

“For the Education, Both Mental and Moral, of the Public”

By Cherri Hurst

At a meeting of the Weston Public Library Board on November 23rd 1911 it was decided to apply to Andrew Carnegie, Esquire, for funds for the building of a Library. That building celebrates its 90th birthday this year.

The Library Board sent a note to Mr. Carnegie for a donation of \$10,000. Carnegie said he would do it as long as he had approval of the plans. The architect firm of Lindsay & Brydon were employed to draw these up. They were sent down to the Carnegie Corporation, who promptly refused them because \$7.70 was owed for duty. The plans were then lost on the way back to Toronto. In April of 1913, the Library Board dispatched actual blueprints to be approved but the Corporation didn't like the length of the building or the height of the ceiling. They thought the stairs took up too much floor space and should be put out in the “porch”. Lindsay & Brydon argued that the new ideas would cost too much money and “in this climate the porch is an absolute necessity”. The haggling continued until August, when the plans were finally approved.

The site, part of Lot 6, 5th Concession of York Township, the northeast corner of King and Main Street was purchased for \$1950. The total cost of the library was not to exceed \$10,000 including the Architects' fees. On April 8, 1914 excavation for the building began with George Sainsbury as the main contractor.

It was decided that the librarian's salary would be \$300 per year and the caretaker's would be \$60. The hours of operation were determined to be from 3 to 5 p.m. each day (they would get an extra grant of \$10.00 if they were open daily) and 7 to 9 p.m. each evening, except Wednesday. Bids were put out to locate a source for fuel. L. A. Lemaire offered to “deliver to the Weston Public Library the D. L. & W. Scranton coal, egg size @ \$7.75 per ton”. After much delay the library opened its doors to the public on Tuesday, December 29, 1914. “With its stained-glass windows and brick detailing around the windows and doors, it was a charming and impressive building.”

By 1975 this excellent example of the William Morris Arts and Crafts Movement type of architecture was in trouble. The York Library Board wanted to move to the Eagle Manor Building because the library was just too small. Others thought it should just be replaced. Many Weston residents opposed and argued that the building should be saved with an addition built next to it. As a result the Weston Historical Society was born and on October 20, 1979 the library was officially designated a Heritage building.

Nine months later the Board of Education had agreed to sell part of the land next to the library so they could expand. The addition would increase the library floor from 4,300 to 12,000 square feet, with a projected cost of \$800,000. The renovations hit some major problems when dealing with the older building but eventually the doors opened to the public on July 5, 1982.

As stated in the The Times and Guide newspaper on January 1, 1915 “the public are requested to use the Library frequently, not to injure or deface it in any way and to assist the Board in keeping the library clean at all times”.

The Weston Historical Society is taking part in the 90th birthday celebrations at the Weston Library on October 27 at 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

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