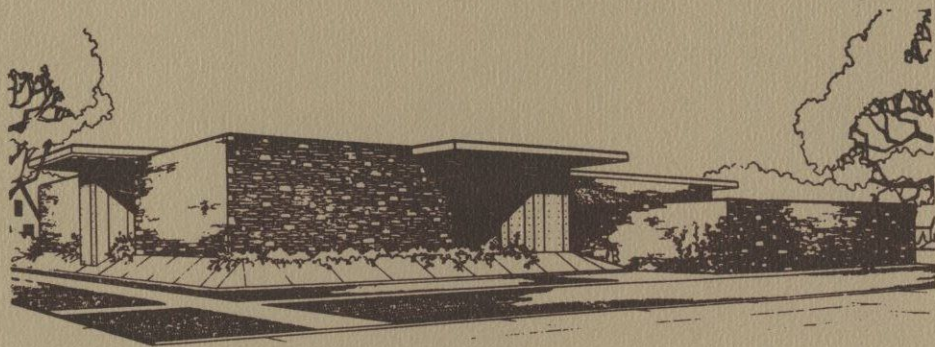


THE
MANHATTAN
LIBRARY
TRADITION

1856 - 1989



THE MANHATTAN LIBRARY TRADITION, 1856-1989, was produced to commemorate the 20th anniversary celebration, October 8, 1989, of the library building at Juliette and Poyntz, Manhattan, Kansas.

TEXT - compiled by Richard Coleman, President
Manhattan Public Library Board

PHOTOGRAPHS & DOCUMENTS - courtesy of Riley County Historical Society and Museum

The 20th anniversary celebration was planned and organized by Rosie Pettle, former Library Board President. She was assisted by many staff members, Board members, and members of the reactivated MANHATTAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION.

While it is not possible to list all of the members of the community who volunteered their time, their efforts are greatly appreciated. A note of special thanks is in order for the following individuals and businesses:

Dental Associates
Blaine Thomas Sign Co.
Ballard Sporting Goods
Brent Bowman & Associates
Video Specialists
Cable Ads, Inc.
Hardees
Vista

Manhattan Catholic Schools
Manhattan Community Theater
Manhattan Parks & Recreation
Sharron Washington Dancers
Woodwinds Anonymous
Charlie Griffin
Amanda's Panda Jugglers
Gyll Bates Twirlers

JoAnn Green Wellman
Barbara K. Wilson
Richard Coleman

IN THE BEGINNING . . .

THE MANHATTAN LITERARY INSTITUTE

In the late fall of 1856, before Kansas was yet a state in the Union, a group of pioneer men formed what was originally called the Manhattan Literary Institute, proclaiming that "all persons of good moral character shall be eligible to membership on complying with the requirements of the constitution." The institutional ideal, as set forth in the preamble was: "to encourage industry, promote virtue, and mutually assist each other in the acquisition of knowledge."

- Prior to his joining, it was required that "each male applicant shall pay into the Institute treasury the sum of one dollar (\$1.00)."
- One of the Institute's six officers was a librarian whose duties were to "take charge of all books, papers, and other documents belonging to the Society, and see that the rules prescribed by the Library Committee are strictly enforced."



Two decades later, Washington Marlatt, one of the Institute's founders, delivered a lecture of early history to members assembled on Thursday evening in February, 1877, at the Baptist Church, and reminisced as follows:

The winter of 1856-1857 was noted for its severity. . . . Just before the winter set in, one of Manhattan's enterprising merchants, Ira Taylor, dealer in whiskey, Missouri bacon, poor flour and dry goods, had erected and fitted up a public hall -- a cottonwood building some 12 x 20 feet and ceiled with brown paper. It was here where the eight charter members of the Manhattan Institute got together, wrote a constitution, and thus established themselves as the oldest society of its kind in the State of Kansas.

Manhattan, Kansas in the 1860's



The official act of incorporation for what was titled more simply "The Manhattan Institute" was granted by the Territorial Legislature of Kansas on February 14, 1857: "Be it enacted by the Governor and Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Kansas . . . that C. E. Blood, Washington Marlatt, E. W. Thurston, Albert A. Griffin, Andrew Scammon, A. J. Mead, Ira Taylor, J. D. Woodworth and their associates and successors . . . are hereby constituted a body corporate and politic, under the name and style of the 'Manhattan Institute'."

- Adapted from minutes of the Manhattan Institute and early-day newspaper clippings.

"Literary Exercises": High Intelligence on Display in Early Manhattan

This pioneer-days Manhattan Institute had as its purpose more than a collection of books; it was more broadly an organization dedicated to the fostering of "culture." Indeed, one of its eight constitutional sections constituted a command for the holding of "literary exercises," described in this fashion: "The literary exercises shall consist of debates, orations, lectures, readings of original essays, and selections from popular authors, declamations, and a manuscript paper."

The first "literary exercise" occurred on Christmas Eve, December 24, 1856. Highlights of the "exercise" and arguments of the debaters were recorded in the Institute's minutes:

On a motion by Ira Taylor, The Institute discussed the question: '*Should the United States sustain General Walker in his position in Central America?*' Messrs. Marlatt and Griffin were appointed to open the debate.

Mr. Griffin opened in the affirmative, basing his argument upon three positions: first, that mankind has the *natural* right to remove from one land to another and that Nicaragua added to this natural right a special invitation to foreigners to settle within her borders; second, that wherever an individual resides he should so act as to give stability to the government and protection of life and property; third that the conduct of Walker in introducing an American element into the government of Nicaragua is the only course that can rescue the country from its present desperate situation.

Mr. Marlatt followed in the negative, reviewing the course of Walker in first attempting with 40 men to overthrow the existing government (but failing), then joining forces with Rivas. He established the latter in power, only to displace Rivas when he could no longer manage him. Marlatt looked upon Walker and his associates as "filibusterers" and urged that the United States should no longer give countenance to "robbers".

A third Institute member, Mr. Scammon, then rose to the support of the affirmative . . . (contending) that it is the Anglo-Saxon mission to civilize the world.

A fourth Institute member, Mr. Taylor, objected on the grounds that one body of men has no more right, because they covet the superior property of another nation, to displace the rightful owners thereof than does one man to abandon his own land claim to take his neighbor's better one.

And so has disputation continued through the 20th century . . . and likely will carry into the 21st.

EARLIEST INKLINGS

In its meeting of April 1874, the Manhattan Institute proposed "to establish a reading room and library in combination with the Ladies' Temperance Alliance." The motion was made and carried . . . and a committee of seven was appointed to raise funds and find a suitable person to care for the room. Shortly thereafter, a reading room was established in the large west parlor of the Adams house and opened to the public, but as Institute minutes subsequently record: "The enterprise was carried on long enough to find out that a reading room was not a crying need for the city, but doubtless a library would be."

In 1877, books were purchased by the Institute for a continuing library, member S. M. Fox "getting them -- all standard books in good bindings -- at wholesale rates." The total cost of these books plus cases to house them and stamps used in ordering them was "something between \$325 and \$350" (according to Fox). The Institute paid Mr. Fox "a sum of \$25 a year for the trouble of keeping and loaning the books." In time, Fox judged them a "nuisance" and they were removed to rooms of the Y.M.C.A. and put under care of a librarian there.

Adams House Reading Room: Established in West Parlor



A ledger-book of early-day library use by Institute membership shows that in a five-year period (late 1870's, early 1880's), twenty-six of these early-day readers checked out an average of 48 books each during that period. The borrowings (and return) were recorded by a book number -- and there seem to have been only 239 to check out. The busiest borrower was Willard Elliott, who had checked out (and returned!) 146 books. The most famous member, Washington Marlatt, checked out a below-average 22!

Through the 1880's and early 1890's the Institute kept meeting, more often than not -- according to Institute minutes -- without a quorum. Finally, when a quorum was assembled, the Institute voted to donate its small library of books and book cases to the Manhattan Board of Education; and -- as the Institute's secretary recorded: "when this was accomplished the Institute members felt their labors had not all been in vain."

The single greatest contribution made by the Institute toward today's Manhattan was to purchase and maintain a lot at the northwest corner of 5th and Poyntz for ultimate use by a library. At the turn of the century this land, plus some other lots owned further to the northwest, was valued by the Institute "at about \$1,500."

SOME LIBRARY-LOVING LADIES

LAUNCH AN M.L.A.

As the 19th century came to its end, an interested group of ladies observed diminishing activity among the men of the Manhattan Institute -- and, being concerned, organized the Manhattan Library Association in cooperation with the Parliamentary Club, an older organization in the community.



*The empty lot at
5th and Poyntz
purchased for a
Library by the Institute*

The first meeting of the Manhattan Library Association was held September 30, 1900. The women referred to themselves as "an auxiliary to the Manhattan Literary Institute," but in truth they were more nearly counterpart, and the livelier "part" at that. Their constitution declared: "the object of the Association shall be the erection of a building for library, reading room, and other purposes." Sixteen women were at the core of the Association, but they wanted a total of 200 members, enrolling at an initiation fee of \$5 each, to build a treasury of \$1,000 with which they hoped to impress Andrew Carnegie when they sought a donation from him to build a library. This goal was reached April 15, 1901.

The women of the M.L.A. earned money for their cause by holding box socials and rummage sales, selling cook books and books of Manhattan scenes, sponsoring lectures, entertainment, plays and concerts, and staging minstrel shows. The men of Manhattan's Commercial Club supported them -- especially via minstrel shows and occasional donations of money and muscle.

The Manhattan Library Association's first rummage sale was held in January, 1901. Its earnings were celebrated at a meeting of the Association's Executive Committee held on the following February 1st. The meeting's highpoint was recorded by the Secretary, Mrs. Anna B. Koller, in the following words:

When the financial report was called for by President Purcell, Mrs. Higinbotham, who had been hovering over an olive green plush box (recognized by all as the rummage sale cash box), pressed a button (on the box). The cover flew up, revealing money, bills, and receipts, from which the following statement was produced: \$243.05 in gross receipts, \$8.60 in bills to be paid for room rent, drayage, cleaning bills, printing and sundries, leaving a net profit of \$234.45.

Elizabeth Purcell
President
The Manhattan Library
Association



- Extracted from Manhattan Library Association minutes; also adapted from "History of the Manhattan Public Library: 1856 - 1970" by Mrs. J. A. Shellenberger.

THE M.L.A. EXPERIENCE:

DREAMS, DETERMINATION, TRAVAILS AND TRIUMPH

Minutes of the Manhattan Library Association from its early, most active years -- 1900-1904 -- record the normal reverses mixed with successes that are the expected experience of a determined group. Here the goal was clear: these women wanted a library for Manhattan and they wanted it *now!*

Thumbing through the Secretary's record of moments, motions, and motives in 1902, the reader will find as occasion for rue or smiles, regret or pride, this sample of M.L.A. experiences:

March 24, 1902: The ladies considered as a fund-raising possibility that "every firm in town be asked to donate one day's business to the Manhattan Library Association." (There is no subsequent record of this having occurred.)

June 30, 1902: The matter of a lecture course "in which Professor Clure is trying to interest the Association was explained by Vice-President Roberts, and after much discussion was rejected by a unanimous vote."

October 27, 1902: The Association met in the rummage sale rooms of the parish house. "President Purcell asked for suggestions what we should do with the rummage not sold. After various plans had been mentioned, Mrs. Roberts moved that prices be cut and everything sold as fast as possible. Carried!" (The November Treasurer's report showed that \$408.89 was netted from this sale -- which, by one economic historian's estimate, would be equal to \$6,337 in 1989 dollars.)

Quite a rummage sale!

November 3, 1902: "The Corresponding Secretary read a letter from the managers of the Lyceum Bureau in regard to the Jubilee Singers. The Secretary was instructed to write to both Mr. Hardy and Mr. Palmer, telling them that the Association expects a thirty-dollar rebate, inasmuch as three members of the troupe were missing from the performance."

. . . BUT THE M.L.A.'S WORK IS NOT YET DONE!

In an October meeting the Association resolved to "continue to work for books, equipment, and furnishings of the new Library with the same energy and enthusiasm that we have for its building." Some examples of what this effort was to entail in the next two years are the following:

- In January, 1905, forty-eight "club-room chairs" priced at \$9.50 per dozen were purchased as library equipment, and a library table was acquired for a price of \$6.50.
- On March 24, 1905, the women of the M.L.A. voted themselves willing (with "one exception") to give an occasional Sunday afternoon over to superintending in the Library reading room "if a Sunday opening is decided on by the Board of Directors."
- On April 20th, the Library Association heard a request from the Board of Directors for funds with which to purchase screens for the Library's windows, "this being a necessary improvement for the proper preservation of the premises." It was moved -- and carried -- that the M.L.A. pay for screening the whole building.



- When carpeting for the second floor was requested, the Association contemplated three samples, ranging in price from \$226.95 to \$280.20 for the entire floor. The costliest carpeting won the members' vote.
- At the October meeting, the Library Association received yet another request from the Library Board: "What should we do toward a new sidewalk on the east side of the Library lot?" A motion to lay this matter on the table carried.
- At the meeting of January 26, 1906, President Purcell reported that the Library's request for a piano had been forwarded to Mr. Carnegie *"and he has not yet refused."* At which news -- recorded the Secretary -- *"there was much applause."* (Even fairy godmothers get fatigued!)

- *Extracted from Manhattan Library Association minutes.*

SIXTY-FIVE YEARS IN THE "ORIGINAL LIBRARY" BUILDING

The Carnegie Free Public Library was becoming so taken for granted, within a few years after its opening in December, 1904, at the northwest edge of downtown Manhattan, and was functioning to such public satisfaction that the original Library's support groups (the Institute and Association) largely disappeared from ongoing view. A new "Friends of the Library" group was organized in 1947, but "lack of objectives and shortage of funds resulted in an early dissolution of the organization" (says Library Historian Shellenberger).

Noteworthy changes in the 1904-1969 years at Fifth and Poyntz include the following . . .

- A children's room was established on the south end of the second floor in 1931.



- The Library's name became "Manhattan Public Library" in 1942. Nearly forty years had passed -- and all connection with Carnegie Corporation had ceased -- since the final payment had been made in early 1905.
- In 1950 an art gallery was created in the northeast corner of the second floor and was named for Mrs. U. B. Wharton, who had donated \$755.19 for this purpose in 1941. **(Library wheels sometimes spin slowly!)**
- The great flood of 1951 caused extensive loss of books and periodicals, as well as heavy damage to the building. These losses notwithstanding, within a few years the Library staff was back to the policy of "throw one out for every new book bought."
- Significant gifts in the 1950's were a new charge-out desk, donated by the Manhattan Rotary Club, and fluorescent lighting, from the A.A.U.W.

Already, by 1937, Head Librarian Lee was commenting in her annual report that a new building was needed "because of crowded conditions."

(Thus it has always been in this library business. The Carnegie-funded structure was only 34 years old, but it was serving a population of townspeople and K-State students nearly three times greater than that originally served.)

THE "NEW LIBRARY"

MOVES FROM CONCEPTION TO COMPLETION

In January, 1964, the Library's Board of Trustees decided to begin thinking in terms of a completely new facility, believing that repairs, refurbishment and renovation were no longer appropriate answers to the growing city's needs.

- Pursuant to this decision, a consultant was hired and a Library Citizens' Advisory Council was formed.
- In January, 1965, a 60th anniversary dinner celebration honoring the Library marked the beginning of an effort to inform the wider Manhattan public that a new library was needed.
- In 1966, the North Central Kansas Library System was established, with Manhattan's library named resource center, serving twelve counties with thirty-one libraries.



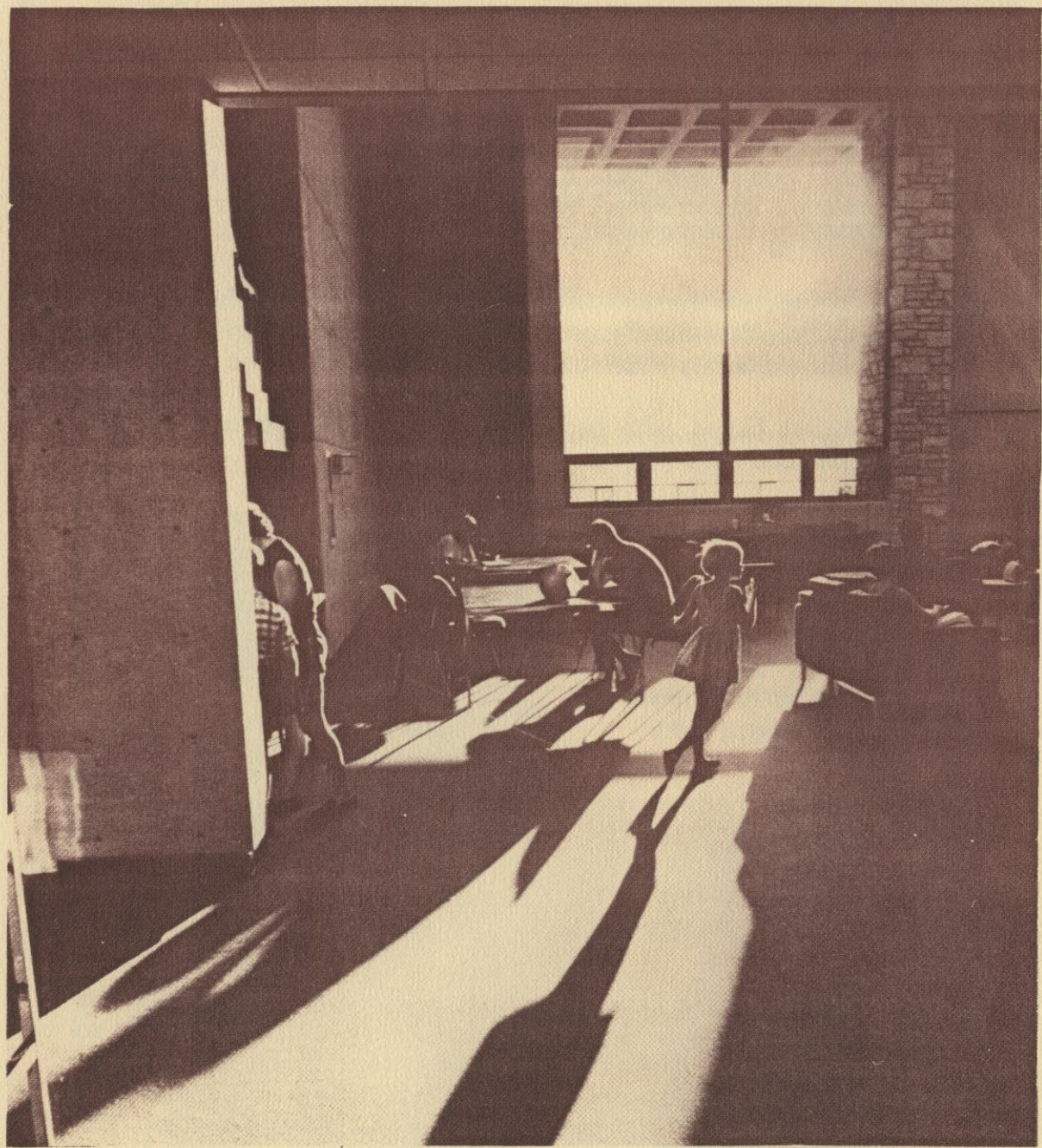
- A "Vote-the-Bonds" campaign was launched in June, 1966, with women members of the Library board leading the fight. Victory in November by a two-to-one margin gave the "new building" its crucial push.
- The present building's site at Juliette and Poyntz was selected from among five possibilities. A building that would cost \$825,000 to construct was designed by William R. Eidson. Construction was contracted to the Green Construction Company.
- The finances were: \$500,000 in citizen-voted bond money, a \$250,000 grant from the federal government, and \$75,000 paid by Riley County for the old library building at 5th and Poyntz.
- Margaret Gates, who had been named Head Librarian in 1965, shepherded the project through to conclusion.

***New library located
at
Juliette & Poyntz
Lobby, 1969***



A grand opening was held from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. on March 9, 1969. A journalist historian wrote as follows about that occasion:

"Dedication of the new Manhattan Public Library took place this afternoon The landing of the beautiful stairway was the setting, so that all spectators could see the participants as each spoke Radio KMAN of Manhattan broadcast the program live and WIBW Television of Topeka filmed parts of the ceremony for broadcast that evening. The dedicatory program was twenty-two minutes in length, followed by a viewing of the new building with more than eight-thousand visitors guided through the Library in an orderly conducted tour."



"HOLD THE TORCH

AND

FOLLOW THE GLEAM"

It is appropriate today, on this 20th anniversary celebration of the "new" building to quote our Library's first leader, Mary Cornelia Lee, who wrote in *Log Cabin Days* (1929):

It is fitting now to remember and to honor the early pioneers of Manhattan who lived and labored, planned and thought and dreamed, through the years of the first half century of our civic life, as well as to give credit to the later citizens who voted for the Free Public Library and who have supported it through the first quarter century of its existence.

So, still achieving, still pursuing, we of this day hold the torch, and follow the gleam.

Thus can Manhattanites smile at their good fortune in living where (in the words of an early journalist) "the arm of the Blue is thrown across the bosom of the Kaw" -- and in having a library which has served them (in two different buildings) so well since 1904.

In a larger sense, this is an 85th anniversary!

A PERIOD OF DRAMATIC GROWTH



Since 1965, Margaret Gates has directed the Library through a period of dramatic growth.

- 1965 - Organization of a new building program
- 1966 - MPL selected to be headquarters for a regional library system
- 1968 - Collection reaches 55,000 volume mark
- 1969 - New building opens at Juliette and Poyntz
- 1976 - Automated circulation system introduced
- 1980 - Building remodeled to accommodate growth
- 1985 - Service hours extended to Sunday afternoons
- 1987 - New videocassette collection introduced
- 1989 - Establishment of Manhattan Library Association support group
 - Celebration of 20 years of service in building at Juliette and Poyntz
 - Unveiling of automated Public Access Catalog
 - Collection reaches 185,000 volume mark.

"Manhattan citizens are the most responsive library users of any city, large or small, that I know."

Margaret Gates

The 20th anniversary of the Manhattan Public Library building at Juliette and Poyntz was celebrated on October 8, 1989. The celebration honored the proud history of library service in Manhattan from its earliest development in 1856 to the present. This 20th anniversary was marked by the unveiling of an automated Public Access Catalog, soon to be integrated with a completely automated circulation system.

The celebration of past achievements leads to contemplation of the future of library service in Manhattan. The present facility was designed to serve the needs of the community for twenty years. Changing service patterns and overcrowding have necessitated preparation for growth. Barbara K. Wilson and Jack Goldstein recently purchased land adjacent to the Library to provide a site for expansion. This generous act will be commemorated in the expanded library by naming a room in honor of J. Robert Wilson, an outstanding citizen of Manhattan.

The Library Board and the Library staff members are committed to carrying on the tradition of progressive library service to the Manhattan community.

Members of the Board of Trustees, 1989

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