

WINSTON-SALEM PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Winston-Salem Public Library, which is attempting to serve the entire population of Forsyth County, has taken a new lease on life since 1949 and is making rapid strides toward becoming one of the outstanding libraries in the State.

The present building, constructed in 1905, at a cost of \$15,000 (contributed by Andrew Carnegie) was planned and built for a town of approximately 20,000 population, and was designed to house 10,000 volumes. Since its construction there have been no additions to the original building. The only additional space that the main library has had for housing books is the upstairs portion of a nearby store building, where less-used volumes are stored. In 1927 a Negro branch library was opened on the first floor of a store building, and since that time this small branch library and the inadequate main library building have been the only quarters for housing the book collections of both libraries. The staff of both libraries have been trying to serve the entire County with this inadequate book collection, which now numbers 54,000 volumes.

For a number of years there have been groups of citizens, chief among them the local library board, who have realized the inadequacy of the present library quarters and facilities, and who have been interested in securing a larger and more adequate building with improved facilities. These people have been outnumbered by those who were apathetic or even opposed to the expenditure of money for such purposes. In 1938 the City held an election for a bond issue for the purpose of building a new library building. The issue was defeated.

In 1941, Mr. James A. Gray, a philanthropic-minded citizen, purchased the West End Methodist Church property and donated it to the city, at which time he expressed the hope that this property could in some way be developed for use by the public library. Later, when the church burned, the lot was sold by the city, and the proceeds from the insurance on the building and the sale of the lot (totaling \$88,400) were placed in a library building fund. This was the first step toward the realization of a new library building for Winston-Salem.

The second financial donation was received in 1946, when the Junior League gave R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company stock amounting to approximately \$10,000, to be used in providing better library services. However, it was not until 1948, when Mr. Richard J. Reynolds gave the site for a new building, that the real impetus was given to the movement for a larger and better library. This gift was followed in 1950, by a series of newspaper articles which deplored the present library plight and aired the needs for more adequate facilities. These articles compared Winston-Salem and Forsyth County's library services with those of other North Carolina cities and counties, and pointed out the fact that even though Forsyth County was the wealthiest county in the state, its library facilities were the poorest of any area of comparable size. These articles served to focus attention of interested citizens on the need for a more adequate library, and in 1951, Mr. Ralph P. Hanes, the Chairman of the Library Board, acting as a committee of one secured more than \$600,000, in gifts from individuals and organizations for a library building. These donations were made by outstanding business organizations and by people of considerable wealth in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. With the \$88,400 from the church property mentioned previously, and the estimated return of \$75,000 expected from the sale of the present building and site, the building fund is expected to total approximately \$800,000.

With the prospect of a new library building, the library board and particularly the Chairman realized that it would be necessary to have a much increased book collection. In early 1951, the library book fund campaign was organized with the idea of raising

\$300,000 for new books for a new library building. The campaign was headed by two prominent business men of the city. Several hundred persons took part in this campaign, and all persons in the city and county were solicited. School children contributed, all types of clubs and groups gave money as did business firms, manufacturers and thousands of individuals. The goal was to get at least \$3 (the estimated average price of a book) from every person in the city and county. Total contributions to date amount to more than \$170,000. It is expected that a number of people will still make contributions whenever the new building is completed. This book fund will go far in supplementing and implementing the present book collection.

Even before the last donations had been made toward the building fund, the library board and staff were busy giving thought to the building which would be built on the site given by Mr. Richard J. Reynolds. Librarians were called in as consultants to make preliminary studies of Winston-Salem's need for improved library facilities. After much study and planning by the various individuals and groups, a local firm of architects was employed to draw the plans for a library building which will serve the needs of this community for many years.

As to architectural type the building may be called contemporary classical. The principal feature of the building is its open-type interior, with no solid walls or barriers. If at anytime it may be necessary to make special rooms, this may be done with free standing book shelves. The Children's Room is apart from the adult room, but divided with glass partitions. The children will be served at the main circulating desk, however, as far as registration and circulation is concerned.

The building will have more than 38,000 square feet of floor space on two floors, with an entrance on Fifth Street and also an entrance on 4½ Street (the back). The building will have a book capacity of over 200,000 volumes. The library will have an audio-visual department which will handle films of various types, and phonograph records. An exhibit or art gallery, a lecture room and other small meeting rooms, will be located on the lower or ground floor. The Extension Division and staff quarters will be housed on this floor. The building is completely air-conditioned, which will make it attractive in the summer.

Mr. Meade Willis, who was the chairman of the Library Board for 25 years—from 1922 until 1947—was tireless in his efforts to obtain a new library building with better facilities and expanded services. He was influential in obtaining the gift from Mr. Gray and the one from the Junior League, and also in getting the vote taken for the bond issue in 1938.

Mr. Ralph P. Hanes is due a great deal of credit, not only for the new library building and a new book collection, but also for having crusaded for a larger appropriation from the County and City. The budget is still low, but hopes are great that it will be greatly increased within the next few years. This will mean more than just a new building; it will mean expanded service for the entire community, including all of Forsyth County.

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