

A Short History of the Cary Memorial Library

The Wayne Library Association was organized on August 11, 1885 under the name of "The Alonzo Wing Library Ass" for the purpose of providing for the circulation of about 160 books, the gift of Alonzo Wing, Esq., of Jefferson, Wisconsin, a native of Wayne. The name was changed November 30, 1895 to the "Wayne Library Association" and incorporated on March 3, 1909.

At first, the books were kept in various stores in the village until, in 1904, Joshua Millett of Maldon, Massachusetts, a former resident of Wayne, leased the building, now known as the Masonic Hall, to the Association. Four years later Mr. Millett presented the property to the Association as a contribution toward the establishment of a free public library.

By 1927 the library had grown extensively and had received many contributions of books and equipment, and it was felt that a more suitable building was needed, one that was fireproof. It was proposed by the Association that a new building, to be known as the Annie Louise Cary Memorial Library, be erected. During the next decade many people contributed time and money to complete the project.

Miss Cary, born in Wayne on October 22, 1841, was the youngest daughter of Nelson Howard Cary, M.D. He was a direct descendant of the Carys who came to America in colonial days and of the knighted family in England for whom the village of Castle Cary has been named. Inheriting her rare musical ability from both her parents, Miss Cary studied in both Boston and Milan, Italy. She made her operatic debut in Copenhagen in 1868 and sang in all the important cities of the U.S. and in many foreign countries including Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Russia and Italy.

In spite of her worldwide fame, Miss Cary never forgot her native town and returned often. She became interested in the public library and presented numerous gifts including private treasures from her home. A certificate she received when she sang before the Russian Royal Court and which she considered one of her most valuable possessions is on display at the library.

Miss Sarah Joy Merrill of Portland, a niece of Miss Cary, took a great interest in this Wayne memorial to her distinguished aunt. Personal friends of Miss Merrill also aided the cause, contributing the fireplace fixtures, a new desk, and other pieces. A bequest of \$11,000 was also significantly helpful.

Joining the movement to build a new library, school children formed a club to earn money for the library fund, giving a dollar for each school term. Concerts, bazaars, auctions and weekly card parties were held to raise the needed money. Contributions also came from individuals and groups. One elderly lady braided a rug and sold it for \$10.00 which she turned over to the building committee. Finally with the consent and approval of Miss Merrill, the library was built.

A beautiful brick building was erected on the same site where Annie Louise Cary had attended school. It was located nearly across the street from her birthplace. The cost of the structure was \$12,000.00. It officially opened on December 9, 1938. Formal dedication exercises were held August 27, 1939. It has been considered a fitting memorial to the memory of Miss Cary.

The library counts among its possessions a large collection of book plates, some of them extremely rare and all of them valuable, given by the late Mrs. Thaddeus Hyatt of Stamford, Connecticut and Wayne. Many notable names are included: Queen Alexandra, Queen Maude of Norway, Prince Christian, William Gladstone, Charles Dickens, Ibanez, Presidents Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson and Hoover, William Beebe, Jack London and William Penn. These plates are also interesting because many are highly artistic engravings made by celebrated artists. View some of the bookplates on our webpage: <http://www.cary-memorial.lib.me.us/catalog/catalogs-and-bookplates/>

A large oil painting by Edwin Blashfield hangs over the fireplace. Titled Opera Procession by the Sea, it depicts Annie Louise Cary in many of her most famous operatic roles. A nearby sign explains the significance of each figure.

Today the library continues to be a source of education and entertainment for the people of Wayne and surrounding community. The book collection has grown from its original 160 volumes to over 11,000 titles. Audiobooks, DVDs, magazines, eBooks and online resources add to the available offerings. Five public use computers, free high speed wi-fi, and an eclectic line-up of events and programs make the library a vibrant community hub for young and old alike. To learn more about the library's offerings and programs, check out the website: <http://www.cary-memorial.lib.me.us/>

Visit the library's lower level where our links to the past are evident. You will see many treasured artifacts bestowed by Miss Cary on display—a reminder of her history and ours.

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