

GRAND AVENUE LIBRARY

By Jacquelyne Kious

Once incorporation was achieved in 1908, city leaders soon began to look for a suitable site to serve as the civic center. The block between Miller and Walnut Avenues was chosen and purchased for \$10,000 from the SSF Land & Improvement Company in 1913.

Although it would be another seven years before city hall was completed, the city's first library opened on the site on November 11, 1918 (Armistice Day – now Veterans Day) to much fanfare. It is fair to say that the library would not have been built if it were not for the efforts of Rue Randall Clifford. Clifford, a teacher at Grand Avenue Grammar School, rode her horse around the town collecting signatures to show community support for the library and to persuade city trustees to apply for a Carnegie Foundation grant. Thanks to Clifford's tenacity, the city was awarded a grant for \$10,000 to help build the library.

Andrew Carnegie came from very humble beginnings but through hard work and a strong desire to succeed, he amassed a sizeable fortune. In his later years Carnegie became one of the greatest philanthropists of his time giving millions of dollars in grants over a 30-year period to help build 2,500 libraries in the US and around the world. Since his youth, books and libraries had been very important to Carnegie. He viewed libraries as a place for people to acquire knowledge and improve themselves so they could succeed in life.

Giving to the “*industrious and ambitious; not those who need everything done for them...*” was the philosophy Carnegie lived by and the philosophy he used in giving away much of his fortune. Those receiving Carnegie Foundation grants had to not only pay for part of the cost of the library but also had to commit 10 percent of that cost to support its on-going operation.

The architecture of Carnegie libraries was simple but formal. Like the Grand Avenue library, most Carnegie libraries were built in the classical revival style popular from 1895 to 1950. Classical revival style is characterized by tall columns, a symmetrical design, and a prominent entryway - all identifiable features found when looking at the original entrance to the Grand Avenue library.

The library's interior design was also important to Carnegie. In Carnegie's time, books were hidden away from the public in a back room or behind the librarian's desk. He wanted books out in the open on shelves for the public to discover.