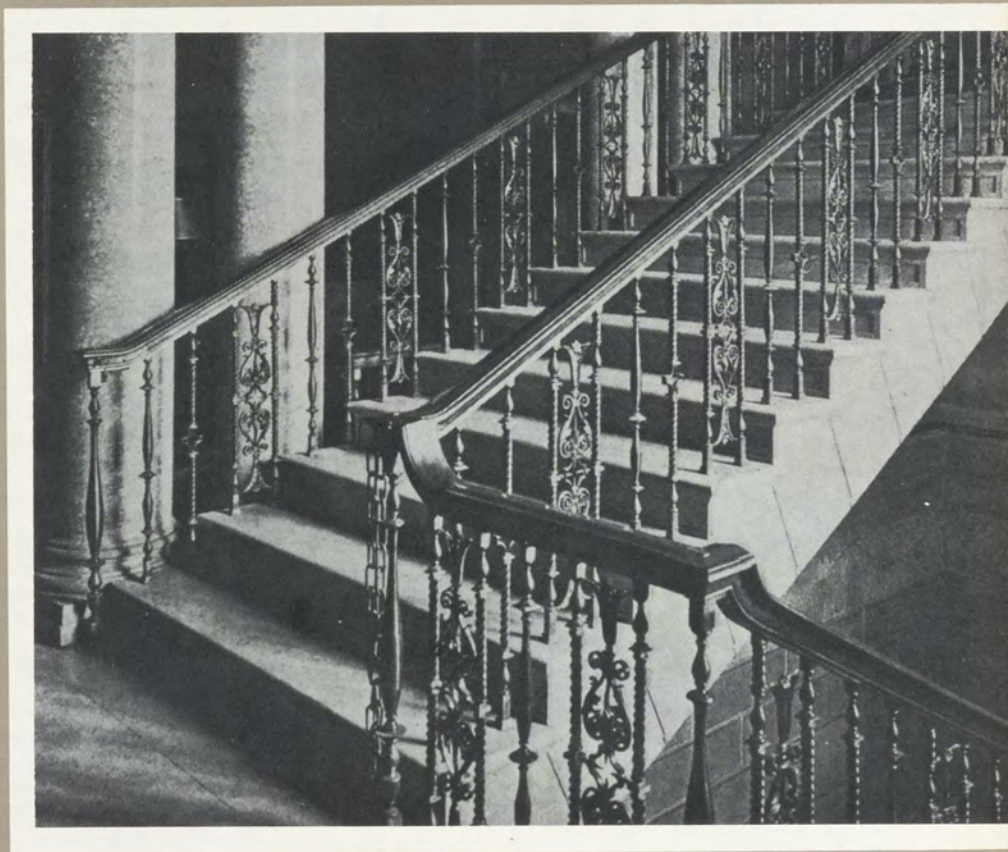




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# RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

**The St. Paul  
Public Library's  
100 Years**



Volume 18  
Number 1



# The St. Paul Public Library And Its First 100 Years

By Gary Phelps

Although the St. Paul Public Library officially ends its first century this year, it actually can trace its beginnings to the 1850s and the founding of such early organizations as the German Reading Association, the YMCA's free reading room and the Mercantile Library Association which were part of a nation-wide movement aimed at placing books and reading within reach of the general public.

The Boston Public Library, founded in 1854, the year St. Paul was incorporated as a city, was the first library in the United States to provide tax-supported free services to the general public.<sup>1</sup> Although St. Paul did not have a free public library until 1882, it had its precursors, as did Boston and scores of its eastern counterparts. In 1849 Minnesota's territorial legislature not only created the Minnesota Historical Society, which soon formed a library to preserve local historical records, but also passed an act incorporating the St. Anthony Library Association in the new village of St. Anthony west of St. Paul. The following year the St. Anthony Library Association, more a lyceum than a book repository, was in business, much to the humiliation of some St. Paul residents. The *St. Paul Chronicle and Register* editorialized:

*Lieutenant Johnson, U.S.A., delivered a very interesting lecture before the St. Anthony Library Association on Thursday evening . . . It is a burning disgrace to St. Paul, the capital of Minnesota, that our sister village of St. Anthony is allowed so far to outstrip us.*<sup>2</sup>

In 1854 the German Reading Association incorporated and by 1857 the group had plans for a two-story building. In 1856 the Young Men's Christian Association of St. Paul was organized and, like the Boston YMCA which had established libraries in 1851, the St. Paul YMCA immediately inaugurated a free reading room that remained open until 1858, closed, and was then resurrected in 1861.<sup>3</sup>

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The Ingersoll Block on Third Street and Bridge Square. Four-story building at left is on the site today of the Radisson Hotel.

A subscription library, the Mercantile Library Association, suggested by William R. Marshall in 1855, was founded in 1857.<sup>4</sup> Mercantile libraries, which had their genesis in Boston, Portland, Philadelphia, and New York around 1820, were developed for the education of apprentices whose parents could not afford to send them to school.<sup>5</sup> St. Paul's Mercantile Library Association began with about 300 books, most of them donated. Members were charged a \$5 admission fee and a \$3 annual subscription fee. At first the library was an all-male institution, but the *St. Paul Daily Pioneer and Democrat* reported on December 29, 1858, that, "In time it is the desire to open the room to the reception of ladies so that none shall be debarred the privilege of using the same."<sup>6</sup>

THE ASSOCIATION apparently was well accepted, due perhaps to a popular lecture series, and it evidently wiped out the St. Paul Library Association, also founded in 1857, but disbanded within a couple of years. In 1859 the Mercantile Library Association established a reading room on the second floor of Dr. Hayward's commercial building on Third Street near Wabasha, but enthusiasm waned and by late October, 1861, the Association, by this time located in Lambert's Block on Third Street, was forced to close its doors due to lack of funds. It reopened however, and by 1863, 1,000 books filled the association's shelves and its first catalog was printed.<sup>7</sup>

The YMCA encouraged both male and female subscribers, and it, too, had nearly 1,000 books. It had a reading room on the second floor of Ingersoll's Block, a three-story limestone building at the corner of

Third and Wabasha with a commanding view of the Mississippi River. As historian Edward D. Neill recorded:

*Thus there were two associations, each asking support of the public for the same objects, each having its friends, and each in a measure the rival of the other. The directors of both the associations felt the necessity of uniting their energies into one institution which would take its place among the public institutions of the city and afford reading facilities equal to the demands of the public.<sup>8</sup>*

In consequence, the YMCA's board of directors proposed to the Mercantile Library Association board a conference to establish guidelines for consolidating the two organizations. On October 29, 1863, both boards approved the plan and the formation of the St. Paul Library Association, the direct predecessor of the St. Paul Public Library. The quarters in the Ingersoll Block were retained and Edward Eggleston, a clergyman and Indian missionary with a substantial library of his own, was selected as librarian. Shares were sold for \$5. Yearly subscriptions were priced at two dollars.

The new St. Paul Library Association opened its doors November 11, 1863. Some of the leaders in St. Paul pioneer finance owned more than \$100 in shares. Among them were John Nicols (1811-1873), iron trader and later regent of the University of Minnesota; James C. Burbank (1822-1876), engaged in lumber, transportation, and after 1867 in insurance, banking and railroads; John L. Merriam (1825-1895), Burbank's early partner in the transportation business and later organizer of the First National Bank and Merchants National Bank of St. Paul; and Daniel W. Ingersoll (1812-1894), dry goods merchant, railroad treasurer, and president of the St. Paul Warehouse and Elevator Company. When the first annual report was issued in January, 1862, 448 shares had been subscribed, but the subscription library had fewer than 300 members in a city whose population was then 10,401.<sup>9</sup>

Despite its small membership, the St. Paul Library Association increased its book collection to more than 4,000 by 1870, with annual circulation peaking in 1868 at 10,500. Book selection tended to be conservative, perhaps because shareholders exercised some control over purchases. Reference material and well-known literary works were favored. An 1866 article in the *St. Paul Pioneer* gives an enlightening example of acquisitions:

*We are glad to notice that the purchasing committee are adding a number of standard and valuable works to the library. Among a lot received this week we notice the following:*

Tales of the Borders — *ten volumes*  
 Spark's American Biography — *fifteen volumes*  
 Savage's Genealogical Dictionary — *four volumes*  
 Duyckink's Cyclopedia of American Literature — *two volumes*  
 Canterbury Tales — *three volumes*  
 Miss Edgeworth's Tales — *two volumes*  
 Spooner's Biographical History of the Fine Arts — *two volumes*  
 Mill's Logic  
 Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson — *two volumes*

Tales of Grandfather

*The committee certainly deserves praise for selecting such a valuable lot of works, instead of the trashy novels that fill already too much space on the shelves.<sup>10</sup>*

By 1870 the St. Paul Library Association had amassed the second largest collection in the state, aided by donations from its members. J. Fletcher Williams, St. Paul journalist, summarized the status of collections in the state in 1870:

State (law) Library	5,500
St. Paul Library	4,234
Historical Society	4,000
Normal School, Winona	4,000
Seabury Hall, Faribault	3,500
Minneapolis Athenaeum	2,290
State University	2,000
Winona Public Library	2,000
Groveland Seminary, Wasioja	2,000
Parish of Good Shepherd, Faribault	1,500
Rochester Public Library	1,285
German Reading Society, St. Paul	1,200
Turnverein, New Ulm	750
St. Cloud Library	600
St. Peter Library	500
Mankato Library	500
Duluth Library	500
Northfield Lyceum	500 <sup>11</sup>

The library also placed major emphasis on procuring guest lecturers from the east coast to appear in St. Paul. In 1865 lectures by journalist Horace Greeley and local historian, soldier and author, Christopher Columbus Andrews, netted \$118 for the library. In 1865 lectures were presented by General H. H. Sibley, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Frederick



Circulation desk in the Market House and closed shelves behind it — 1910.

Douglas. Other speakers included the Reverend William H. Milburn, author of a number of books on outdoor life and chaplain of the United States congress, and Edward Livingston Youmans, scientist and author who established *Popular Science* and whose book, *A Classbook of Chemistry*, became the standard 19th century text.

Subsequent lecturers included Henry Ward Beecher, Bret Harte, John G. Sax, Theodore Tilton, John B. Gough, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Anna Dickinson, Ignatius Donnelly, and Henry Vincent. Net income from the lecture series reached a peak in 1869 when slightly more than \$2,200 was collected. By 1879, however, the board of directors reported that lecture courses were "no longer a safe reliance," suggesting to a later library historian that other entertainments were being attracted to the growing city.<sup>12</sup>

Operating expenditures, however, tended to be burdensome, especially in the lean years of the late 1870s and early 1880s, at a time when income was declining from \$7,500 in 1875 to \$1,800 in 1880. For example, one year's expenses were listed as follows:

For rent.....	\$ 400.00
For librarian.....	\$ 420.00

For printing .....	\$ 56.00
For binding .....	\$ 47.03
For fuel.....	\$ 64.75
For gas .....	\$ 101.05
For insurance .....	\$ 72.00
Minor expenses .....	\$ 83.25

Total ..... \$1,244.08<sup>13</sup>

The St. Paul Library Association did not seem to be popular with the citizenry. In the seventeen years between 1863 and 1880 the population of St. Paul had quadrupled, to 41,473, but the library still had fewer than 400 subscribers.

The library's tottering fiscal state and its lack of patronage did not go unnoticed by the St. Paul newspapers, who joined the growing sentiment for a free public library. The idea of tax-supported libraries had been considered in Minnesota in 1869 when the legislature passed a special act permitting Winona to hold a referendum establishing a city library based on a tax levy. This was not adopted by Winona, however.<sup>14</sup> Ten years later, on March 4, 1879, the legislature passed a law authorizing incorporated villages and cities to establish a public library and to levy a tax not to exceed one-half mill annually.<sup>15</sup>



In September of 1879, the St. Paul Library Association, with Alexander Ramsey as acting board president, proposed that the St. Paul city council take over the Association's library as a free public library.<sup>16</sup> Although the city council appointed a four-member committee to study the proposal, the city in the end refused to accept responsibility for the library. And so the St. Paul Library Association continued to maintain a meager existence, aided by a successful lecture series in 1880 which netted \$621.

In 1882 the Library Association's board of directors, again under the leadership of Alexander Ramsey, proposed once more that the city council accept the library and finance it as mandated under the 1879 state enabling act. Times were better, with the Northern Pacific Railroad, connecting St. Paul with the Northwest coast, within a year of completion. On September 7, 1882, the city council approved an appropriation of \$5,000 to establish a free public library. A new board of directors was appointed by the mayor, by-laws were adopted, and the Library Association's 8,051-volume collection, which shared the second floor of the Ingersoll Block with doctors' and dentists' offices,<sup>17</sup> became the new public library.<sup>18</sup>

IN THE FALL OF 1882, the library board decided to send librarian Helen J. McCaine to Chicago where, for three to four weeks, she studied under one of America's most prominent librarians, William Frederick Poole,<sup>19</sup> head since 1874 of the Chicago

**The four earlier buildings that housed the library: (1) the Ingersoll Block (1883-1890); (2) Ramsey County Courthouse (1890-1900); (3) the Market House (1900-1915); (4) House of Hope Presbyterian Church (1915-1916). Photograph is a segment of a Panorama of St. Paul in 1888.**

Public Library, founded in 1872. Poole's credentials were impressive. In 1852 he had become librarian of the Mercantile Library Association of Boston (the oldest in the United States, founded in 1820); in 1856 he moved to the chairmanship of the Boston Athenaeum, the foremost social library of its time; and in 1869 he was appointed librarian of the Cincinnati Public Library, second largest in the nation.<sup>20</sup> He also was the developer and author of *Poole's Index*, a guide to periodical literature, and a prominent member of the American Library Association since its founding in 1876.

Poole greatly influenced the methods and philosophy of the St. Paul Public Library. Mrs. McCaine adopted Poole's system of books arranged by major subject headings.<sup>21</sup> He apparently was opposed to open shelves at the Chicago Public Library and the arrangement of the shelves in the Ingersoll Block reflected this.<sup>22</sup> Poole was also against the idea of a publically accessible card catalog. Initially, the St. Paul Public Library reflected his sentiment but in time the shelves were opened and by 1889 a card catalogue for public use had been developed.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps Poole's greatest influence on Mrs. McCaine and the St. Paul Public Library was

his philosophy on the purpose of a public library. He wrote:

*The "public library" is established by state laws, supported by local taxation and voluntary gifts, and managed as a public trust. It is not a library simply for scholars, but for the whole community, the mechanic, the laborer, the youth, for all who desire to read, whatever be their rank or condition in life.*<sup>24</sup>

Cautiously reflecting this philosophy, the St. Paul Public Library's collection began to cater more to the general public. Books of fiction, often maligned and frequently suspicious, were purchased by Mrs. McCaine.

Though legally established in 1882, the library did not open its doors to the public until January 2, 1883. Any resident of the city or any person having a permanent place of business in the city was allowed to borrow books after registering their name and either giving satisfactory security or making a deposit of three dollars.<sup>25</sup> Cardholders were allowed to withdraw one book or two volumes of the same, if smaller than octavo size. A book could be kept out for two weeks, with the exception of recent purchases which could be checked out for only one week and not renewed. A three-cent-a-day fine was assessed for overdue books, with twenty cents additional if it was necessary to send a messenger after a book.<sup>26</sup> Public registration was slow initially but by the end of 1884, 3,492 people

had become cardholders.<sup>27</sup>

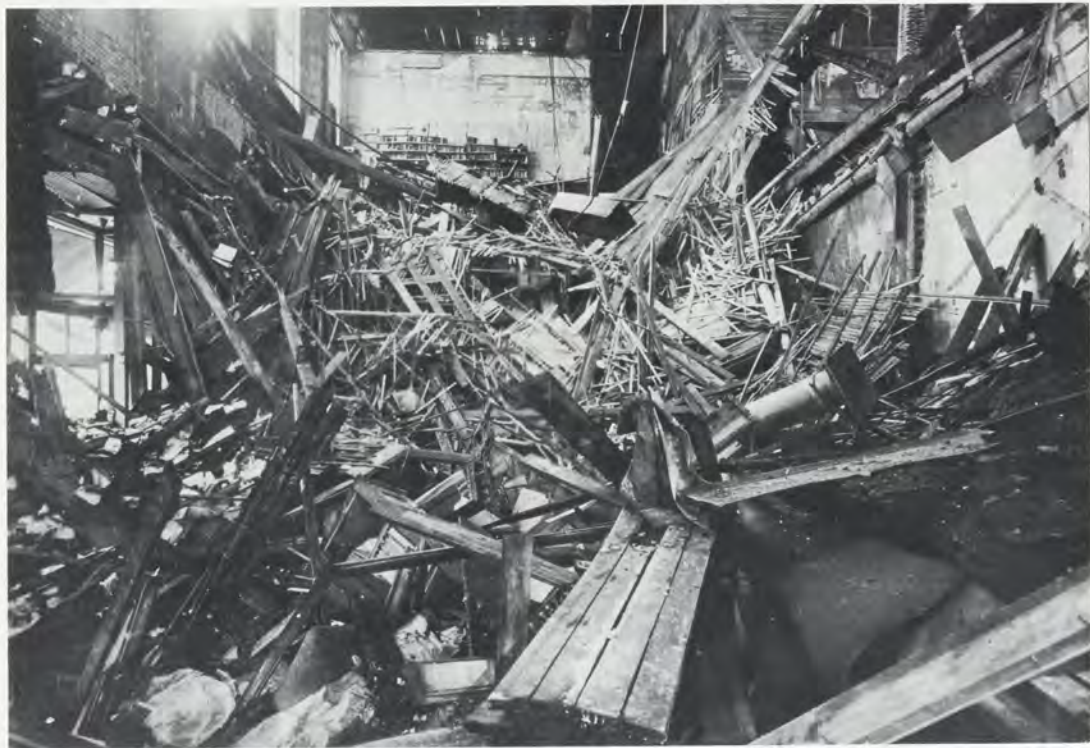
In 1932 Charles J. Ingles, a staff member of the library during its existence in the Ingersoll Block, wrote his recollections of the Ingersoll Block library:

*My memory goes back to the time when Mrs. McCaine was first [sic] librarian of the old Library Association, and even then she was a striking figure with her snow white hair . . . . My own first membership was given me as a Christmas present in 1877. It was the most highly prized of all my presents for that year.*

*I entered on duty for the Library Association in May 1882. . . . I came down early to do the sweeping and dusting. Our location was on the second floor of the Ingersoll Building . . . .*

*Perhaps a few words as the contents of the shelf may be of interest. We had the standard novelists, Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray and a good supply of Trollope, Charles Reade, and Wilkie Collins. A lighter class consisted of Miss Braddon, Mrs. Henry Wood, Mary J. Holmes, Augusta J. Evans, and Mrs. E. D. N. Southworth . . . For juveniles we had for the girls Louisa May Alcott and the endless series of the Elsie Dinsmore books. For the boys we had Captain Mayne Reid, Marryatt, Horatio Alger,*

**Aftermath of the Market House fire, 1915.**





Electus Litchfield's drawing of proposed library, about 1912.

*Oliver Optic, and Harry Castleman. We had a pretty good stock of travel books ... We also had the standard histories and the works of Darwin, Huxley, Herbert Spencer, and John Stuart Mill. We had a good supply of bound magazines, including the early volumes of Harpers Weekly, the old Scribner's Monthly and Littell's Living Age. The popular books at that time, as I remember, were Blanche Willis Howard's One Summer, Howells' Their Wedding Journey, and Henry James' Daisy Miller.*

*... people soon learned that they could draw books free of charge and soon we were abounding with patrons. In a short time another clerk was employed, Miss Grace Spaulding, later Mrs. Edward Randall. We also acquired a janitress, in the person of Miss Mary McCloskey, who remained with us for two or three years.*

*It soon became apparent that expansion was imperative and by June we were removed to the third floor, of which we occupied the entire space. This had formerly been a meeting place, known as Ingersoll Hall. Here we had much more room and things were more conveniently arranged. The room had a high ceiling and was lighted on three sides by long windows. The view from the south was charming for it looked down river as far as Newport and upstream to Fort Snelling.*

*... our new quarters ... were still heated by stoves [and] because of the numerous windows, were apt to be cold in winter.*

*... In the southwest corner was located the desk of the librarian ... In the northwest corner was a small reference room. This was scantily stocked with*



Electus Litchfield

*dictionaries, encyclopedias, two or three atlases, a Gazetteer, and Allibone's Dictionary of Dates. It was occupied principally by a retired school teacher who had fallen upon evil days and used it largely for a lounging place, where he dozed by the hour. He was accompanied by a small dog, which would curl up under the table and likewise go to sleep.*

*I only remained in the service of the library for about a year after [its] removal to the courthouse, severing my connection with the work in June, 1891.<sup>28</sup>*

The St. Paul Public Library's existence in the Ingersoll Block between 1883 and 1889 was a prosperous one, with increases in registered cardholders and the size of collection and the budget. Registrations nearly doubled, reaching 6,200 in 1889; the size of the collections had increased from 8,159 volumes in 1883 to 21,593 volumes in 1889; and total annual expenditures had exceeded \$13,700 by 1889.<sup>29</sup> The construction of the new city hall-county courthouse, begun in 1884, attracted the attention of the library's board of



directors as the collection outgrew its space in the Ingersoll Block. The Chamber of Commerce and the St. Paul newspapers supported the erection of a new public library building, but the city instead allocated space on the fourth floor of the new city hall.<sup>30</sup> The new space offered room for 40,000 volumes with expansion possibilities of half that amount, and on June 17, 1889, after a three-week move, the library opened in its new quarters.

No one could disagree that the new quarters were an improvement over the Ingersoll Block, which had housed the library for twenty-eight years. Still, by 1890 the fact that the city hall was inadequate for the library was obvious to its board of directors. Since the city would not construct a new building, the board sought private donations. They solicited James J. Hill.

Early in 1890 O. O. Cullen, chairman of the library committee, wrote to Hill, who replied on January 25: "Will be glad to meet your committee on 'proposed library question.'" <sup>31</sup> Two months later the Reverend Edward D. Neill, Macalester College professor and librarian, urged Hill to consider erecting a public reference library for not less than \$50,000.<sup>32</sup> Hill rejected both proposals. In discussing James J. Hill's gift of \$500,000 for the construction of the St. Paul Seminary (1892-95), James M. Reardon, St. Paul Diocese historian, also noted that:

*... There was a report in those days that Mr. Hill had offered the money to the City of St. Paul for a public library under certain conditions which the city was unwilling to accept or fulfill, and that he decided to use it for the building and endowing of a seminary for the education of priests.*<sup>33</sup>

It is likely that the city rejected Hill's offer after he asked the city to pay a percentage of the cost. Hill, however, would make them another offer twenty years later. To quote one historian:

*Those ... were lean years for the municipality of St. Paul. The bonds that had been so lavishly issued for the purpose of making the necessary improvement in the '80s and earlier, were falling due and although provision had been made for a sinking fund to take care of them, the necessity for retrenchment in civic affairs was so obvious that little was done in the way of materially improving the facilities of St. Paul for doing business. In the later years of the decade, the tax levy was reduced to a minimum and the income of the city*

*was inadequate to the demands made upon it for the maintenance of the ordinary functions of municipal government.*<sup>34</sup>

In 1891 the city set about fiscal reform by adopting the new Bell Charter, approved by the legislature. As historian Henry Castle noted, "The most striking feature of the instrument was the iron-clad limitations as to expenditures of the public funds imposed on the several officials and boards having control thereof."<sup>35</sup> But while the library was included as a city obligation, the city could not provide support in excess of \$15,000 a year.<sup>36</sup>

For nine years, until a new charter removed this fixed appropriation, the city never allocated more than that \$15,000 to the library, although the library's annual income occasionally exceeded this amount through small donations. Book purchases did not top 4,000 until 1902. Nonetheless, between 1890 and 1900 the collection nearly doubled in size, from 26,500 to 51,280 volumes.<sup>37</sup>

The library's board still sought better quarters, however, and their efforts began to focus more on space than on a new building. In 1893 the Commercial Club agitated successfully for legislation to allow the city to sell its Market House, on Seventh Street between St. Peter and Wabasha, and to use the proceeds to build a new library. However, the financial panic of the 1890s lowered property values to such an extent that it became unwise to sell the site. In 1895 it was again suggested that the library move to the Market House, but the space available at the time was inadequate. Besides, not everyone favored the move. As Board President Alexander Ramsey noted prophetically, "The move to that hall would be from a fire-proof building to constant risk of fire."<sup>38</sup>

In 1896 the St. Paul Library Association was organized to promote a new library. Two years later Edward Feldhauser, a library board member, began another campaign to move the library to the Market House by starting an "endless chain" of letters for the solicitation of funds.<sup>39</sup> He wrote James J. Hill; and received this reply:

*Dear Sir:*

*Replying to your letter of the 11th instant, I beg to say that under the present condition of the library, I could take no interest in the matter and it would be a loss of both your time and mine to make any appointment.*

*Yours truly,*

*James J. Hill*<sup>40</sup>

Of the \$40,000 Feldhauser had hoped to raise, he secured \$565.<sup>41</sup>

In 1899, after more than a decade of pressure, the city council finally passed an ordinance that transferred the Market House to the public library and required the directors to insure the building for at least \$25,000. The directors also were authorized to lease any portion of the premises.<sup>42</sup>

Designed by architect Abraham Radcliff and constructed in 1881, the Market House "had been a burden on the city treasury . . . largely due to its radical faults of construction."<sup>43</sup> Thus \$98,359 was spent for remodeling<sup>44</sup> by architect J. Walter Stevens. Rentals estimated at \$20,000 a year were to recoup this cost.<sup>45</sup> The library moved to half of the second floor of the Market House in 1900 and expanded into the entire floor in 1908. The first floor and basement were leased. Feldhauser had indicated to Hill in 1898 that the Market House was to be considered a temporary quarters for the library. How temporary, no one was certain, though its expansion in 1908 tended to indicate that indefinite might be a more applicable word.

ALMOST AS QUICKLY as the paint had dried in the newly remodeled Market House, a three-year effort was begun to build a new library. It was led by St. Paul attorney Edwin S. Chittenden, who for many years was the most active member of the city development committee of the Commercial Club. Chittenden targeted one of the world's wealthiest men, Andrew Carnegie, who had put his great steel fortune to work on philanthropies, including the funding of public libraries. Minnesota's first two Carnegie libraries were built in Duluth in 1899 and Mankato in 1901. Early in 1901 Chittenden sent a proposal to Carnegie in New York for a new St. Paul Public Library. He also wrote Cass Gilbert, who had opened a New York office in 1897, and Dr. J. S. Billings, director of the New York Public Library, who was negotiating with Carnegie for the \$5.2 million that would build sixty-five branch libraries in New York.

Cass Gilbert had close ties with St. Paul and, at Chittenden's request, he set up an appointment with Billings. Gilbert also sketched plans for a new St. Paul Public Library and sent them with Chittenden's request for \$500,000 to Carnegie's Skibo Castle in Scotland where Carnegie was spending the summer. On June 22, 1901, James Bertram, Carnegie's private secretary who was actively involved in the planning and design of the Carnegie libraries, replied to Chittenden from Skibo Castle:

*Dear Sir:*

*Your letter of April was laid before Mr. Carnegie this morning, but he feels that it would be indelicate for him to become the donor of your libraries in Saint Paul when the late Judge Hale, a resident, left the residue of his estate for this purpose. The memory of the citizen who does this should in Mr. Carnegie's opinion be held in grateful remembrance and his action commemorated.*

*Otherwise he should have been pleased to consider the matter favorably.*

*Very Respectfully Yours,*

*James Bertram.<sup>46</sup>*

Judge Henry Hale, who died in 1890, had left much of his estate to the public library. Most of the bequest, however, was in the form of his Third Street property which had been devalued considerably after the Panic of 1893. The will also stipulated that the funds could not be used for twenty-five years. Chittenden immediately asked Mrs. Hale to write Carnegie concerning the nature of her deceased husband's bequest, but this and subsequent letters had no success.

By the spring of 1902 Chittenden suggested that Gilbert talk with Carnegie directly, an idea Dr. Billings, who did not wish to jeopardize his own standing with Carnegie, heartily vetoed, and the year ended with no further word from Carnegie or Bertram. In early February, 1903, Gilbert reported that he had heard that Carnegie was looking favorably on the St. Paul library project. This hope was dashed before the month was out when the long-awaited reply came from James Bertram:

*Dear Sir:*

*. . . Mr. Carnegie has gone over the papers about the St. Paul Library several times and definitely stated he did not see his way to do anything in the matter, the Hale bequest, etc., being in the way . . .<sup>47</sup>*

As a postscript to the whole effort, Chittenden wrote Gilbert on September 25, 1903:

*Dear Sir:*

*Since I last wrote you, Mr. D. R. Noyes\* has told me that Mr. Carnegie directly told some of [Noyes] friends that the reason why he does not give Saint Paul a library is that J. J. Hill lives here and is fully able to provide one for the city . . .<sup>48</sup>*

\*Founder of the St. Paul drug firm, Noyes Brothers and Culter.



Laying of the library's cornerstone, 1914. At upper left is the Minnesota Club under construction.

The move to the Market House in 1900 symbolized the beginning of the library's renaissance. The new city charter enacted in 1900 removed the \$15,000 ceiling on annual appropriations. The library still, however, was not deriving the maximum benefit from the mill rate authorized in 1879 and its annual expenditures were increasing greatly: to \$20,700 in 1901; \$37,500 in 1902; \$50,870 in 1904; and \$71,100 in 1905. Expenditures on books rose from \$1,500 in 1900 to \$19,200 in 1907 and the total number of volumes in the collection more than doubled, from 51,280 in 1900 to 117,896 in 1910.<sup>49</sup>

Notwithstanding the spatial restraints of the city hall, the library opened a children's room in 1894. Four years later space was in such demand that the children's room was needed for other purposes and Mayor Kiefer donated his office for the children's room. When the library expanded its quarters on the second floor of the Market House in 1908, the new space was used for children's quarters.

BY 1914 CHILDREN'S literature accounted for 18 percent of the library's total collection and 23 percent of its total circulation. Complementing this was the extension in 1907 of library service to the schools. The ten largest schools in the city each received fifty volumes for grades four through eight.

In 1908 this was expanded to 4,050 and included the high school and thirty-one grade schools. By 1913 there were 8,746 volumes and 1,023 titles in the public schools. Of these, only forty-four were fiction.<sup>50</sup>

Still, there seems to have been little effort to draw people to the library, and its publications consisted of topical book lists written by Mrs. McCaine. They included *Select Books on Gardens and Gardening*, *Select List of Books on Fungi and Mushrooms*, or *Select List of Books for Sunday School Teachers and Scholars*. The actual "selling" of the library would be undertaken by Mrs. McCaine's dynamic successor, William Dawson Johnston.

St. Paul's population increased by 100,000 in the 1880s and 1890s, and the residential neighborhoods expanded into outlying areas, gradually leaving downtown more commercial than residential. Thus the library's clientele now lived farther away from the library. Other libraries were beginning to cope with similar expansion of their urban areas. Carnegie had given Duluth \$125,000 for the establishment of three branch libraries in 1899 and Minneapolis had been experimenting with branch libraries since the opening of its



Original interior plan of the library, believed to have been based on Charles Soule's 1912 recommendations.

new library building in 1899.

St. Paul had made an attempt to establish a delivery station (a temporary branch) at Hendricks School in 1891 but the venture was discontinued after six months. However, by 1910 eleven such stations had been established at such places as neighborhood drugstores, the West Side Neighborhood House, and the Merriam Park branch of the YMCA. Usually, 200 books were sent to the station every three months and a library representative visited the station once a week to take and supply orders. In 1912 delivery stations were established at American Hoist and Derrick and in two clubrooms of the St. Paul City Railway. In 1905, 5 percent of the library's total circulation was done through delivery stations. This increased to 14 percent in 1908, and 17 percent in 1913.<sup>51</sup>

THE QUESTION OF staff structure for the library first came before the board of directors at its annual meeting in December, 1902. After investigating policies of nine other public libraries in the United States, including Minneapolis, the board's committee of administration recommended that the St. Paul library staff consist of the following: chief cataloguer, superintendent of circulation, superintendent of reference department, superintendent of the reference room, superintendent of the juvenile department, and registration clerk. Assistants were also employed.<sup>52</sup>

Mrs. McCaine, St. Paul's head librarian from 1877 to 1913, had no formal library school training, but neither did any other librarian in the United States until the late 1880s when Columbia College librarian Melville Dewey offered a four-month course in the subject.<sup>53</sup>

Mrs. McCaine seems to have been a con-

servative librarian, but she was also open to change. Under her leadership, the library evolved from an elite group with 200 members to a library free and open to everyone. She was not a publishing contributor to periodical literature, nor as dynamic as her younger counterpart in Minneapolis, Gratia Countryman, who was concerned with drawing working people into the library, but Mrs. McCaine was noted for excellent standards of book selection.<sup>54</sup> In 1913 the highest percentage of volumes in the library was classified as juvenile literature, followed by fiction, periodicals and newspapers, literature, and foreign language books. The latter accounted for 6 percent of the total collection and of that 9,022 books, 31 percent were in German and 25 percent were in Swedish.<sup>55</sup>

Agitation for a new library was renewed in 1909 by Mayor Lawler who favored selling the Market House and using the money as a nucleus for a building fund.<sup>56</sup> A site on Rice Park was chosen and in 1910 the library board began discussing three options for raising the estimated \$500,000 needed for the site and a building: popular subscription, sale of the library property, and leasing of the library property.<sup>57</sup> In December David Chauncey Shepard, who had made his fortune as a railroad contractor, offered to give \$100,000 toward the project on condition that the remainder be raised by subscription only, not through property sales or bond issues.

In August, 1911, James J. Hill, perhaps stimulated by Shepard's action, offered another \$250,000 with the same conditions, except that he asked that an additional \$400,000 be raised by popular subscription.

Their offers, however, and the option of selling the library property were rejected in favor of issuing bonds and leasing the property to pay interest. Local women's clubs and teachers' organizations supported the plan, and it was approved by the mayor and the president of the library board.<sup>58</sup>

HILL INTERVENED on March 5, 1912, with a new offer. He proposed giving \$700,000 for the construction and endowment of a reference library that would be incorporated into a new public library if the city would acquire the site.<sup>59</sup> An enormous subscription campaign, organized by the St. Paul Association of Commerce, raised \$100,000. An additional \$30,000 was received through a bequest from Greenleaf Clark. In June of 1912 the state legislature authorized the city to issue \$600,000 in bonds for the erection of the library building.<sup>60</sup> Hill suggested the architect and builders for the project, and scrutinized the planning and construction of the reference library.

Shortly after Hill had announced his plans for a reference library, he was approached by the Reverend William C. Pope, pastor of the Church of the Good Shepherd,<sup>61</sup> and a flamboyant man who ministered to the lost souls of downtown. Pope suggested that his nephew, Electus Litchfield, design the new combined library. Electus Litchfield, whose father, William B. Litchfield, was Hill's friend and neighbor, was a partner in the New York architectural firm of Tracy, Swartwout, and Litchfield.<sup>62</sup> As Litchfield wrote later:

*... he (Hill) sent for me and told me that he wished me to meet the Trustees of the Public Library; and that if I could convince them that they would like to have me design the public library, he also would employ me as architect for the reference library which he planned to build upon the adjoining plot.<sup>63</sup>*

Litchfield was accepted by the library board and Charles C. Soule, a Boston book publisher and library planner, was selected as consultant. Soule greatly influenced the interior design of the library. He wrote Hill from the Minnesota Club on October 23, 1912:

*The building committee of the Public Library Board has accepted my tentative sketch [of the interior] as their first step in planning the new library. . . . If, however, you wish further talk with me about any phase of library work, I am at your call. . . .<sup>64</sup>*

Soule did not live to see the library com-

pleted. He died on January 7, 1913, four months after his "accepted tentative sketch" was approved.

In 1913 Mrs. McCaine submitted her resignation because she did not wish to supervise the move to the new library. Dr. William Dawson Johnston, the head librarian at Columbia University since 1909, accepted the position effective January 1, 1914. It was the beginning of a dynamic but crisis-filled reign. Johnston had to deal with the new city charter, instituted in 1914, which transferred government of the library from a board, appointed by the district court judges, to a commissioner of education who was a councilman as well as head of the department of education. An advisory board consisted of the superintendent of schools, the high school principals, a teacher elected by the teachers, and twelve citizens, one from each ward of the city, appointed by the commissioner.<sup>65</sup>

That year, also, the city council accepted \$75,000 from the Carnegie Corporation for the erection of three branch libraries. The council was willing to take on the maintenance of the branch libraries, a prerequisite for Carnegie funds. Thus, before Johnston had spent one year with the library, four new libraries (including the main library) were either under construction or in the planning stages.

JOHNSTON'S THEORY was that "the book should seek the reader," and that "the book that's on the shelf might as well be no book at all." He noted: "I wish that every book was out, except those in the reference room."<sup>66</sup> To this end he initiated the most ambitious publicity drive the library had ever undertaken. He continued to issue book lists and, when he thought city residents were uninformed about the library, he circulated announcements to 30,000 homes via the water metermen.

He arranged for telegraph messengers to carry public library announcements with each delivery to downtown stores and offices. He initiated delivery of books by telephone within a two-mile radius of the library for 5 cents, and he sent 20,000 bulletins about children's literature to the schools.<sup>67</sup> Though library registrations had reached a peak of 42,000 in 1909 and had fallen to 33,550 in 1913, he increased them by 4,000 in 1914 alone.<sup>68</sup> He was popular with the press. As one local newspaper noted:

*... Mr. Johnston . . . regards himself — and rightfully so — as the connecting link between the public and their library, and he is precisely in his element when*

he is informing citizens how the library may serve their intellectual and their spiritual needs.<sup>69</sup>

The support he fostered in 1914 paid numerous dividends the following year when the library was struck by its greatest catastrophe. On April 26, 1915, one of the Market House tenants, the Bossalis and Papas Confectionery Store, left a large vat of candy cooking over a gas stove. The unattended vat apparently boiled over, extinguishing its heat source. Gas seeped throughout the basement and an explosion was triggered.<sup>70</sup> Alexander Ramsey's ominous prediction concerning fire in the Market House, had come true. Of the 158,200 books in the collection, 33,793 volumes escaped fire. Of these, 13,218 were in schools, 12,734 were in stations, 7,143 were on loan to individual borrowers, 73 were in the vaults of West Publishing Company, 719 were in the city auditorium, 615 were at the bindery, and 8,458 were salvaged. Though the library carried \$137,500 in insurance on the books and furniture, the loss was estimated at \$287,000 on the books and \$20,160 on the furniture.<sup>71</sup> Three days after the fire, on April 30, the library opened its temporary quarters at the old House of Hope Church at Fifth and Exchange Streets.

In the aftermath of the disaster, community support for the library reached one of its all-time peaks. Donations of books flowed in, registrations increased, and by the end of 1915 the library's collection had reached 66,500 volumes. Two years after the fire, the library had 3,000 more books than before the fire.<sup>72</sup>

In May, 1916, the library moved into its new building. The interior of the library followed a plan almost identical to the one outlined by Soule in his book, *How to Plan a Library Building for Library Work*. The library contained a large, well lighted periodical room to attract the public, "for all who drop in at a library to pass a quiet, restful, recreative half hour, a very large proportion of readers," as Soule had written.<sup>73</sup> This was the largest room open to the public. Next in size was the circulation or delivery room followed by the children's room and the reference room.

There were special rooms for fine arts, useful arts (science and technology), and social science. Soule created a large stack room for the expansion he foresaw in the library's collections. He admitted, however, that, "My own calculations have been made for twenty-five years and I should call this the life of the average library building."<sup>74</sup> As Soule had anticipated, by the time the library

was about twenty-five years old, space considerations had begun to intrude upon the integrity of its interior design.

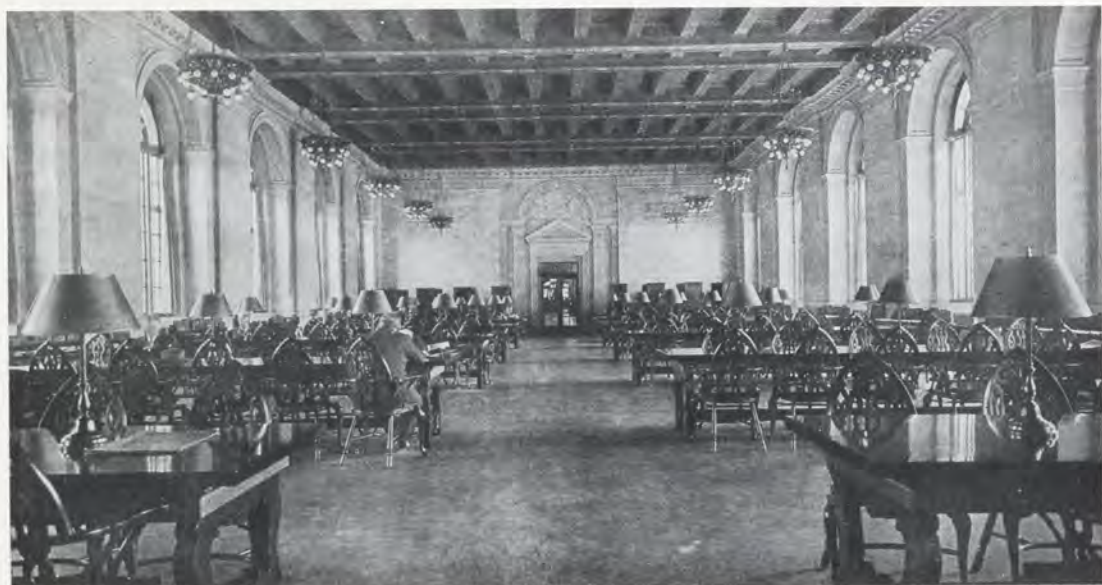
The library's architect, Electus Litchfield, born in 1862, was a graduate of the Polytechnic Institute at Brooklyn, and also held a mechanical engineering degree from the Stevens Institute of Technology. His interest in design led him to begin studying architecture in 1898 with the famous New York firm of Carrere and Hastings who, with Dr. J. S. Billings, designed the New York Public Library (constructed between 1897 and 1911). Between 1900 and 1908, as an associate in the New York firm of Lord and Hewitt, Litchfield collaborated on the United States Department of Agriculture building in Washington, D.C., the City Club in New York, and the Brooklyn Masonic Temple, all of which were winning entries in national design competitions. After forming Tracy, Swartwout and Litchfield, he designed the United States Post Office building and the courthouse in Denver, Colorado.<sup>75</sup>

SOME SOURCES INDICATE that Litchfield's St. Paul Public Library design was influenced by the 1906 design of New York architects, McKim, Mead and White, for the J. P. Morgan Library.<sup>76</sup> Litchfield's design won national recognition, particularly when it received a favorable review from R. Clipston Sturgis in the *Architectural Record* in 1920. Sturgis wrote: "Taken altogether the library is a very notable addition to the group of fine libraries that has been growing up since McKim, in the Boston Library, and Carrere and Hastings, in New York . . ."<sup>77</sup>

The move to the new library was followed in 1917 by the completion of the three Carnegie branch libraries: St. Anthony Park, Riverview, Arlington Hills.\* These branches were designed by city architect Charles Hausler, who once worked under Louis Sullivan in Chicago.<sup>78</sup> Their interior plans were styled after the Carnegie libraries, and their sites were donated to the city by neighborhood subscription.

Circulation statistics after their first year of operation showed Arlington Hills at 69,996, Riverview at 56,721, and St. Anthony Park at 26,656.<sup>79</sup> A number of book stations also remained in operation throughout the city. To the credit of Dawson Johnston and the expansion under his direction, total volumes in the public library system passed the 200,000 mark in 1918, only three years after the fire. Total circulation in 1918 was 956,000, a figure double that in 1913 when he took the

\*Now being considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.



position.<sup>80</sup>

JOHNSTON'S SUCCESS was occasionally clouded by controversy. He bickered with Litchfield over contractors and furniture. He threatened to resign in 1915 after blaming the city's purchasing agent for lethargy in purchasing the books Johnston selected. He was frequently in trouble with the Civil Service Commission because he sought highly trained people to fill lower positions and thus discriminated against those eligible under Civil Service rules.

In 1918 three librarians resigned, one of them Mrs. J. B. Beale who had headed the reference department for eighteen years and was critical of his management. Nevertheless, Johnston was an accommodating administrator who easily grasped the sentiment of the public and the press. He acknowledged the appointment of C. W. Farnham of the Patriotic League as the library's official censor of German books. The *Dispatch* reported in December, 1917:

*If in your visit to the Public Library, you run across a German book you don't like because of its unAmericanism, tell Dr. Dawson Johnston about it. He will intern it for you.*<sup>81</sup>

In the immediate post-war years, appropriations, expenditures, accessions, registrations, and circulation all increased at the library. In 1921 Johnston requested a year's leave of absence to direct the American Library in Paris. However, because he could not assure Commissioner Ferguson that he would return to St. Paul, the leave was not granted and Johnston resigned. During his more than seven years of service the number of cardholders had increased from 33,000 to 75,000

**Reading and periodical room about 1919, photographed by Kenneth Clark, for the January, 1920, *Architectural Record*. Today this is the circulation room.**

and the annual circulation had grown from 488,000 to more than 1,250,000.<sup>82</sup>

Early in 1922 word leaked out that Ferguson was considering appointing Webster Wheelock as head librarian. The son of Joseph Wheelock, former park commissioner and editor and principal owner of the *Pioneer Press*, Wheelock took over as editor when his father died in 1906. Three years later, when the *Pioneer Press* and the *Dispatch* merged, he left the newspaper to engage in the business of farm mortgages and life insurance. The local community of educators and librarians was aghast. Wheelock had never worked in a library in his life.

Although Ferguson received a petition of 1,000 names opposing this appointment, he went through with it and, after a heated council debate, Wheelock was approved. Ferguson exclaimed to his council peers:

*I have never interfered with any of your appointments. I have at all times supported you and given you credit for ability to handle the affairs of your own department. I am surprised that you would not extend to me the same courtesy.*<sup>83</sup>

Minimum civil service requirements for library employment did not apply to the head librarian; only a college degree was required. Wheelock was a graduate of Yale and a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

The enormous task which confronted him was helped along by the excellent organization created by the previous administration.



**Arlington Hills Branch Library, designed by Charles Hausler and financed by Andrew Carnegie.**

Wheelock, however, had his own notions as to what the library should be and these were tempered by the active role he adopted in library organizations, both nationally and locally. A long-time member of the St. Paul Athletic Club and the St. Paul Association of Commerce, he was familiar with the benefits of such affiliations and when he entered the world of library associations, he proved very successful. In 1923 he was elected president of the Minnesota Library Association and he later served as president of the Twin City Library Club.

As the new library director, he oversaw a system that included not only the central library but extension services, branches, and delivery stations, and a hospital program, established in 1921 under the supervision of Perrie Jones. His goal was to expand the library's services through collections and branches, and to increase circulation which had declined markedly during his first years at the library. Wheelock wrote that:

*... there is no doubt that the popularity of radio which absorbs many hours previously devoted to reading played a considerable part in the falling off. For throughout the country statistics of circulation fail to show the same gains as in previous years and the radio is commonly held to blame for at least part of the decline.<sup>84</sup>*

Wheelock recognized as another reason the lack of funds for purchasing books, a situation he criticized frequently. Between 1922 and 1928 the library collection had only grown from 308,000 to 358,000 and library registrations from 71,500 to 73,000.<sup>85</sup> Book expenditures had decreased from \$42,000 in



**Public-spirited women were among chief backers of the early library. Myra Buell, left, head of the central library's branch activities, and Mrs. Earl Christmas in front of the downtown library.**

1920 to \$17,000 in 1927.<sup>86</sup>

To determine how the situation could be improved, a committee of citizens was formed and funds raised to begin a survey of the library by two of the nation's most prominent librarians: Arthur E. Bostwick, director of the St. Louis Public Library, and Carl Vitz, director of the Toledo Public Library.

Three main conclusions were reached: (1) more money was needed to purchase books; (2) the citizens of the community lacked interest in the library; and (3) development of the branch system was inadequate. It should, they thought, be at least double in size. Especially critical of the commission form of government, the consultants recommended that the library be segregated from other city



departments; that it be ruled by a "governing body"; that the tax levy be raised to the equivalent of \$1 per capita; and that there be more publicity.<sup>87</sup>

Webster Wheelock had little time to carry out the recommendations. He died in April, 1931, after a lengthy illness. Before his death, however, he was able to procure the funds left to the library by Judge Hale in 1890: \$88,000 was made available for the erection of the Hamline and the Merriam Park branch libraries, both completed in 1930. Also, Wheelock instituted a four-page monthly publication called the *Library Beacon*. The introduction to the first issue stated that its purpose was "... to reach the non-user", to enlighten the public on the variety of the library's activities, and to "show that the chief function of the Library is not the circulation of fiction."<sup>88</sup>

Jennie T. Jennings, who succeeded Wheelock, had come to the library in 1917 as head of the cataloguing division. In 1919 she became assistant librarian and was acting head librarian between the time Johnston resigned and Wheelock was hired. Her tenure was clouded by the deep setbacks of the Depression. The library's appropriation for 1932 was lower than it had been in 1929, even though two new branches had been established since that time. Employees' salaries were cut by one-sixth, and the library had been forced to close for eight days at the end of 1931.

Over the next five years, the appropriation dropped annually. Jennie Jennings wrote morosely in the 1935 *Annual Report*: "Your library is now suffering the effects of its years of starvation."<sup>89</sup> Circulation leveled off in 1933, but dropped 5 percent the following year. The downward trend was reflected in the inability to buy new books or to rebind the old ones, and the collection's general deterioration. In 1935 more than half of the books added to the library's collection were gifts.

THE DECLINE IN circulation did not accurately reflect the library's popularity during the Depression. With unemployed people using the library's other services, the fine arts room, science and industry, and the periodical/reading room experienced their greatest usage. In 1935, 80,759 people held library cards;<sup>90</sup> Yet, the library was forced to close between August 25 and September 9 to conserve enough funds to stay open during busier months.

In 1936 the library's appropriation increased for the first time in that decade. Jennie Jennings, however, was removed as

head librarian by education commissioner John Findlan, possibly because Findlan sought a more dynamic director. "I want a person who can go around and talk to the luncheon clubs and sell the public library," he explained.<sup>91</sup> He appointed Perrie Jones to replace Jennings and got far more.

Perrie Jones was a native of Wabasha, Minnesota. She held degrees from the University of Minnesota and Smith College and trained at the Columbia Library School before spending two years with the YWCA and YMCA in France during World War I. In 1921 she joined the library staff as first director of the new hospital service which circulated books to hospitalized patients. From 1928 to 1937 she was supervisor of the Minnesota State System of Institutional Libraries. When she became director of the St. Paul Public Library in 1937 the appalling economic conditions were at last beginning to improve and consequently, the library's appropriation began to rise. Circulation also increased for the first time since 1934. In 1939, when the fund for purchasing new books was cut by \$8,000, circulation fell off by 4 percent but registered cardholders increased in number.

Perrie Jones was a shrewd analyst of statistics. When circulation was down early in 1939 she immediately began to call "attention to material other than that [of] hot-off-the-press books through well-placed, special, timely collections, [and] attractive rearrangement of old favorites." She wrote, "a constant scrutiny of procedures with an eye to cutting costs and improving the final result is imperative in this work."<sup>92</sup>

She filled the library with exhibitions of art and photography. She displayed the works of James Weldon Johnson, black poet and author, and she sponsored an exhibition called "Jewish Book Week." In 1939 she publicized Langdon Post's book, *The Challenge of Housing*, a controversial subject in St. Paul at that time. That year, also, the library sponsored an exhibit of modern French paintings, and Jones requested that citizens bring in for study some Nazi propaganda leaflets that were mysteriously appearing in the local mail. Also in 1939 a new reading room for high school students (now the paperback room) opened and was named after library benefactor James H. Skinner, whose descendants financed its construction. Designed by Magnus Jemne, the architect of the St. Paul Women's City Club (now the Minnesota Museum of Art), the room became a national model which forsook the institutional qualities of the typical library

architecture.

A RENAISSANCE WOMAN for the public library, her progress was inhibited by World War II and she concentrated more on the library's general maintenance than on cultural enlightenment and programming. In 1942 fifty-seven members, or one third of the staff, left for service or war-related jobs and sixty-four new staff members had to be trained. Adult circulation fell off. It was harder to get new books from the publishers. Gas rationing decreased attendance at the central library but attendance at the branches increased. Both children's circulation and services to children increased. Jones noted, "We feel that the public library has a definite opportunity and responsibility to emphasize its work with children during this time when, unavoidably, its service to adults will decrease."<sup>93</sup> By the end of the war in 1945, the number of registered card holders was at its lowest point since the 1920s.

The war did not interfere with planning for expansion. As early as 1943 three new branches were planned, plus an addition to the downtown stack space. A few years later, with \$826,000 from the sale of the old Market House property, the Rice Street (1952), Highland Park (1954), and Hayden Heights (1955) branches were built.

As the library returned to a peacetime existence, staff members came home from the war and, though an initial shortage existed, newly trained and educated librarians and trainees were hired. Some 2,000 new library cards were issued in 1946. From 1947 through 1949 the library grew in circulation and registrations, bookmobile services were initiated, and the children's room at the central library was remodelled with funds from Mrs. Arthur H. Savage.

In 1949, new stacks were completed, at a cost of \$178,000. They filled the library's southern wing and three levels of stacks were installed in what is today's circulation room.

DURING THE EARLY 1950s, just when it seemed that Jones had won the battle against the war-related restrictions on library operations, she found herself engaged in another battle against a more permanent enemy — television. In 1950 fewer books were circulated than in 1945 and in 1951 registrations declined with circulation.<sup>94</sup> Public librarians, nationally and locally, pointed their fingers at the increasing popularity of television to explain the declines. Perrie Jones somewhat forlornly noted that, "... competition with the demands and beguilements of the day grows more severe ...."<sup>95</sup> She was



**Perrie Jones**

nearing the end of her career, the library was slumping, but enthusiasm and planning for the future — her trademarks — were still prominent during her last five years with the library.

When she retired in 1955, the library had 89,712 cardholders, more than at any previous time in its history, and circulation was at its highest point since 1940.<sup>96</sup> Much of the central library's present internal physical arrangement is a product of the Perrie Jones years. Above all, she was an administrator, a business woman, and a public librarian who stimulated the public mind.

Her successor was J. Archer Eggen, who was appointed library director in December, 1955. A one-time engineering student and draftsman, he received his library degree from the University of Minnesota and had directed the Fergus Falls and the Cedar Rapids, Iowa, libraries.

During his twenty-two years as director, Eggen combined his engineering talents and his library education and experience to make the library a familiar and popular institution. Important to this objective was the continuing decentralization of the library. In 1937, 34 percent of the library's circulation transpired in branches and stations. By 1955 this had increased to 56 percent.<sup>98</sup> The three most recent branches of the 1950s became centers for self-help and how-to books, as well as biography. Modern fiction was popular, also.

Eggen also modernized the older branch libraries. In 1957-58 the interiors of the three Carnegie branch libraries were extensively remodelled, leaving Hausler's exterior designs tastefully intact. Eggen also upgraded the central library by installing new electrical equipment and providing for wheelchair access. In 1958 the library set a new circulation record of 1,840,000, thus breaking the old record which had been set during the Depression. In 1961 circulation reached two million.<sup>99</sup>

That year the library instituted homebound services for those unable to visit any library service and this program exists today with seventy-one volunteers serving 124 homebound library users.

LIKE DAWSON JOHNSTON, Webster Wheelock, and Perrie Jones, Archer Eggen sought to expand the branch library system which had consistently lagged behind the increases in the city's population. With federal funds and community support for an inner city branch, the Centre Theater on University Avenue near Lexington was acquired and remodelled. It opened in 1967, and it was then the city's largest branch. In 1970 the new SunRay Branch Library was opened. The Highland Park branch was remodelled and enlarged in 1975 and includes the Perrie Jones Memorial Room for the library's rare book collection.

Library services, such as the extension of branches, children's services, and publicity and publications programs, were turn-of-the-century developments. Director Eggen, like his predecessors, maintained these traditional services as did just about every other city library in the country. During Eggen's directorship, however, new procedures and services were developed which were just as dynamic as those the library had adopted earlier. The library entered the electronic age and began using micro forms on a wide scale. In 1968 the public library began using IBM electronic equipment to automate the shelf list, thus saving considerable time in maintaining current records on accessions, removals, and duplications. This data processing system was also used for personnel records, overdue records, and a micro-film photocharging system which was installed in 1969 for book withdrawal, replacing the audio charging machines which had been in use since 1959.

ALONG WITH THE technological advances came the development of co-operative arrangements among metropolitan libraries when in 1969 the Metropolitan Library Service Agency (MELSA) was formed. MELSA became a coordinating agency that made local libraries more accessible to the public by initiating new borrowing rules in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Anyone with a library card from a MELSA member library may take out materials from any MELSA library in the area. MELSA also sponsors interlibrary loan services and disperses funds for state aid and other library revenues.

In 1972 the city's administration of the library changed when a new city charter



J. Archer Eggen

abolished the sixty-year-old commission form of government. The library, as well as the Parks and Recreation Department, were placed under the jurisdiction of the city's Community Services Department. Other events which preceded Archer Eggen's retirement in 1978 were the installation of an air/climate control system at the central library, and the planning and construction of a new Hayden Heights branch.

At Archer Eggen's retirement, Gerald Steenberg was appointed director. With undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Minnesota, he had previously served as director of the Highland Park and SunRay branches, supervisor of the Library Extension Service, and public services supervisor.

Today the developments in library services reflect the revolution in information storage, retrieval, and public dissemination of information. In 1979 the library initiated M.A.R.S. Machine Assisted Reference Service allows library users access by computer to informational data banks in the United States. In 1980 the library began co-operative cataloging, using an Ohio-based bibliographic utility (OCLC). This service allows the library to store its cataloging data with the OCLC and, in return, receive a computer tape of its own holdings. Duplicated on microfiche, the tape then serves as the public access to the library's book collection. Thus microfiche readers were adopted by the library in 1980.

Every book in the library's collection that was acquired after 1967 is catalogued on microfiche, thus supplanting the card catalog for the first time. The microfiche catalog is updated quarterly. A further technological advancement was the acquisition of a theft



**Gerald Steenberg**

detection system installed in the central library in 1981.

TO KEEP UP WITH technical changes initiated by Archer Eggen and Gerald Steenberg and to sustain new programs and services, the library depends on outside support. The city provides only basic operating expenses as part of the Community Services Department's budget. For the St. Paul library to remain a progressive institution utilizing the latest library science concepts, it must continue to rely on special grants and donations from the private sector.

One of the funds which benefits the library is from the estate of Perrie Jones herself. She bequeathed the Perrie Jones Library Fund to Minnesota Foundation to provide scholarships and grants for the library staff to aid them in their work and to help improve and strengthen the library's services. Because she felt the library was a public institution and should be supported by taxpayers, Jones also specified that the fund only be used to supplement public monies.<sup>99</sup>

The Perrie Jones Library Fund of Minnesota Foundation provides a one-year scholarship for study towards an advanced degree in work relevant to the needs of the library. This is available to staff members with a minimum of two years' employment in the library system. It also offers special project grants designed to enhance library service and staff skills. Employees can apply for funds for course work, research projects, workshops, or conferences. To date, the fund has provided more than 500 individual grants. Minnesota Foundation administers the fund with the assistance of the Perrie Jones Library Fund



**Truman Porter**

Advisory Committee composed of nine persons, including the present library director Gerald Steenberg, who also serves on the board of trustees of the Friends of the St. Paul Public Library.

ANOTHER OUTSIDE contribution which is a major benefit to the library is the John F. and Myrtle W. Briggs Charitable Trust, the income from which is administered by the Friends of the St. Paul Public Library. Dr. Briggs, a St. Paul internist and heart specialist, and his wife became involved with the library as a result of their close association with Perrie Jones. Initially, Jones helped Dr. Briggs select books for his invalid wife who was an avid reader, and as their friendship grew, so did their interest in the library. Dr. and Mrs. Briggs were childless and, upon their deaths in 1972, they left their entire estates for the benefit of the Friends of the Library.

The Briggs bequest was a generous one amounting to more than 1.6 million dollars, and produces an income of more than \$110,000 per year for the Friends. The terms of the trust, administered by Warren Burger, now chief justice of the United States, Richard A. Moore, and First Trust Company of St. Paul, require that the Friends of the St. Paul Public Library use the trust income to purchase books, periodicals, films, records and other materials loaned to users of the St. Paul Public Library, and to finance other projects and programs for the library.

The Friends of the St. Paul Public Library was formed in November, 1945, by Perrie Jones and a number of concerned citizens to strengthen public support for the library. The organization helps stimulate interest in the

library; it helps to finance library services not covered by public funds, and it provides volunteers who deliver library materials to homebound readers, lead tours of the library, talk to community groups, help with clerical work, provide programs for children, and conduct other activities.

The Friends, run by an eleven-member board headed by Truman W. Porter who is vice president of Midland National Bank, administer the income from the Briggs Trust and also administer an annual block grant from the Perrie Jones Library Fund. In addition, the Friends have sponsored many public programs for the library, including talks by current literary figures and the Book Bag Lunches, a series of informal programs held spring and fall at the central library and featuring published writers. The Friends also are sponsoring the library's 100th Anniversary Fund Drive and Birthday Party.

AS LIBRARY SERVICES have become more complex, staff members have seen the need to redefine the purposes and goals of the library. In 1979 St. Paul's mayor, George A. Latimer, appointed a Citizens Task Force to study the library's many functions and to make recommendations for improving its operation. The two-year study included a survey of library users, an internal organizational plan, and an analysis by an outside firm of the entire system. Funding for the study came from The Saint Paul Foundation, the Friends of the St. Paul Public Library, and the Perrie Jones Library Fund.

The Task Force, which completed its research in 1981, made a number of recommendations, including the following:

1. Emphasize the library as an information and resource center with the need to improve the range and quantity of its collections.
2. Re-evaluate the criteria for book selection to better meet today's demands.
3. Increase the book budget. The St. Paul Library has the smallest materials budget in this region.
4. Enlarge the staff, which is currently too small, to handle the increasing public demand for books, information and materials.
5. Close at least two branches and combine their services in order to reach a larger population group.

Other suggestions were to organize branch libraries into "community libraries," establish an advisory board as an official advocate for the library to the city administration, set

up a kiosk-type library outlet in the downtown skyway system, improve computer capability, and reorganize internally for more economy and efficiency. This may be one of the few task forces in history whose recommendations are for the most part being implemented.

THE TASK FORCE was made up of nine members, with Humphrey Doermann of the Bush Foundation as chairman. Members were Truman W. Porter; Robert S. Davis of the St. Paul Companies; Reatha Clark King, Metropolitan State University; Frank D. Marzitelli, St. Paul-Ramsey Arts and Science Council; Erma E. McGuire, St. Paul Public Schools; Richard A. Moore, Moore, Costello and Hart; State Senator Peter P. Stumpf; and Fred B. Williams, Martin Luther King Center.

Gerald Steenberg has this to say about the Task Force's work and the future of the library: "The community analysis which was a part of the study indicated a need for the library system to emphasize its role as a general information and resource center. The library administration is moving ahead with programs to implement this information role, especially in the areas of collection development and referral."

Steenberg also believes that for the library to make efficient use of its resources it must continue to develop its automation program. Automated circulation and acquisition of library materials, along with information data bases, are important to the success of any library system today, he feels. "In the years ahead we will continue to work for an active, effective library system as we respond to changing community needs," he says. "The strength of the library lies in the support and use made by the citizens."

To implement Task Force recommendations, many of which are critically needed, the Friends are spearheading a 100th Anniversary Fund Drive. The Saint Paul Foundation recently approved a \$200,000 incentive matching grant. Contributions from individuals or corporations go to the St. Paul Public Library Endowment Fund with The Saint Paul Foundation; matching funds go to a 100th anniversary project of the donor's choice.

This fund drive is not just for St. Paul. It is a regional drive which also will benefit residents of the greater St. Paul area. The library serves as an information resource for county libraries, but it also has been designated by the State of Minnesota to provide interlibrary loan service for the entire state. Therefore, its collections affect library service through-

out Minnesota.

Along with the fund-raising drive the library celebrates its 100th birthday with a party in Rice Park on Sunday, September 19, 1982. Included in this gala event are used and new book sales, an autograph party, children's activities, music, and a dance in the library.

Today, a number of library historians disagree about the historical role of the public library in America. Some maintain that it has been the ideal of democracy; others, that it has somehow fallen short of that ideal. Be that as it may, 100 years of service should be celebrated by the only educational institution in the community whose basic services still are free to the public it serves.

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*at 2097 West Larpenteur Avenue, Falcon Heights, is owned and maintained by the Ramsey County Historical Society as a restored farm house of the mid-nineteenth century period.*

The Ramsey County Historical Society was founded in 1949. Its chief function is to collect and preserve the history of the city and the county and share that history with the people who live here. The Society is the county's historian. It preserves those things from the past that are the community's treasures — its written records through the Society's library; its historic sites through establishment of the Irvine Park Historic District and its successful efforts to help prevent destruction of the Old Federal Courts Building, now Landmark Center. It shares these records through the publishing of its magazine, brochures, pamphlets, and prints; through conducting historic sites tours of the city, teaching classes, producing exhibits on the history of the city, and maintaining its museum on rural county history. The Gibbs Farm Museum, the oldest remaining farm home in Ramsey County, was acquired by the Society in 1949 and opened to the public in 1954 as a museum which would depict the way of life of an early Minnesota settler. In 1966 the Society moved onto the property a one-room rural country schoolhouse dating from the 1870s. Now restored to the period of the late 1890s, the school is used for classes, meetings, and as the center for a summer schoolhouse program for children.

Society headquarters are located in Landmark Center, an historic Richardsonian Romanesque structure in downtown St. Paul, where it maintains the center's only permanent exhibit, a history of the building during the seventy-five years it was the federal government's headquarters in St. Paul.

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