

10/23/97

## For Reference

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### Reference Pamphlet Huntington Beach--Library

HUNTINGTON BEACH PUBLIC LIBRARY  
7111 Tolport Avenue  
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

## A LOOK BACK



**jerry  
person**

### *Early library officials had a read on Carnegie Foundation*

Last week we began looking at the history of the Huntington Beach Library and the grand opening of the building at Walnut Avenue and Main Street in 1909.

In June of that year, the library association appealed to the city for \$300 to help pay the library's debt and to take control of the library.

The city passed an ordinance to acquire the library and appointed Blodget, Manske, Lindgren, Everett and Vincent as trustees, with Everett as president and Lindgren as secretary.

Edith Brown of Long Beach became the first librarian with a salary of \$25 a month.

The new board of trustees put aside a sum of money to purchase books and shelves, and it was found that the library would need the whole building space.

In 1910, the library went through several librarians — Miss Brown, Mrs. Nutt and Maude Andrews, to name a few.

Later in 1910, it was learned the library would have to move the building, this time to Third Street and Walnut.

In May 1911, Bertha Proctor became the permanently appointed librarian, and her salary was increased to \$35 and then to \$50 a month.

During this time, there was talk of a more permanent library building. The Huntington Beach Co. in 1912 offered to donate five lots at Walnut and Eighth Street if the library would provide a building.

In July 1912, Mrs. C.H. Howard was appointed to the library board with Paine as president and Blodget as secretary.

The board contacted the Carnegie Association for a grant of \$10,000 for a library building.

The city called for bids, and W.D. Lambert of Long Beach received the contract.

When the building was completed, a bronze plaque was placed in the building that read "Gift of Andrew Carnegie." That plaque can be seen today inside the Main Street Library.

• **JERRY PERSON** is a local historian and 18-year Huntington Beach resident. If you have ideas for future columns, write: P.O. Box 7182, Huntington Beach, 92615.

10/30/97

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Independent

## A LOOK BACK



**jerry  
person**

### *Another chapter in the history of the library*

Last week we looked back at more of the history of the Huntington Beach Library and this week we'll continue with its interesting past.

The new state-of-the-art library at Walnut and Eighth streets opened in 1913 with the help of a grant from the Andrew Carnegie Association and over the years gradually equaled Santa Ana in the number of books in circulation.

And so this magnificent structure sat, increasing the number of books on its shelves through two world wars while over in the Wintersburg area of our city a small, wooden, one-room building stood just south of Warner Avenue on Gohard Street behind the Warner Avenue Baptist Church.

This county-owned building served the area as its library through the 1930s and 1940s.

The Wintersburg library was only open Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays with Marge Gardner Cowling serving as librarian.

By the 1950s, the Wintersburg library was gone and the Carnegie library on Eighth Street began showing its age so the city started looking for a larger location.

The city chose a small parcel of land on the south end of the old civic center that was known as Palm Park.

The Carnegie library closed in 1951 and was put up for auction with a minimum bid of \$15,000 for the five lots it stood on, but there were no bidders.

The old library sat forlorn and empty for several years before it was torn down.

The new library on Main Street had its grand opening on Sept. 30, 1951. It was dedicated at a large ceremony by Mayor Vernon Langenbeck with the Rev. Robert Blume giving the invocation to the 8,000-square-foot, \$140,000 library.

The librarian at that time was Lylyan Mossinger and her staff consisted of Hildrith Farrell, Bertha Pann, Gwendolyn Talbert and Veva Wedel.

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## A LOOK BACK



**jerry  
person**

### *Here's another one for the books*

Last week we saw how the Main Street library began in 1951 and this week we'll look at the history of the new library in Central Park. The idea of a new, larger library began in 1967 when librarian Walter Johnson and the City Council placed a new library initiative on the Nov. 5, 1968 ballot, but it failed.

The council then formed Public Facilities Corp. to fund the project. The corporation included William Armstrong, Larry Curran, Dr. Dudley Boyce, Robert Polly and Darrell Wards as its board of directors. A call for bids was made and they interviewed 17 architects, finally settling on the firm of Richard and Dion Neutra.

"Construction of Huntington Beach Central Library may well bring the acclaim of the world to the city," stated the January 1971 issue of the Huntington Beach Sands. Groundbreaking for the Talbert site took place on Oct. 28, 1972, and construction continued until Feb. 14, 1975.

Huntington Beach resident Virginia Whipple tells me the first meeting of the Friends of the Library took place in the home of Charlene and Ralph Bauer.

During construction, a couple of mysteries were uncovered. One was the discovery of old, narrow-gauge railroad tracks and the second was the finding of large burned-out pits.

The mysteries were explained at the time by Laguna Beach resident Merle Ramsey. The railroad tracks were from a spur line of the Southern Pacific Railroad that ran from Newport Beach to Smeltzer (near Edinger Avenue) to haul celery crops to market.

Also in the area in the early 1900s were fields with solid masses of tule roots. The celery farmers would set these on fire and fill the holes with soil in which to grow their celery.

Ramsey told of numerous underground streams containing fish with no eyes flowing at least 20 feet below the library site.

But the biggest hazard for Neutra was the imminent invasion of the library by a plague of building inspectors who could "linker away the [aesthetic] values of the building," Neutra said at the time.

• **JERRY PERSON** is a local historian and 18-year Huntington Beach resident. If you have ideas for future columns, write: P.O. Box 7182, Huntington Beach, 92615.

## Closing the book on history of library

This week we'll finish up the history of the Huntington Beach library system.

Work continued on the 75,000-square-foot library building in Central Park that was designed by Dion Neutra and built by Swinerton & Walberg at a cost of \$2.9 million for the building. The completed project would cost \$5 million.

Construction began in October 1972 and was completed on Feb. 14, 1975, with an official dedication on April 5, 1975.

In March 1975, the Friends of the Library sponsored a preview tour with several hundred VIPs attending. Although entertainer Joey Bishop was honorary chairman, he did not attend the preview.

Then council members Ted Bartlett and Harriett Wieder welcomed the guests in the lobby.

Mayor Al Coen then introduced the City Council, librarian Walter Johnson, members of the library board and Shirley Kerins of the Friends of the Library to the guests.

The library board consisted of chairman David Wickersham and members Richard Altimari, Charlene Bauer, Jacqueline Schmidt and George Williams.

During the preview tour, the music was provided by the Edison High School ensemble and the Huntington High Harmonaires.

The public first got to see the inside of the library on April 7.

### A LOOK BACK



**jerry  
person**

The old Main Street library closed March 24, and the books were moved to the new location. When it reopened on April 21, it was an annex of the new library, one of three we have today.

After the first week, the new library had more than 13,000 items, and books were being added at a rate of 1,000 to 1,500 a day.

We have seen how the library evolved from a one-room building on Pacific Coast Highway and Main Street with only a handful of books to the Carnegie Library on Eighth Street and then to the Main Street building and finally to the vast complex we have today in Central Park.

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