100 Years of Change: The Carnegie Library in Hillsboro 1914-2014

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By Liza Schade
The Carnegie Library opened December 9, 1914 at 2nd and Lincoln Streets in Hillsboro. This exhibit celebrates the library and historical setting of the year the library opened in Washington County. Above are sample magazine covers and advertisements from 1914, the year that World War I began in Europe.

Here are a few other things that happened in the first few months of 1914:

- First scheduled airline flight, St Petersburg-Tampa
- Stock brokerage firm of Merrill Lynch founded
- First steamboat passes through Panama Canal
- Henry Ford introduces an assembly line for Model T Fords
- Charlie Chaplin debuts “The Tramp” in “Kid Auto Races at Venice”
- In Washington, DC, the first stone of the Lincoln Memorial is put into place
- American Society of Composers, Authors & Publishers – ASCAP – forms in NYC
A Few Facts About the Carnegie Library

The Carnegie Library plan required financial commitments from the town that was receiving the donation as public support; rather than making endowments, because:

“An endowed institution is liable to become the prey of a clique. The public ceases to take interest in it, or, rather, never acquires interest in it. The rule has been violated which requires the recipients to help themselves. Everything has been done for the community instead of its being only helped to help itself.”

– Andrew Carnegie

Andrew Carnegie required recipients to:
• demonstrate the need for a public library
• provide the building site;
• annually provide ten percent of the cost of the library’s construction to support its operation
• provide free service to all

The Carnegie library was built in Hillsboro for $10,000 on land donated to the city, but the money donated did not cover books, only the building. The amount of money donated to most communities was based on U.S. Census figures and averaged approximately $2 per person.

The design of the Carnegie libraries has been given credit for encouraging communication with the librarian and created an opportunity for people to browse and discover books on their own. Before Carnegie, patrons had to ask a clerk to retrieve books from closed stacks.

Visit the Museum on January 15 to learn more about the Carnegie Library history in Hillsboro.

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