

## HISTORY OF PETOSKEY CARNEGIE LIBRARY

Throughout October of 1901, Petoskey was abuzz with the news that Mr. Andrew Carnegie would give fifteen thousand dollars for the construction of a building suitable for a public library, if the city agreed to tax itself \$1,500 a year and provide a "suitable site." This began the uninterrupted involvement of the City of Petoskey with a public library. A public library was considered so important to the welfare of city residents that a public library was mandated in the City Charter of 1924 and again supported in the 1984 Charter revision.

Actually, the idea of having a free library was not a new one. For years, one goal of the Petoskey Literary Society was the creation of a library. The Society held its first meeting on 11 February 1876. This became a reality when, in 1884, the Ladies Library Association acquired a room in the Snyder block for library purposes for one year, rent-free. The Snyder block is now the Gattle's building on the corner of Lake and Howard Streets.

The Petoskey Public Library was established by the Common Council of the City of Petoskey in October, 1905, and on 1 November a library commission was appointed. Through cooperation with the public schools and citizen donations, the commission was able to establish "a fully equipped and cataloged library of about 2000 volumes" on the second floor of the First National Bank building (currently Bank One) in June, 1906.

Throughout the first year, there was a constant increase of patronage and it was only a matter of time before the rooms were taxed to their limit. A Carnegie Library was within reach. The commission was informed that they could draw on Carnegie's funds to the amount of \$12,500, provided the city would furnish a site and maintain the library when completed.

It is interesting to note that on 31 January 1906, the Petoskey Record reported "Yesterday 1200 volumes in the district library were removed from the high school building. The Board feels deeply grateful (sic) for the help given them by the Ladies Library Association, who turned over \$200 for their use; to Mr. Chalmers Curtis, who gave electric light fixtures and \$10 in money; and to the Bachelor girls, who gave the \$26 cleared at their holiday dance. The Board elected Mrs. Faulkner librarian, at a salary of \$3 per week, and the rooms will be open for the present Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday afternoons and evenings." Funding was always precarious and we have this from the proceedings of 20 February 1906: "Resolved, that the city clerk and mayor draw a warrant on the city depository for the sum of \$83.75, transferring from the dog fund to the library fund, and that it be made available at once. Adopted."

Mrs. Lelia Johnson purchased the present site in memory of her husband, and presented it to the city. The warranty deed, dated 11 January 1908, states: "This conveyance is made to furnish to the people of the City of Petoskey, a site for a free public library and under the express condition that it is to be forever as a free public library and for no other purpose."

On 27 January 1908, Andrew Carnegie gave the City of Petoskey \$12,500, and the Common Council agreed by definite resolution to maintain the library when completed. An additional \$5,000 was raised through taxation, so that a better building could be erected.

The existing Carnegie Library building is one of the most significant historic buildings in Petoskey architecturally as the most outstanding example of the neo-classical revival style, and historically as one of an ever-decreasing number of remaining Carnegie libraries in the country. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places by its inclusion in the Downtown Petoskey Historic District. It is the oldest municipal building in Emmet County in continuous original use.

The building was designed by the Grand Rapids firm of Williamson & Crow, Architects. It was constructed in 1908 and dedicated in 1909. Only the best stone and brick were to be used on the exterior, with black as