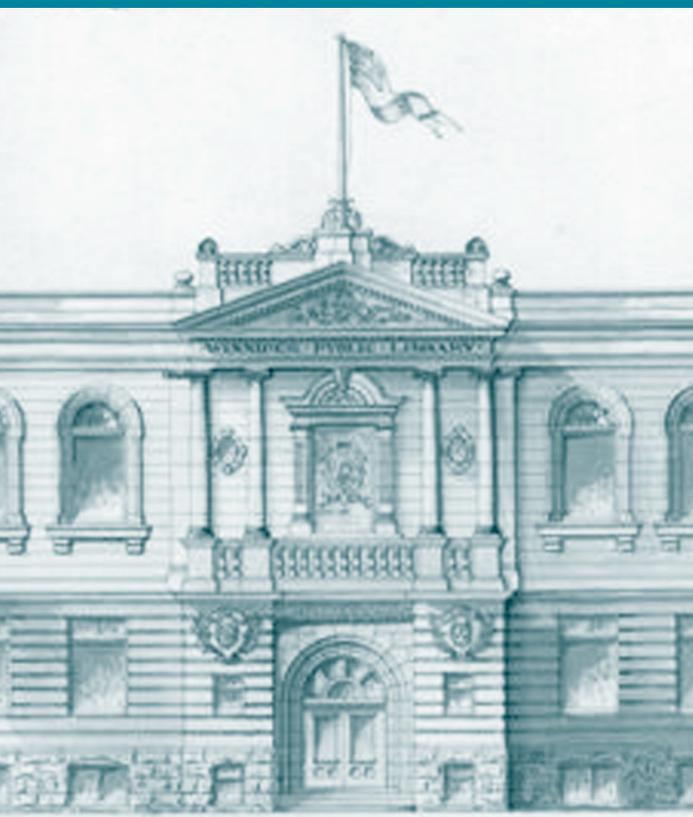


City of Winnipeg Archives

# Carnegie Library

380 William Avenue

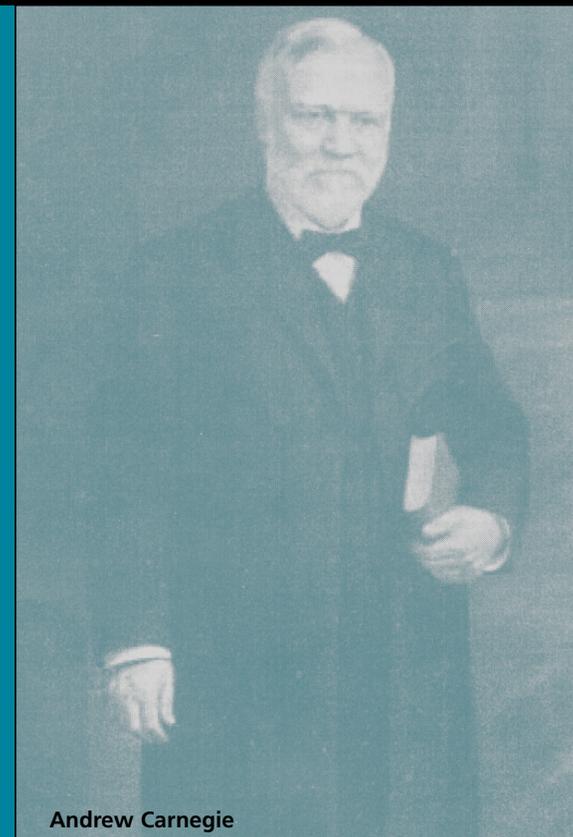


## History

The Carnegie Library at 380 William Avenue was Winnipeg's first public library building, constructed with a grant of \$75,000 from American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Prior to its opening in 1905, a library was managed out of City Hall and "Branch Stations" – small deposits of books for lending – were maintained in a number of areas around the City.

Two other Winnipeg libraries – the St. John's Branch on Salter Street and the Cornish Branch on West Gate – were also built with Carnegie money (a twin grant of \$35,000 in 1915).

Through Carnegie's generosity, 2,500 libraries were built around the world – 124 in Canada. The Carnegie Library on William Avenue was the forty-ninth library in Canada to be built with funds from the Carnegie endowment. A two-story addition – also financed by Carnegie – was added to the back of the building in 1908.

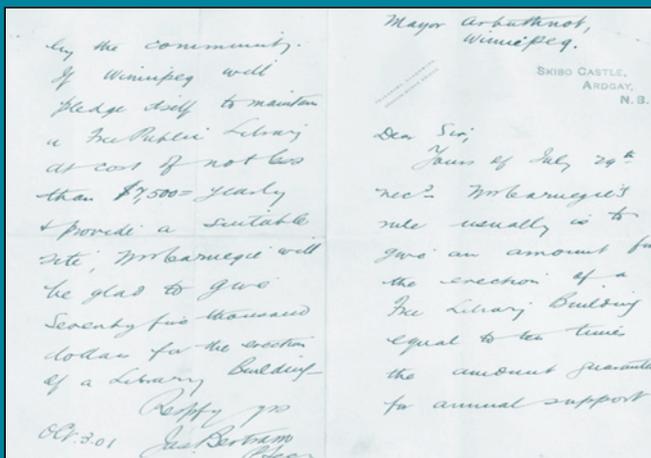


Andrew Carnegie

Following completion of Centennial Library in 1977, the Carnegie Library was closed. However, community appeals resulted in reopening of the building in 1978 as the William Avenue Branch Library.

From 1977 to 1994, space for library services was gradually reduced and reallocated to storage of the City's archival records. The William Avenue Branch Library was closed in 1994 and 380 William Avenue became the City of Winnipeg Archives.

The Carnegie Library was designated a Heritage Building on July 30, 1984. Protected elements include the interior front rooms on both the first and second floors, the iron fence surrounding the property, and the building exterior.



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# Carnegie Library



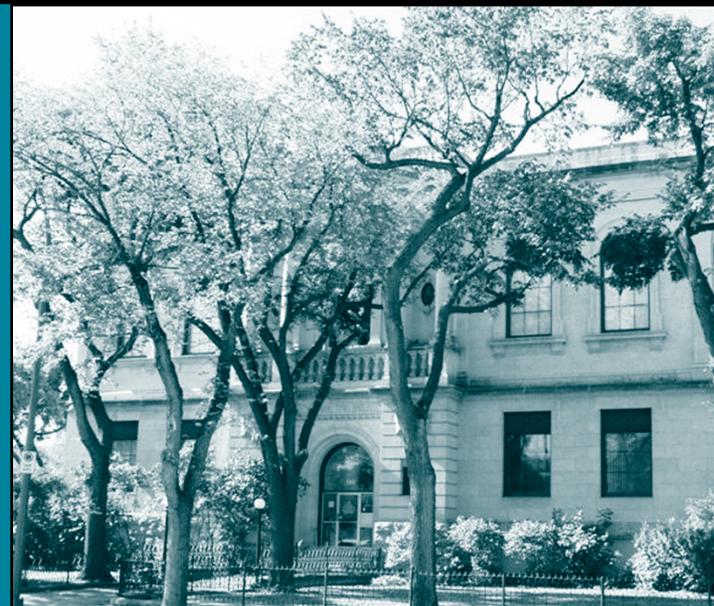
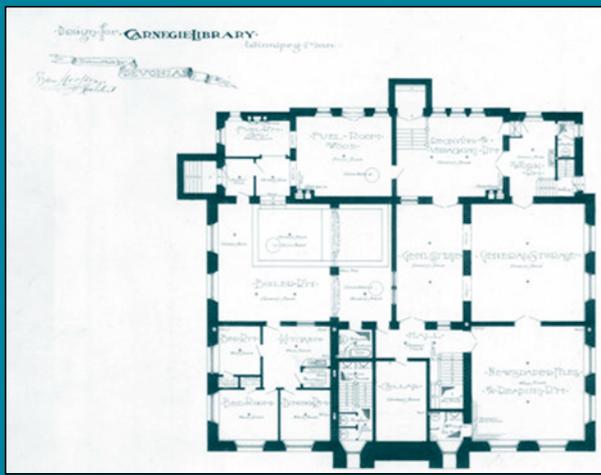
## Site & Architecture

In September of 1902, City Council passed By-law No. 2450 which allowed for the purchase of land for a public library building. After some deliberation, the site on William Avenue was selected and the City authorized a design competition for the new library. Of the eight plans submitted, three were chosen as finalists. However, citing cost, local contractors declined to bid on tenders for the first and second prize winning designs (H. S. Griffiths and Samuel Hooper respectively). A revised design by Hooper resulted in a successful tender from builders Smith and Sharpe, and construction commenced late in 1903. The library was opened on October 11, 1905 by Governor General Earl Grey.

## Architectural Features

- Restrained classical style combining elements of Greek and Roman architecture.
- Window shape and detail, pedimented porticos, and a heavy arched entranceway provide interest.
- Adorned with stone cartouches on either side of the front door, reading "History & Literature" and "Arts and Science".
- Engraved above the front door archway, "Free to All".
- Finished in native grey limestone.
- Marble staircase to second floor rotunda.

Original plans for the building included an apartment situated in the northeast corner of the basement. This apartment was home to the building caretaker, who for nearly thirty years was one James Simmons. Simmons lived onsite – with his wife and four children – maintaining the boilers and caretaking the library. The apartment area has been refitted with moveable shelving for the storage of records.



## Opening Day

Wednesday, October 11, 1905

*"This afternoon at 2:30 the ceremony of opening the new Carnegie library will be started. The Vice-Regal party will be attended by a guard of honor composed of a company of school cadets from Norquay, Alexander and Somerset schools. Countess Grey will unlock the great front doors with a key which will be presented to her by Alderman Sandison. The party will then enter and the Governor-General will be asked to open the building formally. As soon as the institution is declared open, His Excellency will be presented with the first Carnegie library ticket, and he will take out a book in the usual way."*

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