board of Education reacted favorably to the offer but refused to incur any financial responsibility
• The City Council passed a resolution to support the project with one member introducing an opposing resolution
John J. Connelly’s Opposing Resolution

“Whereas, Andrew Carnegie, a citizen of the United States, and a resident of Scotland, has offered a donation of $50,000 to the city of Wheeling for the purpose of erecting a library, with conditions attached whereby he hopes to perpetuate the name of Andrew Carnegie at the expense of the taxpayers of the city of Wheeling.

And, whereas, the citizens of Wheeling are willing and able to provide for their educational wants; therefore, be it:

Resolved, that the city of Wheeling do hereby reject the offer of Andrew Carnegie to donate $50,000 for the purpose of erecting a library, and we recommend to Mr. Carnegie that he give his proposed $50,000 to the widows and orphans created by him on the banks of Monongahela on the morning of July 6, 1892.”

John J. Connelly
December 22, 1903
STRIKERS’ BLOOD

Strikes as a Result of the Iron Workers’ Strike

At the Carnegie Steel Works at Homestead, Pa.

Workmen Shot Down by Paid Pinkerton Men

Who Attempt to Make a Landing at the Works, Only to Be Repulsed by the Determined Strikers.

The sight of blood arouses suppressed rage of the thousands of locked-out workmen and a battle results in which each side loses a number of killed and wounded—The situation serious and more fighting is looked for—The excited men refuse to listen to those who advised them to think well before they took the rash step.

Homestead, Pa., July 6.—Three hundred Pinkerton detectives attempted to land at the Carnegie steel works at 3:45 Wednesday morning. They fired on the guard. About one hundred shots were exchanged. Two strikers were shot. The Pinkertons were repulsed at the first attack.

For two hours before the boats arrived 5,000 or 6,000 persons awaited their arrival.

The burgos issued a proclamation calling on all citizens to remain indoors and ordering all saloons closed.

The main fight at that time was being made near a huge oil tank on the river front one mile from Homestead. Here the reporter saw one of the workers breath his last. The man was standing near the Baltimore and Ohio tracks, firing a twenty-pound cannon, trying to sink the borges on which were the Pinkertons. His shots went wide of the mark. A moment later the mill-worker’s head was almost severed from his body by a shot from a Winchester in the hands of a Pinkerton.

The Locked-Out Men Victorious.

At 10:10 a.m., near the lavatory, one man aimed his rifle and the next instant a shout went up and a Pinkerton detective who had been standing on the barge fell. The bullet had passed through his head and he dropped in the river never to rise. The locked-out men had gained entire possession of the company’s lavatory and in this their ammunition is stored. The workmen have at least 500 rifles in their possession.

At 11 o’clock the men reported that they were out of ammunition and the committee was immediately sent after more.

Hugh O’Donnell, one of the most conservative men here, was seen by your reporter. When depicting the early morning scenes he wept as numbers of men gathered around to hear the story. It certainly was a sight as the cannons and guns pealed forth their thunder. O’Donnell, summing up sufficient courage, said:

“At the first shrill of the water works whistle a messenger rushed to my house and dragged me out of bed. In a half-dressed condition I rushed to the scene, and on the way met Captain O. C. Coon, of the Eighteenth Regiment, and John Flinn. With these men we went right to the front, standing on the river bank with 1000 men, who were shooting and
Carnegie Controversy

The Ohio Valley Trades and Labor Assembly voiced strong opposition to Carnegie’s offer:

“We don’t want a monument to Carnegie…a man who has driven down women and children to the workship.”

“God forbid that one of my children should ever bring home a book from a Carnegie Library.”

Both sides launched campaigns, with the Board of Education and important figures in the community voicing their support.
Citizens voted on library levy in an election held on January 16, 1904. Even as a huge flood covered the city, voters turned out at the polls. Levy did not receive the necessary majority and was defeated, making Wheeling the only city in West Virginia to defeat (by vote) a library levy to get Carnegie dollars. The issue won in all districts except the working class sections of the city, especially wards where iron and steel workers lived.
DEFEAT OF LIBRARY PROJECT.

Owing to the activity of the element opposed to the new library project, and the indifference of some of its friends, the bond proposition of the board of education failed to receive the required three-fifths of all the votes cast. If any comfort is to be gained from this miserable failure on the part of the friends of progress to have voted, it lies in the fact that the proposition obtained a majority of 429. The 201 votes lacking the three-fifths requirement were not cast because they were housed up through the flood, or through the usual antipathy to sacrificing a few moments from business or other cares.

But, after all, speculation is useless in the light of definite defeat. By the result of yesterday's election Wheeling is counted among the cities that set their faces against progress. It also submits to the domination of a class that has retarded its growth in the past, whose methods are unreasonable and prejudicial to the common welfare of all, with small chance of emancipation in the future. Like Prometheus it is bound to this rock of opposition and is having its liver picked out by the vulture of organized hatred of one man.
REMOVAL OF LIBRARY
ADVOCATED BY BOARD

Library Quarters.

The Masonic Association notified the board of the expiration of their library lease on April 30th, and that they would be pleased to renew the lease at $1,200 a year, an increase of $200.

Mr. Rogers objected to this, as the library quarters were inconvenient and favored other quarters even did the board have to pay $1,500 a year. “I don’t favor staying in that coop. Let us be progressive and have a place to put our books and have a library in place as well as in name.” The matter went to the committee on libraries to look for other quarters.

On motion of Mr. Williams, the expenditure of $400 for improvements to the library was ordered held till it was determined whether the present room would be retained or not.

Mr. White here took the floor and stated that everything pointed to the building of a new library and that it was time something was done.

Library Report.
Carnegie Controversy

- In 1909, the Board of Education again contacts Carnegie:
  - Maxwell properties purchased by Board for high school and library
  - No bond levy required
- Asking for grant between $75,000 to $100,000
- In March of 1909, Carnegie’s secretary indicates that the promise of $75,000 is still in force
- Unions once again object to acceptance of Carnegie grant
- In 1910, Carnegie issue again arose with the Board of Education voting to terminate contact with Carnegie and to erect a building with their own funds
Construction of New Public Library Building

• On March 3, 1910, the Board of Education accepts Charles W. Bates’ plans for a new public library

• Library opened on January 9, 1911
The New Public Library Building - 1911

“The library was a two-story, red-brick building; the doorway was framed by marble Corinthian columns and a classic pediment. A decorative cornice encircled the building above the first story.”
The New Public Library Building - 1911

“One enters the building through two glass doors which open on the stone steps and then one goes into the vestibule which widens out into a sort of lobby, in which is the desk and in back of that, the stack room.”

“To the right is a room intended for a juvenile reading room, although it is not yet equipped.”
"To the left is the general reading room, in which are tables and chairs necessary for the comfort of the patrons. In this room are found the newspaper and magazine racks supplied with the best current literature of the day."

In 1919, the collection is changed from a closed stack to an open stack system.
The Bennett Museum

In 1920, Sallie Maxwell Bennett presented a collection of curios and collectibles from her travels around the world to the library.
The Bennett Museum

“Mrs. Bennett stated that she wanted this collection to be in memoriam of her father, a prominent member of Wheeling society and one of the Board of Education before his death.”

Eventually, the artifacts from the museum were removed from the library and distributed to the Bennett family home, Willow Glen; the New York City Art Gallery; and Oglebay Institute.
The Statue of Ethan Allen

Donated by
B. Walker Peterson, prominent local resident and president of the Dollar Savings and Trust Company in Wheeling.

- Replica of sculptor L.G. Mead’s statue (Statuary Hall)
- “This ideal of one of the heroes of the War for Independence is given to the Wheeling Public Library in memory of Dr. Daniel Peterson, Surgeon’s Mate, Colonel Stark’s Regiment, Colonial Forces, and his son, W.F. Peterson, Sr., who came to this community in 1824.”
Larkin G. Mead

Statuary Hall

1950’s
Dire economic conditions precipitated by the Great Depression results in the passage of a 1932 state law that:

- places limits on personal property taxation
- reduces local control of taxation

Prevents the use of Board of Education money for public libraries
OCPL Board of Trustees
Minutes
October 4, 1933

“The present tax tangle leaving us with no income except gradually diminishing fine and rental collections it has become necessary to cut expenditures to the lowest possible figure.”
“Bills against the Ohio County Public Library were presented. Their number and size were not excessive but they smote with dismay an impecunious though honest Board.

Mr. Archie Paull offered the loan of Three Hundred Dollars ($300) until such time as the Board shall be able to pay it back.”
Special Law

• Local leaders petitioned the state legislature for a solution to the library funding crisis
• The legislature responded with a special law that allowed public funding of the library
• Money was carved out of Board of Education funds and later property tax collections
• OCPL is one of 11 WV libraries funded through special library laws
1950’s Teens
Locations

Wheeling Library Association
- Odd Fellows Hall
- The Armory in the Capitol Building

Public Library of the City of Wheeling
- Above R.J. Smyth(e)’s grocery at the corner of 14th and Market Streets
- The Masonic Temple – 1407 Market Street
- Schmulbach Building
- Delaplaine Building – 1305 Main Street
Locations

Ohio County Public Library
– 21st and Market Streets
(January 9, 1911- May 18, 1973)
1926 – Third Floor Addition Completed

Wheeling High – Commercial Department
September 7, 1926
Warwood Branch

Opened April 6, 1942

Cooperative Venture With Woman’s Club of Warwood

Second Floor – Warwood Bank building
Women’s Club rooms adjacent

After bequest from Howard T. and Fransess P. Hildebrand - renamed Hildebrand Memorial Library on July 25, 1986

Moved to southwest corner of building

Miss Florence Musgrave – first branch manager

Closed January 31, 2003
(low patron use)
Elm Grove Branch

Opened November 11, 1951 – 1,500 books

Cooperative Venture With Elm Grove Civics Association

Located Hoge-Davis Building – Second Floor

Later - 2214 National Road

Closed in 1973 (low patron usage)
16th Street (May 19, 1973 – Present)
Yet Another Controversy....
Board of Education Sues For Ownership of:
-- Contents of the Building
--- Real Property

Library prevails on both suits – settles with BOE on August 19, 1976 for $61,055.97 [BOE gets old library building]

Ethan Allen statue is purchased by Fort Ticonderoga in NY
Ohio County Public Library Firsts

1912
Children’s services

1932
Special law funding

1938
Music room

1939
Bookmobile

1952
Teen Corner
Research Sources


Javersak, David T. (Fall 1979). One Place on this Great Green Planet Where Andrew Carnegie Can't Get a Monument with his Money. *West Virginia History, 12*(1), 7-18.


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