Paulding County Carnegie Library

Established 1916

A History of the Library











205 South Main Street
Paulding, Ohio 45879
419.399.2032
http://www.pauldingcountylibrary.org

The Library Movement in the United States

The activities of the Paulding Public Library Association must be seen in the context of the United States as a whole. Turn of the century American society was greatly interested in self-education and improvement. (Witness the growth of literary societies of various types all over the country, and other educational social clubs.) At the same time, a burgeoning American publishing industry was responding to the growth of American literature. It was a time of response to and pride in Longfellow, Whittier, Crane, Harte, and Twain.

An often overlooked, but important part of the literary explosion was in children's literature. Once only didactic in nature, the end of the 19th century saw a renaissance in literature being written for a young audience with pure enjoyment in mind. Children were no longer preached to, but rather enjoyed the subtle messages and illustrations of Beatrice Potter, Kate Greenaway, Walter Crane and Randolph Caldecott. Books like Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books, Rudyard Kipling's *Just so Stories* and Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus Stories* all influenced the trend of popular reading for children.

Increasing urbanization and technology brought about problems and it was crucial for the adult population to be well educated. Free public education was raising the literacy level, and the public library was seen as the logical extension of the school system, as well as the repository of the achievements of American writers and publishers. Carnegie's endowments to libraries were a desperately needed shot in the arm at a time when most communities were struggling to form their own libraries, but lacked sufficient funds to provide proper facilities. Many cities benefited from his generosity. Almost 41 million dollars was donated to build about two thousand public libraries.

The Library Movement in Paulding

In 1893, the Ladies Literary Society of Paulding assessed themselves 2 dollars each to start a circulating library. Standard books were purchased and kept at the residence of the librarian, Mrs. Wm. J. Wheeler. Books were offered to the public upon payment of 5 cents per volume per week. With this money more books were purchased. The library – in its lifetime – existed in various places, in homes, above downtown stores and in a Main Street store front.

In 1903, the Paulding Public Library Association was formed with 32 charter members. Later that year, the local Federation of Literary Societies called a public meeting to engender interest in a public library. In 1904 the Library Association opened a public library and reading room at 113 North Main, above the Farmer's Bank with 600 volumes. It was furnished and maintained by donations and volunteer help, and the dues of the Library Association members.

Toward a County Library

In 1912, Mrs. E. E. Edge, president of the Paulding Public Library Association, wrote a letter of inquiry to Andrew Carnegie in New York, to find out if it would be possible to obtain a grant for the construction of a public library. Specifically, they were interested in obtaining the funds for a county library organized along the same principles as the Brumback library in Van Wert, Ohio. The following signatures appeared on the letter:

Mrs. E. E. Edge
Wm. J. Wheeler
Mrs. Sophia Eichling
A.R. Geyer
J.R. Ross
J. Mohr
C.H. Allen
J. W. Neeley
Mrs. Edward Staley
W.N. Shaffer
N.R. Webster
John S. Snook

Carnegie's First Refusal

Carnegie's secretary wrote back, requesting population and revenue information about Paulding County. A series of letters followed in which the concerned residents of Paulding argued their case for a county library. At first, Carnegie refused to consider the plan, stating that other communities in the county would also want libraries, but did not have enough population to warrant the grant. When the Library Association explained to him that the county library would provide county-wide service through book stations, Carnegie changed his mind and granted $40,000. County Commissioners A.E. Blakeslee, S.O. Jackson and J.L. McClure upon their formal application, gave evidence to the establishment of a continuing maintenance fund equal to 10% of the grant.

No More Monuments to Pretentiousness

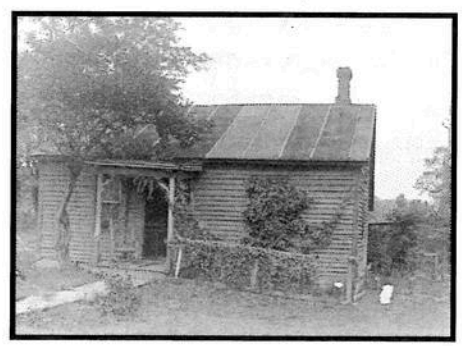
Carnegie had two further requirements to be met before the plan could reach fruition: the obtaining of a site and approval of the building plans. A.S. Latty's widow, Rebecca S. Latty, solved the first problem by donating the four lots on South Main Street. The Columbus architectural firm Howard & Merriam, who also designed the first Presidential library in the United States (the Rutherford B. Hayes Library in Fremont, Ohio) solved the second. The plans were submitted to Carnegie's secretary by the building committee (W.N. Shaffer, S.G.C. Dittenhaver, and Wm. J. Wheeler, who all would later serve on the library board). After some stripping down to cut costs, the plans were ultimately approved. Carnegie had begun requiring the submission of building plans for approval after viewing one library that he felt wasted his money by having "too many pillars." He was determined to utilize his money practically and functionally for the public good, rather than in the construction of massive monuments to pretentiousness.

The Site

The site upon which the Paulding county Carnegie Library was built was part of the original 1835 Congressional patent deed granted to George Marsh, an early pioneer of Ohio, and father of George Hayden Marsh, of the Van Wert charitable foundation. March Sr. was one of the men responsible for platting the Village of Paulding in 1850. The lots upon which the library stands are numbered 215, 216, 217 and 218. According to Paulding, Ohio courthouse records, all four lots were eventually purchased by Alexander Sankey Latty, in the following order:

- **June 9, 1852:** George Marsh, with power of attorney for James W. Riley of Mercer County, Ohio, transfers title of lot 217 to A.S. Latty.
- **June 25, 1852:** George Marsh, with power of attorney for D. Loomis and Isabella Loomis, deeds lots 215 and 216 to A.S. Latty.
- **April 6, 1854:** Samuel Keefer and Sarah Jane Keefer deed lot 218 to A.S. Latty.

Latty homesteaded on the site and was one of the 17 voters to participate in the first election to be held in Paulding. One part of the grounds was utilized as the private cemetery of the Latty family and the property remained in the family even after the bodies were exhumed and moved to another location at a later date. The Latty family moved to Defiance, where A.S. Latty died.



The Latty Homestead
(ca.1900)
[Paulding County Carnegie Library Digital Collection]

Construction and Opening

Construction began in 1914. The Willing Brothers of Bellevue, Ohio undertook general construction and Bashore Brothers of Paulding handled the heating, plumbing, and lighting. Elder citizens of the Paulding community report that a laborer was killed accidentally during construction.

The library first opened its doors to the public on March 3, 1916. The first patron to check out a book was A.A. Abuer; it was about agriculture. The library had a staff of three at the time: Miss Ella Smith, the librarian, Miss Vivian Jackson, the assistant library and A.V.R. Mott, the shipping clerk. The mode of operation was slightly different than it is today. The collection of 4,000 books was kept in the east room behind the circulation desk, and the stacks were "closed", meaning that the patron was not allowed to simply go among the shelves and browse. A person who wanted a book would go to the card catalogue, find the book card, and then take it back to the desk, where the attendant would go to the back stacks and bring the book up front. If not taken home, it would probably be enjoyed in one of the reading rooms — adult on the north and children on the south — in front of open fireplaces which contributed to the heating of the building.

Physical Description

The Paulding County Carnegie Library is constructed of French gray pressed brick with matching Bedford Indiana stone decoration. It is a one story, full-basement building shaped like an inverted T. The façade is divided by prominent string coursing which parallels the stone lintels supporting the upper and lower rows of windows. Surmounted by molded coping beneath which runs a dentilled cornice, the façade has pilasters on each corner. The entire façade is embellished with regularly spaced round

cartouches immediately beneath the cornice.

A central bay projects slightly from the center of the building, containing the main entrance, which is an arch constructed of stone, featuring a molded keystone flanked by cartouches. Above the dentilled cornice over the opening is carved the inscription "Paulding County Carnegie Library". The door is flanked by Palladian windows with molded stone pediments. The stone balustrade going up to the entrance has molded insets which match the keystone. Stone decorations on either side of the entrance match the shape of the interior floor plan and the facade.

The interior is divided into a central lobby with three surrounding book rooms and vestibule. Both vestibule and lobby have dentilled cornices and Tuscan pilasters at each corner. The vestibule is lined with marble, and the inner door arch matches that on the main entryway. The central lobby has an arched, molded ceiling with recessed lighting.

North and south rooms have oak molding at ceiling and wainscot levels, with fireplaces at each end featuring carved oak decorations in a scholar's lamp and laurel wreath motif. A small office projects from the central lobby into the south room and is glassed in on three sides.

The Paulding County Carnegie Library is situated on a grassy lot planted with maples, flowering fruit trees, shrubs and seasonal flowers. Flat Rock Creek borders it along the east. The library stands 1/2 block south of the court house.





The Main Library Today

In 2013 the library received a prestigious Ohio Historic Society Preservation Award in recognition of the exterior preservation project completed by All Trades Historic Preservation, LLC. The team with All Trades identified a serious breach in the shifting of bricks and displacement of keystones over exterior windows. Their creative solution included removing the keystones, replacing the shifting bricks and then replacing the keystones, securing them with steel pins.

The roof was replaced in 2012 and new energy efficient storm windows were installed in 2013. In addition to the windows, efficient lighting was also installed which is calculating to save the library hundreds of dollars in electric costs per month.

The interior of the library was repainted in 2013 in calm sand earth tones with terra-cotta hued accents. The older broadloom carpet was replaced with a gray-sage carpet tile with sturdy walk-off carpet in traffic areas. A portion of the original wood floor in both the north and south wings were sanded down to the original pecan wood and finished in a natural protective coat.

The building is listed on the U.S. Department of the Interior's National Historic Register of Historic Places and as a State of Ohio Historical Society Bicentennial Historic Landmark as being the first library in the United States funded to serve an entire "county" by Andrew Carnegie.

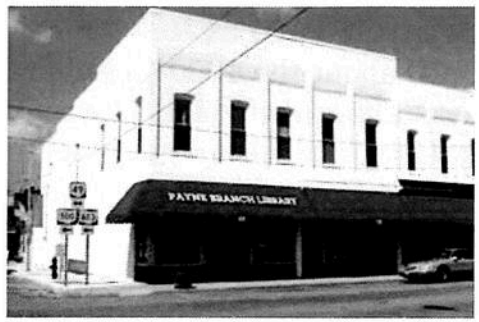
Branch Libraries

Until about the 1960s, the library provided service throughout the county via book deposit stations. These small collections were located in grocery stores, gas stations, offices, etc. The books would be rotated and changed out periodically.

In the 1960s, the State Library of Ohio began contracting out Bookmobile service throughout the state to reach the geographically isolated. The Paulding County Carnegie Library contracted with a State Library of Ohio Service Center to provide bookmobile service to five communities throughout the county. This service was discontinued in 1969 after the defeat of a levy in 1968. It was initiated again in 1983 after the State Library of Ohio representative John Phillip and Mr. Phil Suhy of the Northwest Bookmobile Center informed the board that there was 80% state subsidy available. The bookmobile would run 30 hours per week and would cover all the county communities. The State Library of Ohio discontinued mobile library service to NW Ohio in December 1994.



In 1989, residents of Antwerp, Ohio formed the Friends of the Antwerp Branch Library and mobilized to acquire a branch library. Working with the county library Board of Trustees, the first branch library was opened in 1991 at the corner of US 24 and SR 49. The branch soon relocated and opened in in a new building next to the school and was fully paid for by the Friends within two years.



A group of citizens in the Village of Payne were worked towards a branch library after the Bookmobile service was discontinued. The Friends of the Payne Branch Library secured a store-front building at the corner of SRs 49 and 500 and the second branch of the library system opened in 1996.



In 1999, members of the Oakwood Library Association approached the Board of Trustees once again (the board had been approached many times in years past) for the purpose of merging their volunteer library in Oakwood with the county library system. The Oakwood Branch Library opened in 2000 as the third branch of the library. In 2007 the branch relocated to a donated store-front and was renamed the Cooper Community Library, a branch of the Paulding County Carnegie Library System.

Throughout the 2000s, concerned citizens from Grover Hill and Scott had also expressed a need for a branch library. However; State Funding for Public Libraries was on the decline and then frozen. The library system received no additional monies when a branch library was opened. The total budget was divided so as to afford to operate and manage the new branches. With frozen and then shrinking state funds, opening additional branches was not fiscally possible.



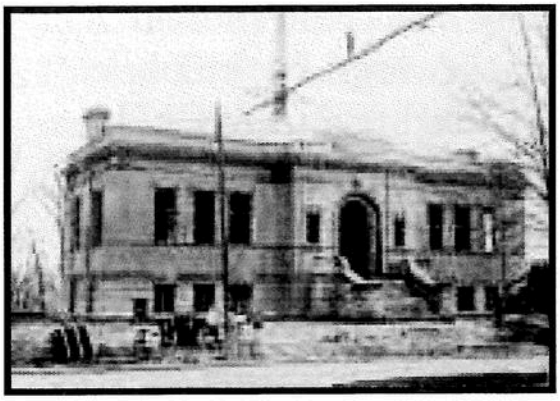
In 2010, the Board of Trustees decided to investigate the purchase of a used bookmobile to provide library service to communities not served by brick and mortar branches. A used bookmobile was acquired from the Caldwell Public Library in SE Ohio, wrapped, stocked on put on the road in June 2011. The bookmobile provides service to communities throughout the county. The bookmobile also provides books, storytimes and more to preschools throughout the county as well as Head Start classrooms, nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

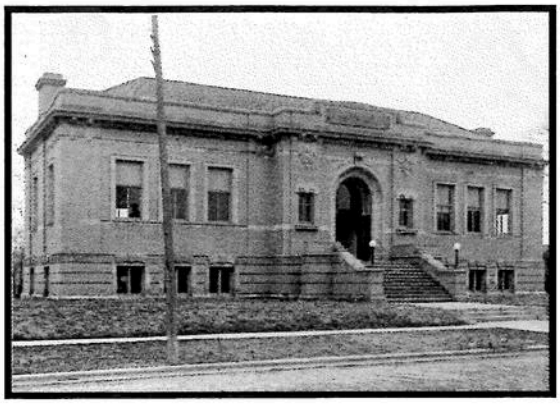
The Paulding County Carnegie Library is truly a 21st Century Library, with high-speed internet access, Wi-Fi, multiple public computers available system-wide, engaging and informative programs for all ages, makerspaces, S.T.E.A.M. programming, book clubs, digital resources, eBooks, and authoritative, current and relative materials in a variety of formats. Material holdings include books, magazines, newspapers, music CDs, large print books, books recorded on Playaway and CD, and more.

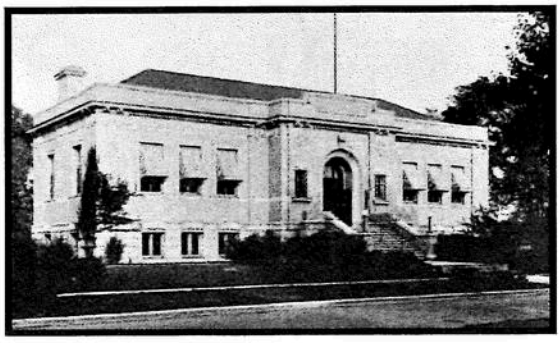
The current librarian is Susan Hill Pieper who has served in the position since 1997. The library employs a staff of nineteen and serves the predominantly rural population of Paulding County through the main library in Paulding, branch libraries in the villages of Antwerp, Oakwood and Payne, and in 2011 via a bookmobile to unserved areas.

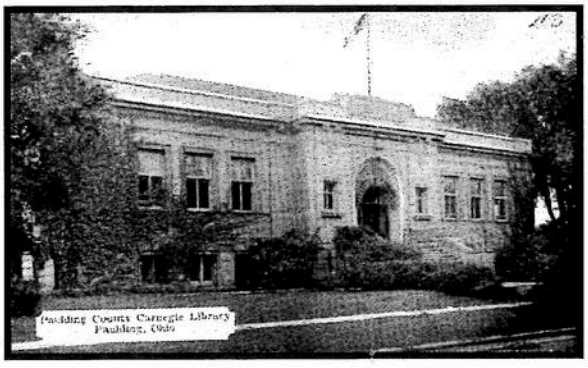
The end for now, but the beginning of a new century of library service yet to come. What will the next 100 years of library service look like?

Photo Gallery









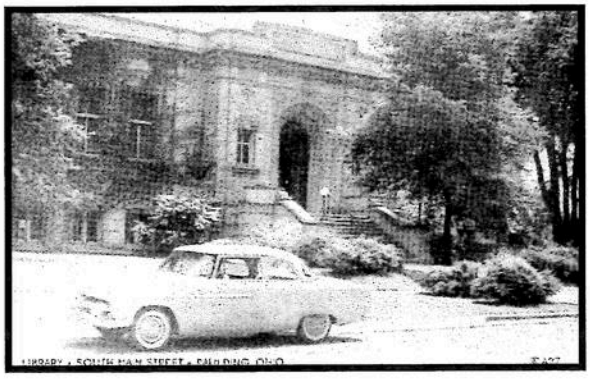




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The rest of the photos are part of the library's digital photo collection.

Compiled by Susan Hill Pieper, Library Director/Librarian
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