CWA Helps Nebraska to Five New Libraries

Withdrawal of Carnegie Funds for Building Library Homes Had Left the Small Town to Its Own Resources Until the Depression Brought CWA Aid

South Sioux City's library.

Nehawka's log cabin.
HAVE you wandered into your public library lately? Great things are being accomplished there. For four years, while depression has stalked the people of America—driving them, cowering them, into hiding; haunting them with insane fears, destroying their belief in the world in which they live—the public library has been the great stabilizer.

Wander into the public library in your town. There you will find unemployed youths digging into the books which will fit them for the work they plan to do when the opportunity comes; youngsters whose college careers have been cut short for lack of cash, pursuing extension courses from the university; once-successful businessmen studying (perhaps for the first time in their careers) the ideas which have helped others to keep their business on even keel in the storm; "bums" reading the daily paper and the latest magazines—their only contact with the world that used to be theirs; club women who have turned from never-ending sessions of bridge to learn the meaning for the tremendous experiences which the world is going through.

Thus, in the midst of depression, the library has served its community by keeping up that fighting hope, preserving the faith of the faithful, and preparing the victims of the present to become the heroes of the future.

YET, in this crucial time, our library plant in Nebraska has suffered as probably no other arm of local government from lack of funds. But the work has continued, in spite of smaller forces of library workers, fewer new books, and inadequate quarters.

The depression has been hard on the libraries, both in increased demands for their services and in restricted resources. Yet the depression has borne fruit; for, through it, Nebraska has gained five new library buildings—each built by an energetic community with the aid of CWA and PWL funds. The new libraries are at Nehawka, South Sioux City, Beemer, Ulysses and Syracuse. Each of these libraries has an interesting and stimulating story to tell.

NEHAWKA has one of the most attractive and unusual library buildings in the state. There is no other like it in Nebraska. Dedicated the last Sunday in September, with a pageant, "The History of Nehawka," it is a quaint old-fashioned log cabin, made possible through the CWA.

The lot for the library was donated by a granddaughter of one of the first pioneers. The log cabin measures 16 by 30 feet, and is made of peeled red oak logs. On the north end is a 48-inch fireplace, beautifully made of native red rock. On the mantle is an old clock used by one of the pioneer families. The chimney of the fireplace is made that later it can be used with a furnace as there is a basement under the entire building. The furniture will be of an old-fashioned type, some pieces no doubt antiques.

The CWA granted Nehawka five hundred dollars for labor and $150 for material. Private donations were added and the Woman's club of Nehawka came gallantly to the aid of the new library. In fact, it was the dauntless effort of the Woman's club with their many ways and means of raising money, with the free service of labor by the men of the community, that really made the library possible.

The logs were gotten out gratis, the gas stations donating the gas for trucks to haul them, rocks for the fireplace were gathered, even the wiring for electricity has been donated. History of the pioneer families is to be written and placed in the library for future use. The library lays claim to 750 books and Mrs. F. B. Lemon, the librarian, says more will be added this fall. For all the years, and years to come the Log Cabin Library of Nehawka will stand as a memorial to the early pioneers and the descendants of those same pioneers who helped to make the library possible.

THE South Sioux City public library is a large English style structure of red-tone brick and chocolate mortar with the gold lettering, "Public Library, CWA," on a white background above the front entrance, and opened June 16.

The civil works administration has placed a bronze tablet on the south wall of the vestibule bearing this information: "Public Library, Erection 1933-34 "Constructed by civil works administration. Materials furnished by the Woman's club and the city of South Sioux City, Neb."
The new library at Syracuse.
The quarter block of grounds have been beautifully landscaped in an informal fashion. The south part of the lower floor is the apartment for clubs. The square club room is floored with inlaid maple in the shaded block design. The woodwork is in ivory mahogany wood and a light brick fireplace is at the south end. The draperies are of figured Spanish tile cloth on hinged rods. Thirty-six oak chairs, an oak table, and a piano furnish this room.

A adjoining the club room are a kitchenette and a cloak room for the use of the members of the Woman's club, the Literary club and the Arts and Crafts club, all of whom helped furnish the room. In the children's reading room is a large fireplace of red brick.

The library cost 10 thousand dollars, $2,500 of which covers CWA work. This is now a city library, operated by the city and being paid for by the city.

They have 4,500 books in the library and about 1,500 borrower. Mrs. Marie Murphy, librarian, says that from August 7 to September 7, 898 books were loaned. She is confident that the library has loaned an average of five hundred books a month this year.

The new library at Beemer is a one-room building, located a short distance from highway No. 8, on Main street. This library is built from an old office building. There are built-in shelves, coat closets, fuel and cleaning equipment closet, and closets for surplus magazines. The library was built from CWA funds and city money.

Beemer has over nine hundred books, the magazines are mostly donated. Mrs. Benjamin Martin, the librarian, states that they have a record of 128 books being checked out in two hours, which is outstanding for a small town library. They co-operate with the school teachers to a great extent. Beemer has a loan from the state library of 70 to 80 books which may be kept three months then returned and a new shipment is sent out. A splendid arrangement for a small library with limited funds.

While Syracuse has had a public library organization since 1894, they have never had a library building until this last year, when the CWA helped build a permanent home for their library. Last year the long deferred hopes for a new building seemed about to be fulfilled. Application was made for government aid through the PWA, but the application was not granted. Later, the old Congregational church building was suggested, and this suggestion proved a happy one, as the purchase price was found to be reasonable and could be met.

In 1877 when the law permitting the establishment of municipal libraries was passed, Omaha was willing and ready to accept the institution. It was a red-letter day for Omaha when in February, 1878, a large reading room was opened to the public for the first time.

The first library room that Omaha could afford was in the second story of a building at Dodge and Fifteenth street. As larger quarters were needed, it became necessary to move from place to place. In 1891 the city, received, by the will of the late Byron Reed, the plot of ground at Harney and Nineteenth streets where the library building now stands, together with the Byron Reed collection of coins, manuscripts and books.

Bonds were voted by the city for a library building and the present building was erected. The Omaha library moved into its spacious new quarters in the year 1893.

In Nebraska towns stand Carnegie library buildings. Almost always, the Carnegie Library is an outstanding example of good architecture, a center of civic pride and a real community asset. Thus the Carnegie fund aided the cultural advance of the Cornhusker state materially.

Lincoln boasts the first Carnegie library in the state. The Lincoln library had its beginning as (Continued on Page Twelve)
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a subscription library in the early days of 1875.
Two years later it became the Lincoln public library through the act of the legislature which made it possible for a library to be supported and maintained by a municipality. In 1901 the Carnegie building was erected. Later a branch library was needed and the Carnegie corporation gave to Lincoln for the second time. College View, University Place, and Havelock have been annexed and three more libraries, all Carnegie buildings, have been added to the system.
The third oldest library organization was that at Crete. This organization was established in 1878, it struggled along until a Carnegie building was made possible in 1915.

The organization of a library especially in the smaller towns, was no light task. Patient, long suffering and loyal people worked hard to accomplish results often against tremendous odds.

One town after another was moved to ask the Carnegie corporation for a library. For a number of years an average of five hundred applications from the United States and Canada alone, and nearly as many more from other English-speaking nations, were received by the corporation.

When Mr. Carnegie turned over the administration of his many funds to the Carnegie corporation, his benefactions lost a personal element. It was only natural that the corporation should start an investigation of the libraries. It was discovered that some of the contracts had not been kept and that financial disaster had occurred. But for the most part failure to keep the contract was not a failure on the part of the library itself, but of the municipality which agreed to support the library.

Nevertheless, the corporation, announced in 1917 that it would give no more money for library buildings. The corporation has given largely since that date, to the library movement at large, in both money and research, but the work with the small public library has been discontinued.

Libraries have suffered tremendously in the last few years from lack of sufficient funds.

Many towns in Nebraska not so fortunate as to have a Carnegie library building, have been moved to secure on for themselves by other means, often a gift of a local philanthropist, or a group of public-spirited citizens.

The public library is a worthwhile investment. When the Carnegie fund for building libraries was withdrawn, it left many a community to struggle against merciless odds for the cultural advantages which all civilized people demand. So the depression, which prompted the government to make a frontal attack with public works, has been an important element in the cultural advance of Nebraska, regardless of the stringent financial condition which many libraries have had to face.

ONE may well ask: "Will the renewed interest in reading and the use of public libraries die down as economic conditions grow better? Is the library merely an escape or haven in times of stress?

In the days of long empty hours many a shabbily-dressed man who haunted a library's reading room and spent long hours reading there was no more a loafer than the well-groomed person who spent equal hours toying with first editions of the classics or literature, or some other hobby in books.

"It is to be hoped that the opportunity to increase one's knowledge and skills, to advance one's self in a profession, and to obtain wholesome amusement at low cost, will prove a lasting habit?" says one writer. And we must echo his hope.

Throughout the depression the public library everywhere, by furnishing good material for reading and study, has helped to keep the people of Nebraska and the nation sane.