

Wyoming Libraries - Platte Co.
June 1946

PLATTE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
Outline of its History

The Wheatland Library Association was formed in 1896 as a reading circle by the ladies of Wheatland.

Books were kept in a private home.

Wheatland Library Association was organized as a corporation on Nov. 16, 1900, and registered as such in Cheyenne, county seat of Laramie County.

Shares in the corporation were sold at \$1.00 per share, to raise money for a library building.

A corner lot was donated by the Wyoming Development Company through Mr. Joseph M. Carey.

A two-room brick building was erected in 1901.

Library was supported by an assessment of \$1.00 per member per year.

Book collection was circulated by volunteer attendants.

Library was open on Saturday afternoons for this purpose.

As the book collection grew, the service became more unsatisfactory.

A more systematic arrangement with library index (catalog) and a full-time librarian were needed.

In October, 1914, at a meeting of the Women's Federation of Clubs, an address on library service was given by Mr. Hadley of Denver.

Discussed Wyoming Library law, which Wyoming has had since 1886.

Found that if the Wheatland Library Association donated a collection of books, building, lot, or anything pertaining to library work to the county, the county would have to accept the gift and make provision for its maintenance.

The law provided for a Library Board of three members.

Their duties would be first to secure a library organizer, then a competent librarian. See that a tax of not less than 1/8 mill on the dollar or not more than 1/5 mill levy be provided for the library.

After the report from its delegates, the W. T. K. Club of Wheatland appointed a committee to confer with the trustees of the Wheatland Library Association.

In 1914, the Wheatland Library Association donated its lot, with building and book collection to Platte County.

Miss Mabel Wilkinson was secured as library organizer in February, 1915.

She organized the central library according to approved methods, and established "traveling libraries" in the post offices, in private homes, etc. over the county.

Miss Lena R. Fenton was librarian in 1916. When her term was up, Miss Wilkinson, who had been organizing the library at Park County, returned to Wheatland, and became librarian.

The building became too small for the collection of 1800 books.

Wyoming State Library
Supreme Court Bldg.
Cheyenne, Wyoming
82002

The Carnegie Corporation was asked about a new library building. They required a site which would allow plenty of light around the building. Wyoming Development Company donated the present site of the library. The old lot was sold to the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company, and the building has now been made into a garage for the company's truck.

Plans had to be based on the population of the county and its probable growth.

Population of Wheatland was 810 and population of the entire county was 5,277 according to the 1915 state census.

A. A. Baerresen was engaged as architect.

Plans allowed for a total capacity of 10,700 volumes.

Contractors were C. W. Goodrich, and Turpin and Wandom.

Building was completed in 1917, at a cost of \$13,000 approximately.

Book collection as of June 30, 1946, totaled 20,064 volumes.

The Library is open from 12 noon to 8 p. m. every day except Sunday.

Circulation (June 30, 1946) for last year - 43,874

June 1952

There are not many people in Platte County who realize that we had a library long before we had a library building in which to house our library. The Wheatland Library Association was formed by the ladies of Wheatland in 1896, shortly after they had just begun to realize that Wyoming had had a library law since 1886 which was taxing them and bringing them nothing. The books that had been collected by this group were first housed in Dr. Rigden's home and then later in a building and lot formally deeded to Platte County. This building was erected in 1901. The present Carnegie building was built in 1917.

Visits were made to various communities in Platte County to determine the eagerness of its residents for a library extension service. These visits were made on horseback, bringing some very interesting experiences to the ones carrying on this survey. For the most part, it seems that most Platte County residents were more than willing to help and co-operate in establishing the extension service.

Our library is maintained by a tax levied on the people of not less than one-eighth of a mill nor more than one-half of a mill on the dollar on all taxable property. The system varies depending upon where patrons reside in the county. Residents of Wheatland or nearby are allowed to keep books for two weeks; rentals are kept for either one or two weeks, depending upon whether one resides in town or the country. All other Platte County residents are allowed to retain their books for a month. A special privilege is given to teachers in that they are allowed to take as many as thirty books out for a six-weeks period.

The earliest records show that Lena R. Fenton was the first actual librarian, while Mabel Wilkinson was the county organizer who was responsible for a great deal of the interest shown in the library. The first board of directors consisted of Mrs. B. O. Franzen, president;

Mr. O. O. Natwick, secretary; and Mr. G. D. McDougal, treasurer. Other early librarians were Jennie C. Hunton, Lena M. Davis, Josephine Hankins, and Moira Hunton. The earliest circulation book, dated 1918, records 12,379 as the number of books circulated that year.

In 1951 the library circulated 83,927 books among 8,376 borrowers. There are approximately 25,000 volumes on the shelves, as well as editions for several years back of 56 periodicals and 7 newspapers. The library at present is open 48 hours a week. Branch libraries in Cassa and the YMCA at Sunrise take books from our library for six months or longer subject to call. Mrs. Bertha Castor is branch librarian at Cassa, while Mr. C. L. Wendell holds this position at Sunrise. Miss Betty Correy is the librarian of the Platte County Public Library at present. She has an assistant and several pages who help with the various duties of the library. The present board members are Mr. C. E. Artist and Mr. Arthur Rugg.

Many people are ignorant of the many duties performed "behind the scenes" in order to keep reading matter before the public. They seem to believe that the checking in and out of books is the sole duty. The procedure of processing new books, caring for older books, which includes mending, and the discarding of books, is more complicated than is generally realized. In 1951 1,300 books were mended. Many books are sent to the bindery in Greeley for rebinding and cleaning also.

Another service which is rendered to the public is research work done to facilitate students and local authors. In many cases reference material is obtained from the Wyoming State Library in Cheyenne and the Bibliographical Center for Research in Denver.