

**SOUTH PASADENA LOCAL HISTORY
SOUTH PASADENA PUBLIC LIBRARY MATERIALS
SUBJECT: LIBRARY**

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Children's Services 1982-1992

From its inception, the new building reflected the South Pasadena Public Library community's commitment to children's services. One of the first children's programs in the new building was a contest to name the seven-foot stuffed ostrich, which had been adopted as the library's unofficial mascot. Another early project was the restoration of the Leo Politi murals which had graced the walls of the old library's children's room.

In the 1920s tourists flocked to South Pasadena to visit the famous Cawston Ostrich Farm. When the new library was being constructed in the 1980s, the staff thought that an ostrich would be an appropriate mascot for the library. So when a staff member saw a seven-foot stuffed ostrich, which is made by the German toy company Steiff, the library began a series of lengthy correspondences to obtain one. The Steiff company was no longer had any of the stuffed ostriches available, but they directed the library to a display company in Florida, from which the library eventually purchased their mascot. To celebrate the opening of the new building, the children's department sponsored a contest to name the ostrich, and a young boy had the winning entry -- Awston. So began the festivities in the new children's department.

Maintaining the pleasant ambiance of the former children's department was a priority for the library. So the librarians tracked down Leo Politi, the artist who had painted the murals for the old children's room in 1957, to ask him if he would re-paint the fading murals. Mr. Politi is author and illustrator of over 30 books and winner of the Caldecott medal which is given for "the most distinguished American picture book for children." He earned the Caldecott award in 1950 for his book Song of the Swallows. Expecting to spend just a few hours refurbishing the paintings, Mr. Politi agreed to re-paint the murals. In the end, however, he spent weeks brightening up the paintings, which depict children reading books, picking flowers, and enjoying the day. And for his weeks of work in transforming the old, darkened paintings to flowing portrayals in greens and blues, Mr. Politi charged nothing.

Awston and the Leo Politi murals are still treasured elements of the children's department. And continuing the tradition of strong children's services, the library still offers a variety of children's programs, from Summer Reading Program to storytimes to class visits. Maida Lin Wong, the current children's librarian notes, "Adults who used the library as children 10-20 years ago are coming back with their own children. They remember the fun times they had at the library with Mrs. Sirolos, Mrs.

Goodwin, and Mrs. Flemming. We hope that the children using the library today will bring their own children back to the library." (Sorry, there aren't any statistics on programming 10 years back. 1989/90 there were 119 programs serving almost 4,000 children. In 1990/91 there were 144 programs serving almost 5,000 children.)

Metro Monthly

The Administrative Newsletter of the Metropolitan Cooperative Library System

Edited by Linda Katsouleas

Issue 45, June 1994

Library Spotlight

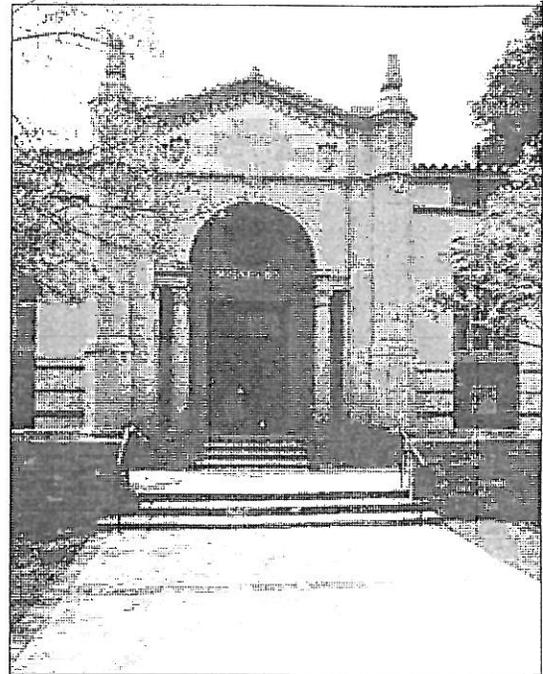
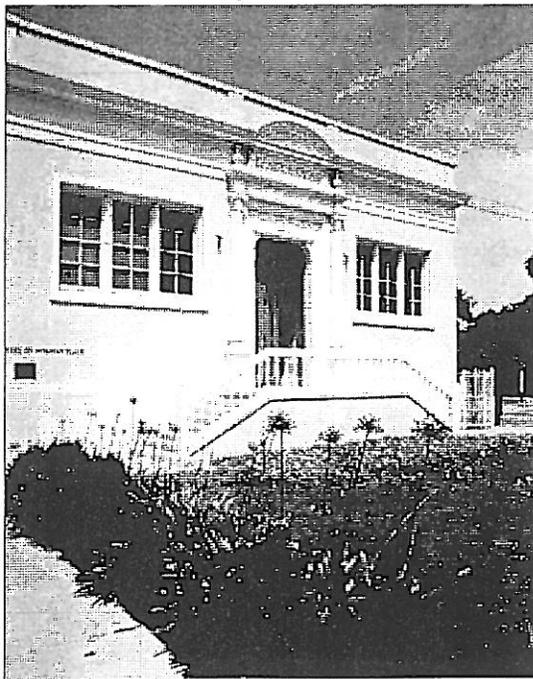
The Carnegie Libraries

Probably no one has had as much influence on the development of public libraries in American history as Andrew Carnegie. Through the endowments of himself and his foundation, over 100 library buildings were constructed in California between the years 1900 and 1918.

Two of these buildings are still in use as MCLS libraries, although in modified form. One is a branch of Santa Monica Public Library and the other is the Main Library for the City of South Pasadena.

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Santa Monica Library - Ocean Park Branch



South Pasadena Library

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Santa Monica Library Ocean Park Branch

The Ocean Park Branch grew out of a book exchange run out of a corner drug store in the Ocean Park area. This exchange was an adjunct to the Santa Monica Main Library, built in 1904. People could return library books to this location and could place orders for additional books to be delivered later. Such book "exchanges" were common during the era and such operations were the forerunner of libraries in many towns across the State.

A *second* grant was obtained from the Carnegie Corporation (a grant for the main library having been obtained in 1903), for the construction of the Ocean Park Branch which opened on February 15, 1918.

The library has enjoyed a long and varied history since its construction. The basement meeting room was used by the USO during World War II. For a short time after the war it became a Young People's Room (a local gathering place for teenagers), then a children's library, and finally a meeting room again.

The heritage value of this building was recognized when it was declared a City Landmark in 1977. In response to changing community needs, the library was renovated and expanded in 1984, reopening in September of 1985.

The present library contains approximately 20,000 volumes, and the community meeting room has been refurbished to include a projection booth and kitchen.

The Carnegie "Look" of the original structure has been retained in the addition; and the building, when viewed from Main Street, looks much the same as it always has although the main entrance has been moved to the side for better access and to accommodate the physically handicapped.

The Ocean Park Branch Library of the City of Santa Monica is located at 2601 Main Street (the corner of Main Street and Ocean Park Boulevard) in Santa Monica. For hours of operation and other information phone (310) 458-8638.

South Pasadena Library

In 1889 the sum of fifty-six dollars was raised and a free reading room was established in South Pasadena staffed by volunteers.

In 1895 the city formally established a library, a library committee was formed, and the first paid librarian was hired (at the sum of \$12.50 per

month!). The collection at that time included 296 books and 40 unbound periodicals.

The library was already in existence for several years (in the Mohr and Graham Opera Building) before the City applied for and received a Carnegie grant (\$10,000) for a new library building.

The library was built in 1907-1908 at the northwest corner of the site now known as library park. It was a typical Carnegie design of simple classical elements. Architect Norman Marsh designed the original 1908 Carnegie Building. The building also featured oak furnishings which added \$2,000 to the cost, the additional amount also funded by Carnegie.

By 1916 the collection had grown to more than 14,000 volumes and was running out of space. A second Carnegie grant funded an addition completed in 1917.

By the late twenties the library was again in need of more space. Fortunately library park by now included the entire block bounded by Diamond, Fairview, Oxley, and El Centro streets.

The original Carnegie Library was dismantled in 1928 and moved from its old location at the northwest corner of the park to its present location in the center of the park during 1929 and 1930. It was also extensively remodeled, expanded and given a complete exterior face-lift designed by the firm of Marsh, Smith, and Powell.

Exterior modifications were extensive, consisting of a sloped roof, entrance portico and new windows, incorporating many Spanish and Italian design elements. The sculptor Merrell Gage created six stone panels representing literature of the past. A frieze along the top of the building celebrates the names of writers who have contributed to California literature.

This 1930 remodel was *seamless*, and it is not apparent to a casual observer unfamiliar with the Carnegie endowment program that it is not the original building.

The library enjoyed continued support and recognition from the community during the ensuing years and was declared a cultural landmark in 1972.

The library was again remodeled and expanded in 1982, designed by the successor firm to the original architects. The Friends of the Library and the Rotary Club spearheaded a fundraising drive for new furnishings.

The library presently is 24,500 square feet in area and has about 85,000 volumes in its collection. The old library reading room is now used as a community

meeting center. The original oak tables built in 1907 are still in use.

1995 will be a year of celebration for it will be the centennial year for the City of South Pasadena and the Library.

The South Pasadena Public Library is located at 1100 Oxley Street, South Pasadena. For operating hours and other information about the library, phone (818) 441-7833.

Summary

Both library buildings grew out of the free reading room and book exchange movement, the predecessor of many civic libraries in California, and both have enjoyed the support of their communities for nearly 100 years.

Those interested in learning more about these buildings should read *The Santa Monica Public Library 1880-1990* by Ellen Braby and Janet Hunt, and *South Pasadena, A Centennial History* by Jane Apostol.

(Special thanks to Ellen Braby, Branch Librarian for the City of Santa Monica, and Mary Lou Wigley, City Librarian for the City of South Pasadena for providing a tour and much of the information for this article.)

-Christopher N. Ambrosino, AIA.

About the author - Mr. Ambrosino is a licensed architect in Pasadena with a special interest in library buildings.

Council

Highlights from MCLS Council Meeting May 26, 1994 Santa Fe Springs City Library

- It was MSP (Alaniz, Steinfeld) to approve the slate submitted by the Nominating Committee and to elect Margaret Donnellan, WHI as Chair and Carolyn Crain, SMAR, as Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect of the MCLS Administrative Council for 1994/95.
- It was MP to approve the recommendation of the Executive Committee to approve the proposed contracts with the Santiago Library System to have MCLS provide reference, administrative, and fiscal

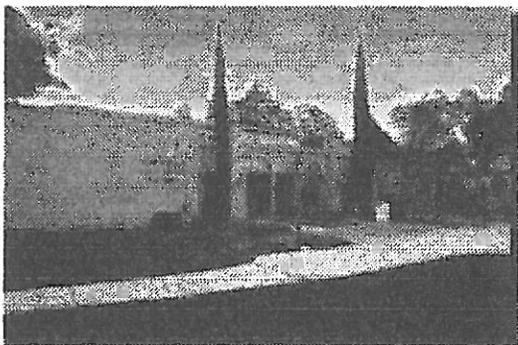
agency services for Santiago Library System for 1994/95.

- It was MP to approve the recommendation of the Executive Committee to adopt the 1994/95 budget as presented.
- It was MP to approve the recommendation of the Executive Committee to adopt the CLSA Plan of Service for 1994/95 as presented.
- It was MP to approve the recommendation of the Executive Committee to award the contract to provide audit services to MCLS for FY 1993/94 to Berghoff, Abraham, Friedman & Johnson, Inc.
- It was MP to approve the recommendation of the Executive Committee that the bylaws revisions to create associate membership be accepted as presented.
- It was MSP (Conover, Tiffany) to approve the 1993/94 budget revision, reflecting current and projected expenditures as well as changes in personnel use, as presented.
- It was MSP (Conover, Jenkins) to authorize the Executive Committee to meet in lieu of a June Council meeting to approve the 1994/95 staff committee rosters and charges.
- The drawing was held for new members of the Executive Committee for 1994/95. New members are: Miguel Alaniz, ING; Jim Buckley, TOR; Sandra Christopher, BUR; Bill Tema, ALT; Robert Conover, CMM.
- It was MP to approve the recommendation of the Executive Committee to approve the calendars for MCLS Council, SAB meetings, and holidays for 1994/95 as presented.
- After discussion of the financial problems in surrounding libraries, there was a consensus to develop a letter in support of SB 1448.
- Wini Allard, System Chair, reported on the Network Steering Committee meeting she attended, noting that the networking plan is moving forward. CLA is setting up an ad hoc committee to meet with Mr. Strong to discuss concerns about the networking plan. A retreat for the Steering Committee is scheduled for the fall.
- Wini Allard reported that the pilot libraries for Metro Business met to discuss possible plans for implementation and how to market the products to MCLS communities. Another meeting has been scheduled which will include reference staff members. Following their input, a plan for

South Pasadena, Los Angeles County

Los Angeles area, Los Angeles County region

South Pasadena Public Library
1100 Oxley Street
South Pasadena, CA 91030



opened 1908
Public Library 1908-1982
Public Library and Community Center 1982-present
currently a public library

grant amount: \$10,000
architectural style: Classical Revival (Type A)/Mediterranean Revival
architect: Marsh & Russell

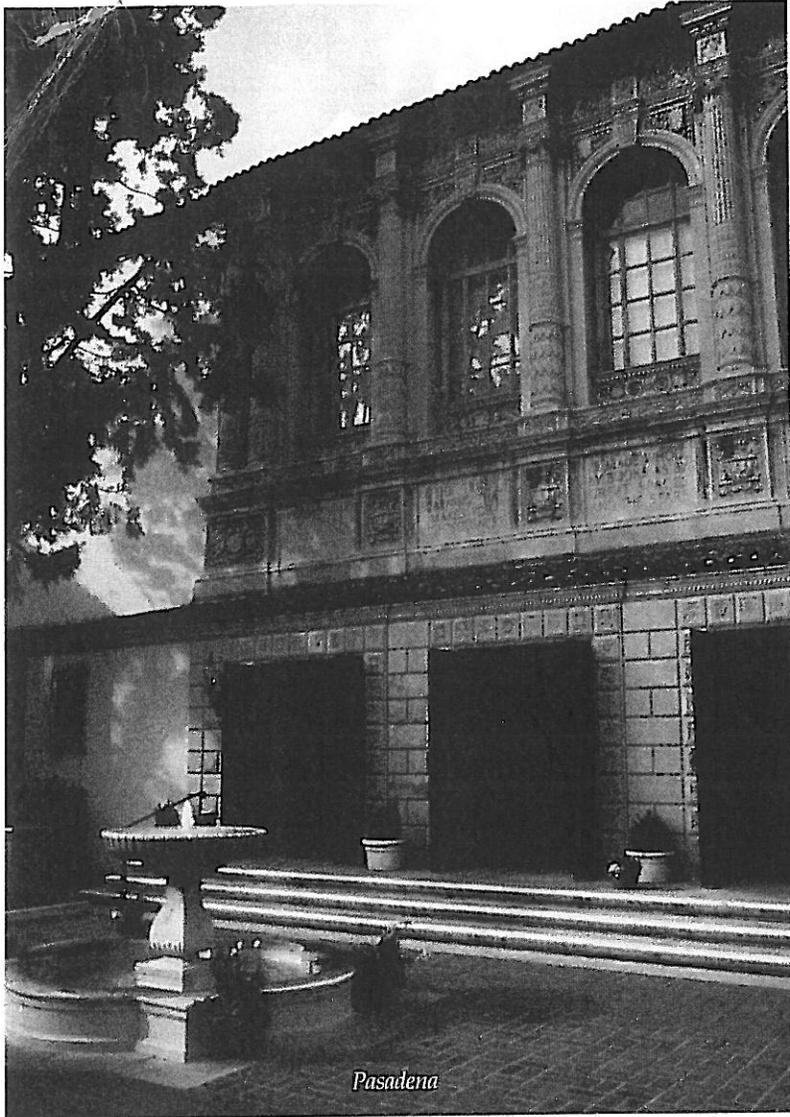


The South Pasadena library is a unique combination of its earlier and later forms, with little to be seen of the original Classical Revival Carnegie. That building was expanded in 1916, with the aid of Carnegie funds, and in 1930 remodeled in Mediterranean Revival style with classic elements, without Carnegie funding. There is also a 1981 addition. With its 1930 face to El Centro Street and its 1981 face to the

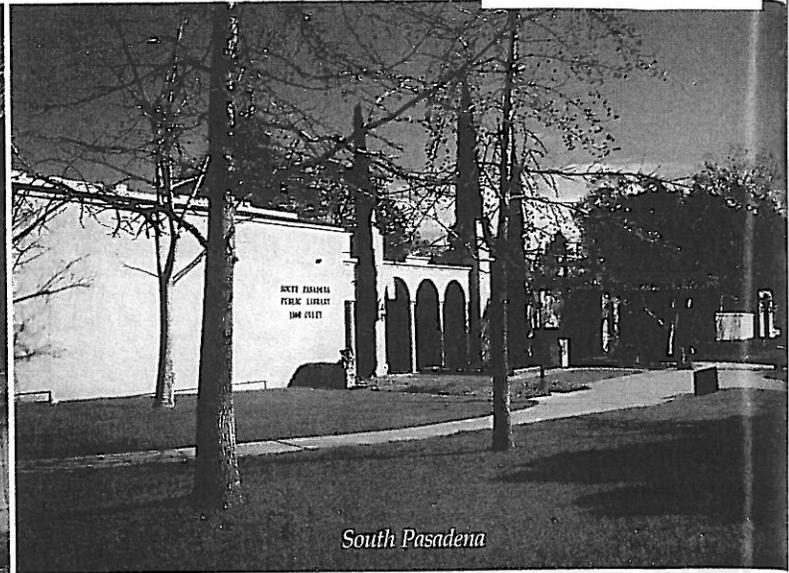
parallel Oxley Street, the library occupies a landscaped city block between Fairview Avenue and Diamond Avenue. It is the 1930 section of the building, now a community meeting place, that was made a South Pasadena Cultural Heritage Landmark in 1972.

South Pasadena's early libraries, an 1876 literary society and its successors, came under city auspices in about 1895. A 1906 Carnegie grant of \$10,000 was increased to \$12,000 and the Classical Revival library with domed skylight was one of the few visited by Carnegie on his 1910 trip to California. An additional Carnegie grant of \$6600 in 1916 provided more room. The 1930 remodeling, changing it to Mediterranean style, was by Norman Marsh, the original architect, and incorporated Merrell Gage sculpture framed in brick and depicting literary scenes, with a plaque in the frieze above each bearing the name of a California literary figure. Back-to-back to the 1930 building, the 1981 building replicates its elements in a spare and modern configuration.

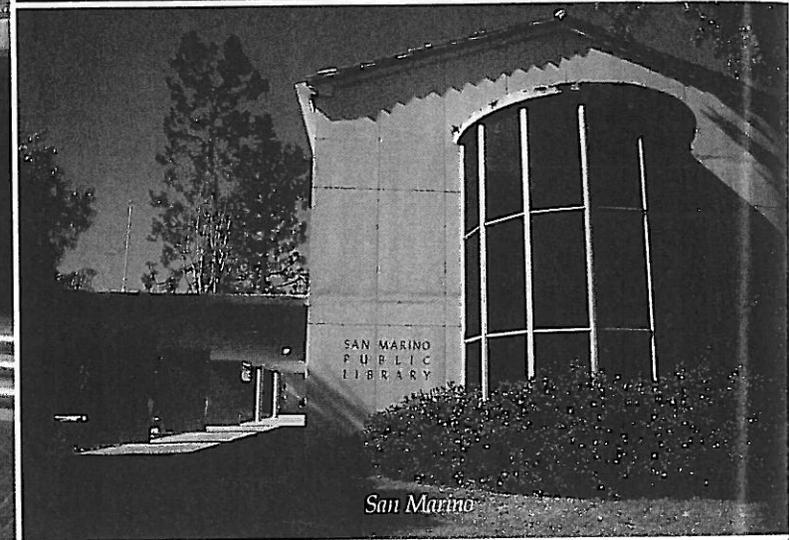
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Pasadena



South Pasadena



San Marino

Houses of Books and History

BY LEAH PISANO MCCRARY

In 1889, Margaret Collier Graham, one of the founders of the South Pasadena Lyceum (predecessor to the public library) said, "This is an age of books; it has ceased to be a question whether one shall read or not, the only question is what one shall read, and there is no way to find out what to read, but *to read*." In a sentence, Margaret Collier Graham captured the attitude and values of a pivotal period in the history of the San Gabriel Valley that led to the founding of three local libraries: the

Pasadena Public Library; the South Pasadena Public Library; and the San Marino Public Library. Each library is different, each a different size, and with different strengths. However, they all share one thing in common: all are integrally tied to the communities they serve, and are products of their dedicated constituents.

The Pasadena Public Library

Under the name of Pasadena Library and Village Improvements, The Pasadena Public

Library was founded on December 26, 1882, and thus predates the incorporation of the City of Pasadena by four years. The library began as a public enterprise consisting of 10,000 shares, which were offered for sale at \$5 each to Pasadena residents.

By February 1, 1885, only 348 shares of stock had been subscribed and paid for, totaling \$2,374.04 and falling short of \$3,063.70 in operating expenditures. In an effort to save their library, volunteers organized fund-raising

ing events including a Citrus Fair in March 1885, and an Art Loan Exhibition in February 1889. In August 1894, the library received support from a levy on all taxable property within the city limits.

The Pasadena Public Library is one of the primary components of Pasadena's Civic Center. Its current home at 285 East Walnut Street is the third of three buildings the library has occupied since its beginning more than a century ago. Designed by Myron Hunt of Huntington Library fame and his architectural firm, H.C. Chambers, the library was built as part of the national "City Beautiful" movement in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Construction began in 1925, and on February 12, 1927 the new library was completed. It is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In the early 1950s, the Pasadena Library System set a goal to have a branch library within one mile of every Pasadena resident. In addition to the Central Library on Walnut Street, the Pasadena Library System operates nine branch libraries in neighborhoods throughout Pasadena. In 1963, *McCalls* magazine called Pasadena "the best read city in America," based on circulation and expenditures per capita.

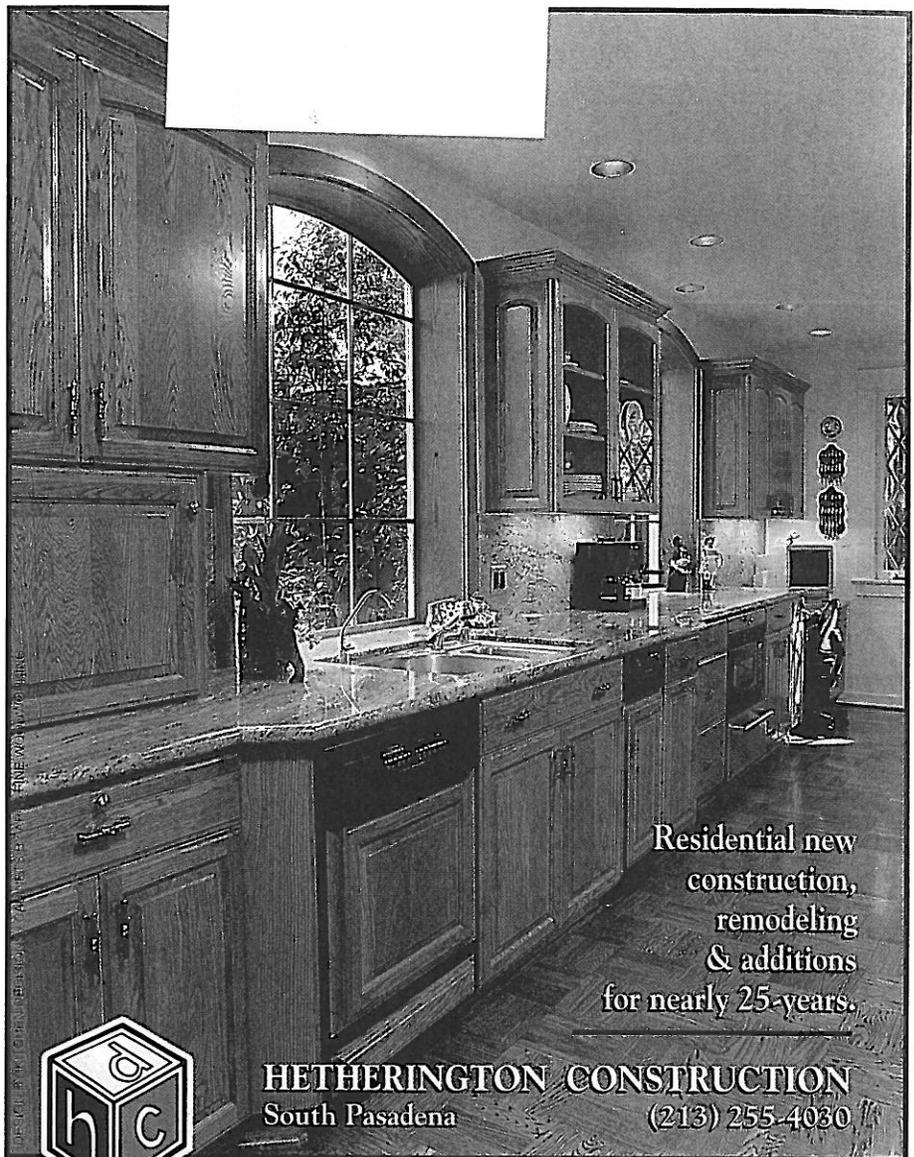
Today, the Pasadena Public Library is preparing for the future with a website, www.ci.pasadena.ca.us/library/, that provides online information about each branch, scheduled programs, a catalog of available resources and community information.

The Pasadena Public Library system boasts more than 700,000 items in its collections, 372,300 at the branch libraries, and more than 327,000 at the Central Library with a special emphasis on business and general reference materials, as well as current and historical information on the City of Pasadena. Circulation in 1996/97 was well over 1.5 million and librarians answered more than 376,000 reference questions.

South Pasadena Public Library

Pasadena's smaller neighbor, South Pasadena, was not far behind in establishing its own library. Even before South Pasadena had a public library, its residents were committed to books and literary endeavors. In 1886, two years before the incorporation of the city, citizens formed a reading club to nurture intellect and imagination and, like the Pasadena Public Library, the South Pasadena Public Library began under a different name.

On February 14, 1889 the South Pasadena Lyceum was created. The Lyceum, at Meridian Avenue and El Centro Street, was a reading room and lending library, maintained for six years with the help of volunteers and volunteer contributions. When contributions ceased to meet the growing demand for



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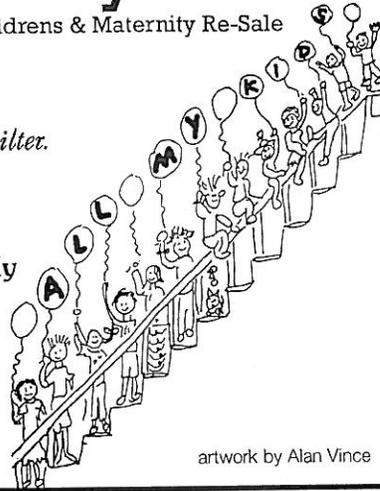
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artwork by Alan Vince

A black and white illustration of a clown on the right, wearing a polka-dot suit and a ruffled collar, looking towards the left. On the left, there are three balloons tied together. A speech bubble from the clown contains the text 'WOULD YOU BELIEVE? ... & AAA COSTUMES'. Below the speech bubble, the text 'SPRING FEVER' is written in a bold, sans-serif font. Underneath that, a list of items is provided: 'April Fool's Day', 'Gags & Office Jokes', 'Easter Rabbits', and 'Renaissance Faire Rentals'. At the bottom left, it says 'Free Balloon Delivery • Call Us For Details'. At the bottom center, there is a box containing the phone number '626 799-3828' and an 'ATM' logo. To the left of the phone number, it says 'STORE HOURS TUES.-SAT. 10 AM TO 6 PM'.

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Lyceum resources, town residents asked for the implementation of a city tax to finance a public library.

On September 10, 1895, the South Pasadena Public Library and Reading Room was established at the same location. Resolution #48 was passed which required a Board of Trustees for the library and a small library fund for operations. Mrs. Nellie Keith was selected as the first city librarian and her son, Merton Keith, was a member of the first Board of Trustees. By the end of its first fiscal year, after only 10 months of operation, the library boasted a collection of more than 1,100 volumes on the shelves, 412 cards issued, upon which 11,575 books were drawn thanks to the efforts of Nellie Keith.

Nellie Keith began a long succession of outstanding librarians who each created policies and programs that enabled the library to grow and provide service to broader constituencies. South Pasadena librarians were dedicated to creating a love of books within their community. They were so successful that they struggled to keep up with demand on the library's resources. At the turn of the century, the library desperately needed more space and they looked to the Carnegie Corporation for help.

During the years between 1886 and 1915, Andrew Carnegie and his philanthropy efforts created 1,679 free public libraries. Grants were awarded on the basis of an application and evaluation process. Each community was asked to present specific information including its size and population, the existence of a library, a site available for a library building, and how much the community was willing and legally able to tax itself for annual support. South Pasadena was a prime candidate for a library grant.

In 1906, after two previous failed attempts, the Carnegie Corporation awarded the library \$10,000 for the construction of a free public library. On September 28, 1907 the cornerstone for the new building was laid at the corner of Diamond and El Centro. A provision within the Carnegie gift required a commitment from the Board to contribute \$1,500 annually for operating costs. Thus a new Carnegie Library was born. The six room library designed by Norman Marsh included a domed skylight and oak furnishings, for which Mr. Carnegie sent \$2,000 to cover additional expenses. The library opened for business on February 17, 1908.

When Mr. Carnegie visited South Pasadena in 1910, he expressed his support for the new library when he told residents, "Some of you must have been putting a good part of your lives into this work." He could

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not have been more accurate. In 1916, another Carnegie grant was awarded for the acquisition of additional space and equipment to meet the needs of its rapidly growing collection. In 1930, growth again made expansion necessary. The library was moved to 1115 El Centro with the help of \$55,000 for new rooms, landscaping and other improvements.

The library was rebuilt in 1972, through the Community Redevelopment Agency and it was declared a Cultural Heritage Landmark. The entrance changed from El Centro to Oxley Street; however, the original facade remained intact and the original structure of the library was preserved as much as possible. Today, the South Pasadena Public Library is a little more than a century old. In 1995, the library turned 100 — and it honored its 28,900 registered borrowers, 100,800 volumes, and more than 100 volunteers who contributed 10,000 hours of service with a year-long centennial celebration.

San Marino Public Library

South Pasadena's neighbor, San Marino, is a slightly newer community with a slightly younger library; however, its history is equally as rich. From its earliest years through today, the San Marino Public Library and the San Marino School District have shared a close relationship. San Marino was founded in 1913, and shortly thereafter, resident Edna S. Rees requested that San Marino become a site for a branch of the newly established L.A. County Library. In 1915, the San Marino Public Library opened as a branch of the L.A. County library system and Rees became the first librarian. At this time, the library operated out of the Mayberry house at Oak Knoll Avenue and Monterey Road, which also served as City Hall. Later, in 1917, the Mayberry house would also become home to San Marino's first grammar school. The library was opened only on Wednesdays and by the end of its first year of operation, it had 42 registered borrowers and circulated 1,408 books.

As the town of San Marino grew, so did demand on library resources. The library quickly grew and in 1920, moved to the new location of the San Marino Grammar School on Huntington Drive, which is now the Huntington School. The teaching staff at the school performed librarian duties, and expanded library hours of operation to two afternoons each week. By 1930, once again growth required a move.

Through a bond issue, the city raised funds to provide a building to meet library

needs. In May of 1932, the city council passed a resolution terminating the library's contract with L.A. County and established a city library to be governed by a Board of Trustees and supported by a library tax. The new San Marino Public Library opened at Huntington and West Drives in January, 1933, and was greeted with great enthusiasm.

Its collection of more than 1,200 volumes nearly tripled in the first eight months of operation, and circulation and registered borrowers rose accordingly. Within five years the library bookstock numbered 11,647, almost twice the storage capacity it occupied. In 1941, the library was bursting at its seams with more than 16,000 volumes in its collections with 4,000 registered borrowers circulating more than 100,000 books annually. Finally, in October 1949, a bond issue secured funds for a new library building. After several delays, due to the Korean War and shortage of materials, the library opened on December 3, 1951, with shelf capacity for 60,000 volumes.

Today, more than forty years since the opening of the new building, the library has more than outgrown its facility. A new or reconstructed building is needed, but rather than only expanding their walls, the library is focusing on the future. The library's website www.San-Marino.k12.ca.us/~smpl, is part of SMnet, an internet partnership with the San Marino public schools, and continues a long tradition of association between the two entities. The Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens are also part of SMnet. SMnet and SMILES, the San Marino Interactive Library and Education System, allow visitors to search the materials and resources of other institutions. Several computer workstations are available at the library.

All three libraries faced financial difficulties throughout the course of their lives: wars, the depression and most recently, Proposition 13, which sharply reduced the property taxes on which the libraries depend, made their futures seem precarious. However, as a result of dedicated volunteers and supporters, each library has pulled through even the most bleak of times. These libraries must now face the biggest threat to their existence: the information superhighway. One cannot help but wonder about the place of the public library when Internet access and online databases are available from a home computer, which are quickly becoming as common as a household television. These three libraries are more than houses for thousands of volumes. Their walls contain more than books — they hold the history of each community, and the commitment of generations to education and the gift of reading. 

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