

**Carnegie** Libraries are most often recognized by their classical colonnades, architectural symmetry and classical style. They are among the most numerous public buildings in the U.S. and in their day they were quite innovative.

Andrew **Carnegie**, despite his generous philanthropy, was a very practical and frugal man. It was imperative to him that the buildings be efficient and limited to one floor so that a single librarian could supervise the entire **library**. Basements were to be used only for meeting rooms, toilets and mechanical and plumbing.

**Carnegie's** personal secretary, James Bertram, reviewed every set of plans for the **Carnegie** financed **library** buildings, including our **library** in Wellington. **Carnegie** was concerned that the libraries should not be too extravagant.

In developing the "Notes on the Erection of **Library** Buildings" pamphlet, Bertram proposed a number of interior designs for local authorities to reference. The plans for our **library** were developed from "Plan B" of this pamphlet and modified by Wichita architect C. W. Terry.

Bertram's correspondence could be quite abrupt and even rude at times. From a letter dated June 1, 1915, to he states, "We gather that your proposed architect has not erected any other **library** buildings... all the more reason that he should pay more than usual attention to the memorandum sent for your guidance rather than ignore it."

Though meticulous in overseeing the interior design of the space, Bertram did not offer "strong opinions" about **architecture** other than to warn against "aiming at such exterior effects as may make impossible an effective and economical layout of the interior." So the "family resemblance" shared by many **Carnegie library** buildings was the result "of hundreds of individual design decisions and not an image imposed."

Wellington's **Carnegie library** structure invites us on a familiar and welcoming glimpse into the past. In seeking to fulfill **Carnegie's** intention that libraries be a place for people to find the tools and resources they needed, the **Library** as an institution is continually being reinvented and reinvigorated, redefining the role of reading in our society, and providing digital access for those lacking such and public spaces for gathering.

Resources: "**Carnegie Library Architecture**" by Dr. Abigail A. Van Slyck; **Carnegie** Corporation Correspondence" archived by Columbia University **Library** Archives; "Old Fashioned **Library** of the Future? How **Carnegie** Libraries Point Toward the 21st Century" by Della Hansmann; "How Andrew **Carnegie** Built the **Architecture** of American Literacy" by Kriston Capps