

"Whatever agencies for good may rise or fall in the future, it seems certain that the Free Library is destined to stand and become a never-ceasing foundation of good to all the inhabitants." – Andrew Carnegie

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To many of us, Andrew Carnegie's name is synonymous with philanthropy. He is often referred to as the Patron Saint of Libraries and the Father of Modern Philanthropy. But who was he, really?

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Andrew Carnegie was born in Dunfermline, Scotland in 1835. His father was an early proponent of worker rights and conditions. When those efforts failed, the family immigrated to America. Upon landing in New York, 13-year-old Andrew found the city's "bustle and excitement" overwhelming. It took the family 3-weeks to reach their final destination of Allegheny, Pennsylvania.

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Carnegie was a hard worker. "Not just ambitious, young Carnegie was a voracious reader, and he took advantage of the generosity of an Allegheny citizen, Colonel James Anderson, who opened his library to local working boys, a rare opportunity in those days. Through the years, books provided the basis for most of Andrew Carnegie's education, remaining invaluable as he rapidly progressed through his career." ([www.carnegie.org](http://www.carnegie.org))

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By the time he turned 30, Carnegie had expanded his investments in the railroad, iron works, steamers, and built the Carnegie Steel Corporation. In 1901 at age 66, Carnegie sold the Corporation for an astounding \$480M. He retired from business and devoted himself full-time to distributing his fortune to noteworthy causes, including libraries, church organs, colleges, schools, and associations in the United States and around the world.

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Funding library buildings was not the largest philanthropic investment he chose to make, but it was perhaps his most influential. Thanks in part to grant requests from women's groups nationwide, like the local Prentiss Study Club here in Wellington, Carnegie began expanding his efforts to build community libraries across the country.

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Carnegie's endeavors were driven by the belief that anyone with access to books and the desire to learn could educate himself, or herself, and be successful. As an immigrant, he especially felt that America's newcomers needed to acquire cultural knowledge of their adopted country, which a library could help make possible.

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In his autobiography, Carnegie recalled that even as a child he identified this need, "I resolved, if wealth ever came to me, that it should be used to establish free libraries." And, that's what he did.

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Between the years 1883 and 1929, Carnegie funded the construction of 2,509 "Carnegie Libraries" worldwide. Of those projects, 1,689 library buildings were built in the United States with about 70% of them being built in

small towns. About 750 are still open as libraries. Each library is unique in its own way, but all Carnegie libraries shared one common requirement, that the city which was provided the grant must have a plan in place for permanently funding library operations.

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The Wellington Public Library is proud to be one of the remaining Carnegie Library buildings still in operation. We value the **legacy** Andrew Carnegie established, our rich heritage and the services we continue to provide our community.

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