

From the 18 April 1959 Evening Guide...

Canadian Library Week

Mechanics Institute, Carnegie Library Have Served Local Readers For A Century

Book reading in Canada has dipped to such a low ebb, with the tide still going out, that the Canadian Library Association and the Book Publishers' Association have undertaken a nation-wide campaign to arouse Canadians to 'wake up and read'.

A report in the Guide of Tuesday announces that some 300 villages, towns, and cities are rounding out a two-month campaign designed to encourage more reading.

Reader and author relationship is bowing out to television. In one short hour or shorter, sometimes half an hour, a whole book-length novel or story can be reduced to a few pictures with the addition of voices, and the message of the author is conveyed across to the audience with no effort exerted on the part of the recipient. So, why read, asks Junior, and why read, asks the youth. Father and or mother used to read to them before they were able to do so for themselves, but they can have their bedtime stories now by the turn of a button.

The right to read has been passed along at almost no cost through public lending libraries in this country, and in the town of Port Hope, for well over a century. The best of books and literature have been available for the asking and the promise to return it in Port Hope Public Library since 1912 and, before that, since 1852.

The pioneers knew the educational value of a hard-covered book, and, in their hope to develop a Canadian literature, promoted reading by making it almost free.

The first library was established in Port Hope in rooms over a store on Walton Street. Mr. J.H. Helm was the president. It was incorporated in 1854. Miss M.C. Budge was secretary.

The Mechanics Institute was organized in 1855 with 60 members. Mr. Thomas M. Benson was president, George Knox was vice-president, William Sisson, treasurer, and the librarian was Archibald Sands.

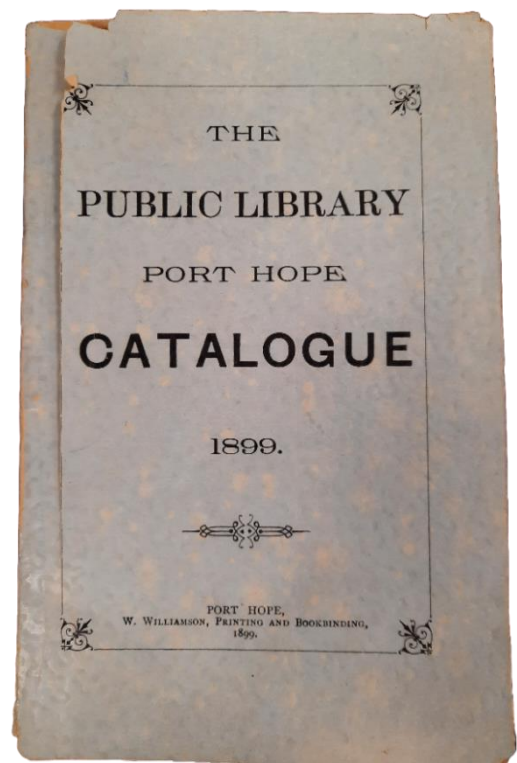
Four dollars admitted members at all times, and two dollars was the charge to those who could come only in the evenings. The library contained 750 books at that time, and, during the early years, courses of lectures were provided during the winter months.

[It is claimed that the first Mechanics Institute became defunct and sold out to the YMCA. The second Institute was started on Walton Street in 1874.]

In those earlier times, literary clubs were most popular, where groups gathered to discuss or criticize the latest books, and only the very few were not aware of the newest book published.

By the year of 1901, the Mechanics Institute was circulating over 5000 books. Miss Budge was the librarian, but whether she was the same Miss Budge recorded in the earlier library is not confirmed.

[The image, right, shows the cover of the 1899 edition of the annual catalogue of library holdings, published by W. Williamson of Port Hope.]



About the turn of the century, Andrew Carnegie, the multimillionaire steel magnate and railroad builder, established a trust fund for the building of public libraries in America and other English-speaking countries. Any town or city could draw upon this trust fund by complying with the regulations and maintaining the library. In 1912, Port Hope availed itself of this generous offer, donated the land *[a letter to the 08 April 1983 Evening Guide from Mike Wladyka claims the Otown passed a resolution 17 April*

1911 to expend the sum of \$600 for the purchase of land], and built the present public library on Queen Street.

[It opened in October 1913, containing reading rooms, closed stack rooms, a small office room, and, in the basement, a small lecture hall and furnace room.]



Miss [Lillian May] Hamley, librarian in the children's library, was the last librarian in the Mechanics Institute, but she was not given the senior position in the new library. The new library board could see only a man at the head of this fine building, and Mr. [Edward?] Farquarson received the appointment. Miss [Edith Margaret] White (image left) came in as a relief librarian in 1926 and supplied until Mr. Farquarson died in 1930, when

she was established as chief librarian.

Another record of long service with the library is that of Mrs. [C.B.] Kelly, who was first appointed to the library board in 1931 and became chairman of the board in 1936, in which office she has since served.

It was under the guidance and wisdom of Mrs. Kelly that the children's library was established in 1938, with Miss Hamly in charge. From four to six o'clock, this is the busiest time of the library day now. The children love to visit and look at the various magazines selected and placed on reading tables for them, and they seem to love Miss Hamly, too. She has such

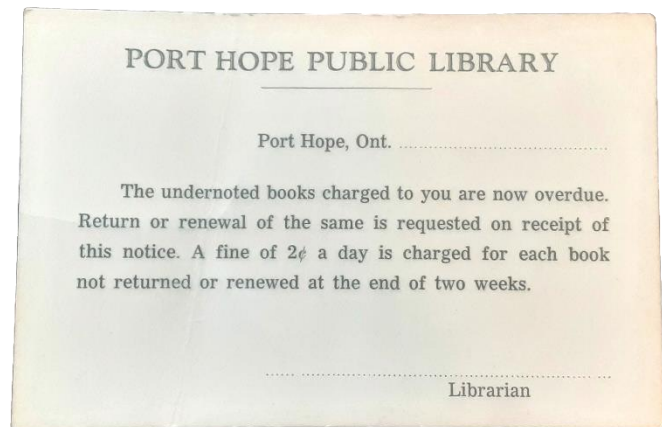
kindly patience in serving their needs and answering numerous questions. In this library section, there are some 3000 books from which the school-age children may make their selections.

Asked about the reading habits, Miss Hamly reports that the young folk are enthusiastic readers until they reach the age of 12 to 14 years, then they taper off rapidly.

Reading tastes have changed considerably, said Miss White of the adult readers. Fiction novels and romantic reading has completely given way to the non-fiction, with scientific and technical books taking the lead.

The Port Hope Library has a circulation of about 13,000 books, but library membership is not as high per capita as it was before the war, with males trailing in numbers.

Any resident taxpayer, or other person who has a taxpayer vouch for him or her may have a library card for the cost of the card, and may borrow any book for a period of two weeks.



The library is operated by a grant from the town and the Province of 71 cents per capita. Few changes have been made in the administration of the library. Mrs. Kelly was preceded by three chairmen: Mr. Summerville, Mr. Chisholm, and the Rev. M. Rigby.

The first cost for the building was \$25,000 and it was built by the late George Garnet, contractor. A few alterations have been made in the way of shelving, heating, etc., and of course the introduction of the children's library on the lower level [*the former lecture room, 1938*]. A cloakroom and kitchenette, where the librarians have hot and cold water on tap, was a needed service which was added a few years ago. The new red tile steps were put in in two years ago [*1957*].

[1962: New lighting and a telephone was installed in the adult library, and a modern charging desk replaced the impressive but impractical desk then in use.

1964: Kinsman Club donated \$2,000 and labour to renovate the children's library.

1971: Additional ground space was acquired from the town and an addition was built. The front façade, consisting of the central staircase and columns, was removed and an addition of a film, art space, and meeting room was added, on a budget of \$65,000.

The 1980 flood caused \$800 in damages.

1982: Elevator was added through funding by the town and Rotary Club.

1994: Catalogue and circulation functions were automated.

1996: a computer for free internet access was installed.

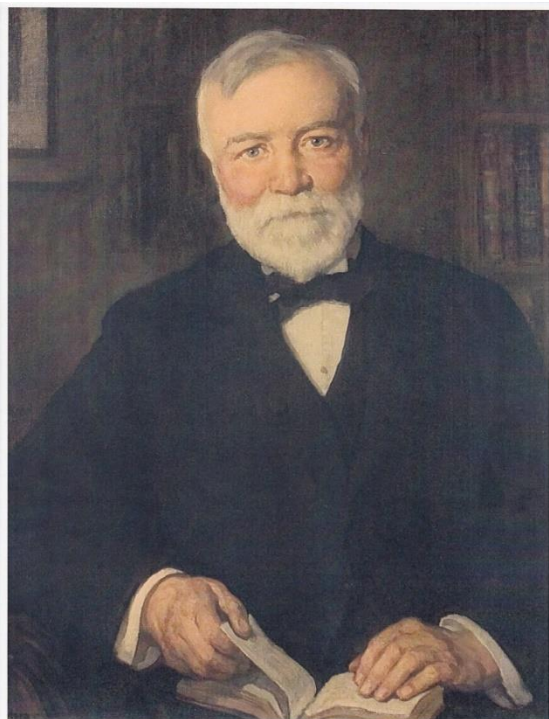
1997: Children's library closed for a month for new ceiling and light fixtures for a cost of \$3,134.

2001 saw the renovation and construction of the "new" library, the Mary J. Benson Building.

2006/2007: Awarded the Ministry of Culture's Angus Mowat Award for Excellence.

2012: 100th anniversary.]

For those who may be unfamiliar with the charitable millionaire who endowed public libraries, we should give a glimpse into his rise to wealth and establishing of the trust funds.



The late Andrew Carnegie was the son of a Scottish emigrant who came to America in 1848 and settled with his family in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania. He was born in Dumferline, Scotland, in 1835. He worked first as a bobbin boy in a cotton factory, then became a telegraph operator and clerk. T.A. Scott, head of the Pennsylvania Railroad, employed him as his secretary and in 1859 made him superintendent of the western division. His rise to wealth is numbered among the amazing

and romantic stories of mid-19th century success. During the Civil War, he introduced sleeping cars on the railroad. He purchased a farm which turned out to have oil wealth and, foreseeing the great future in iron and steel, he established the Keystone Bridge Works. By 1888 he controlled great holdings in coal and iron fields and had added steamship lines. In 1901 they were incorporated into the United States Steel Corporation. Mr. Carnegie then retired.

This man who gave great credit to his pursuit of reading had started life as a labourer. He had a philosophy which was remarkable in those days. His theory of wealth he summed up in the following sentence: "This, then, is held to be the duty of the man of wealth: to set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; to provide moderately for the wants of those dependent upon him; and after doing so to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds, which he is called upon to administer; the man of wealth thus becoming the mere trusty and agent for his poorer brethren."

After his retirement, he devoted himself to the work of providing capital for social and educational advancement. He also founded the Carnegie Hero Funds for deeds of heroism. In 1903 he contributed the funds which erected the Temple of Peace at The Hague, Holland. He endowed liberally for the advancement of civilization. In 1918 there had been 2,505 library buildings erected from the trust funds.

He died in Lenox, Mass. August 11, 1919. His was a very great contribution to the promotion of good literature made easily available to those who would read. It would require another story to relate the numerous contributions the trusts have made to cultural development.

If reading is not gradually to be numbered as one of the lost arts, or habits, what can be done to revive it? What contribution is Port Hope making to assist the other 300 villages, towns, and cities across the country and the Canadian Library Association in their campaign to 'Wake Up and Read'?

Much has been said by learned men of the magic power of the printed word. Life is enriched for those who will discover what lies between the pages of a good book.

-Helen Upper-



APRIL 3-9 IS CANADIAN LIBRARY WEEK — Seen above at the year's first meeting last January of the Port Hope Library Board are left to right Miss Lillian Hamly, secretary, Mrs. C. B. Kelly, chairman, Mrs. J. A. Reynolds and Miss Frances Quindlan. Standing J. C. H. Walsh, Lewis Roberts, T. J. Tobin, H. C. Hass and E. M. Plummer. Staff Photo

(Image above from the 05 April 1960 *Evening Guide*)